MARIANO AZUELA, NOVELIST OF THE MEXICAN REVOLUTION

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MEXICAN REVOLUTION

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CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND OF AZUELA'S NOVELS

Mexico's history offers such colorful and interesting material for writing that it is surprising to note that she has not produced more novelists. The story of the Spanish conquistadores, that of Father Hidalgo's fight for independence, and, finally, the record of her recent Revolution, could all furnish a background for the costumbrista tales which portray a country's life. During the past twenty years, the Revolution has stirred some of her literary men, but until that time there was hardly a writer who could truly be called Mexican. Such men as Martín Luis Guzmán, Gregorio López y Fuentes, and José Rubén Romero began to record the Revolution after the actual fighting was over and wrote admirable regional novels, but even they were not to realize its full value. The one man to recognize its significance during the time of the Revolution was Mariano Azuela, an active worker for its cause. He was closely associated with the fighters and kept a journal of the events so that his work might be accurate. He could not understand why more Mexican novelists did not see the vivid picture they could portray, nor why they did not see the suffering and injustice that pervaded their country. He
believed that the peon should be defended in literature, and that the tyrannical cacique should be attacked by Mexican patriots.

Azuela was truly a man qualified to write about the peon, for he knew him intimately. He himself is of Indian lineage and knows the place of the indígena in Mexican history. His parents lived in the small town of Lagos de Moreno in Jalisco, but his father owned and worked a small tract of land outside the city. They were able to educate their children and to live well enough, yet Azuela saw at first hand the poverty and unhappiness of the enslaved workers. He stayed in Lagos for his primary training at the Liceo del Padre Guerra, but went to Guadalajara for his secondary work at the Liceo de Varones. It was there that he first showed his interest in politics. Before the end of the nineteenth century, he and other boys at the Liceo saw the danger in the Díaz regime and began an anti-Díaz movement at the school. This agitation lasted until he received his medical degree there in 1899.

Immediately after becoming a doctor, Azuela returned to Lagos to practice medicine. He became acquainted with padre Agustín Rivera, who was a well-known historian and a sympathizer with Mexico's lower class. He married Rivera's niece, Carmen Rivera, and stayed in Lagos. After Díaz had been overthrown, Azuela was elected jefe político of Lagos, a position which he did not retain very long, for he realized that Madero's government was insecure. In spite of this, he
resigned his political post and became a *maderista*. His only other public position was as Director of Public Education after Huerta had resigned and Carranza and Villa had split forces.

Because of his association with the *maderista* movement, and the *carrancista* invasion of Guadalajara, Azuela was forced to flee with Villa's *dorados*. He joined the band of Julián Medina as a doctor. They fled through various parts of Mexico, and it was while they were in Aguascalientes and Tepatitlán that he collected the material for *Los de abajo* and others of his novels. He was forced to flee to El Paso, but later he returned, going to Mexico City to settle there to practice medicine. He has continued writing, but never as his primary profession. His activities in Mexico City, as is seen later in the discussion of his novels, also gave him a close association with his subject. By helping in the courts and giving his services to a public clinic, Consultorio No. III, he knew intimately the people who frequented these places.

Thus, Azuela was well qualified to become the only "true novelist of the Revolution." He wrote about the suffering of his fellow men in such a way that they recognized his ability and have acknowledged him as their greatest contemporary writer. In recent years his fame has spread to other countries, so that he is now the most representative Mexican author. He was able to write stirring novels, for his subject was close to him. Speaking of his theme, John Engle Kirk
Indignation and concern are the motive forces of his pen, and he does not write either for pleasure or for force. The abject poverty and the age-old injustices that stand out so sharply in the Mexican comedia-humaine move him deeply and demand of him an explanation of their causes, incite him to cry out against those responsible for his country's tragedy. And so throughout his novels, in greater or less degree, he is fighting for a cause. Social conflict is his theme. Now, in his earlier works, he points accusingly to social conditions that condemn the tyrannical oppression of los de arriba; later, in the tragic brutality of the Revolution itself, he boldly strikes at those responsible for plunging his country into class war without any clearly defined program of social reform; and more recently he paints us a sombre picture of post-revolutionary society, more corrupt and degenerate than before, for the Revolution has unleashed new forces of evil hitherto held in check through fear of a powerful centralized control.  

In his later novels Azuela began to describe other classes, but his sympathies remained with los de abajo, and he centered his main interest around them. The story of the indígena in Mexico has been a sad one to him, and one that he could not forget. In his defense of the Indian, he is usually indifferent to the middle class, but he is openly scornful of the rich. He turns his fury against the latter for what they have done to the peon. This contempt is not so noticeable in his later novels, but even in his most recent ones, he reflects a little of his early feeling for the hacendado. As the years passed, some of his hopes for the Revolution may have died, but even when saddened and resigned, he fought for its cause and kept some faith that it would help the Indian.

1John Engleikirn, editor, Los de abajo, pp. xiv-xv
Just as Mexico’s political and social progress are shown in his stories, so is a certain progress seen in his style of writing. He himself says that his first novels, those about pre-revolutionary Mexico, were influenced by such European writers as Honoré de Balzac, Emile Zola, Flaubert and Alphonse Daudet. There was also the estridentista movement initiated by Maples Arce, which caused him to attempt to write according to strict rules. Fortunately this did not modify his style until 1922-23, after he had completed his most outstanding works. He says in the same reference that his favorite authors of recent years, Conrad and Proust, have not influenced his work. This may be true, but with the effects of the various writers, he has lost that style which was exclusively his own.

This style is seen primarily in the novels which deal directly with the Revolution. It seems almost impossible that he could have let the European writers affect him for a number of years, could have completely shed this influence, and later could let other ideas change his style once more. However, he did this, for he doesn’t seem to imitate any other author during this revolutionary period. His novels are filled with the language of the common people, and one of his primary aims is to present their ideas, goals and philosophies. His words flow freely, and rhythm aids in the expression of his ideas. The revolutionists had no feelings

2Mariano Azuela, Books Abroad, 12:1, p. 26, cited by Englekirk, Los de abajo, p. xxviii
of restraint, and he avoids any such feeling by writing just as he felt.

Throughout all his novels, his greatest achievement is the molding of his characters into people who are as real as the ones he knew. They stand out with a remarkable clearness and seem to reflect his sincerity. The whole mood of his novel may sometimes be found in the way he portrays one of its principal characters, and the reader finds his own emotions governed by Azuela's. Such men as Demetrio Macías, Miguel Angel, and Adolfo Gutiérrez are outstanding as representatives of three separate classes, and they will be imprinted on the reader's mind. Until his later novels appeared, the women characters were ordinarily secondary, but they were nevertheless well done.

Although all of his novels do not deal directly with the Revolution, they are all concerned with it. It is well, then, to know a little about the historical background. The evils of Mexico's political system did not begin with the Díaz regime of tyranny; they go back to the caste system introduced by the Spaniards who settled there. Their colonial society was made up of the Indian; the mestizo, who was of mixed Spanish-Indian blood; the criollo, a colonial of pure Spanish blood; and the gachupín, a peninsular Spaniard appointed by the Spanish king to rule over the colonies. The same unrest that developed in the other American colonies was felt in Mexico, and finally they revolted under Padre Hidalgo. Their independence freed them of Spanish
rule, only to bring forth native despots. The constitution which they demanded and obtained brought relief for a time, but soon the hand of Porfirio Díaz was to curtail all their freedom. The caste system had not been abolished, and its evils sometimes became worse than they had been before.

Finally, Francisco Madero led a revolt against the republican government and won. At this time the revolutionists had no special plan for reform; they merely wanted to rid Mexico of her corrupt political system. Madero was elected president, but later he was assassinated, leaving the presidency to Victoriano Huerta. Then began a period of strife resulting from the leaders' inability to agree. It was while they were fighting among themselves that the ideals of the Revolution and a plan for social reform came forth. The latter involved three phases: the agrarian reform proposed to break up the haciendas; the political reform was to abolish local bossism; and the religious reform was to enforce the laws that had been passed earlier to curb the powers of the church. However, none of the revolutionary leaders was very capable of understanding these social problems, so the Revolution, for the most part, continued as little more than a fight for power.

After the fighting had almost ceased and Obregón was elected president, the country returned to a more normal state. Since 1920 there have been various political outbursts, which Mexico seems unable to avoid, but the recent presidents have been able to make more actual progress than
the revolutionary presidents did. The Communists have found Mexico a fertile land for party activities, as have other political factions. Even now many of the results of the Revolution are still to be felt.

This is the Revolution about which Azuela writes, the only revolution which Mexicans spell with a capital "R", and which unmistakably means only one period of Mexico's history. His novels can be separated into three groups; those concerning his first indignant outbreak against Díaz and the local caciques, those dealing with the years of the Revolution, and his more recent ones about conditions in Mexico since the Revolution. In any case, his purpose has been the condemnation of tyranny and injustice, and his hope has been reform.
CHAPTER II

PRE-REVOLUTIONARY NOVELS

Díaz's regime, while bringing an apparently greater prosperity to Mexico, actually had kept the masses bound down to the earth. Azuela was one of the few men in Mexico who understood the needs and complaints of the common people, and he wanted to reveal them. He began his defense of these people with a series of costumbrista sketches, Impresiones de un estudiante, and various articles in magazines. These early writings were not outstanding, and he received little recognition for them; however, they did begin his career as an active sympathizer with Mexico's ill-treated peon. From these short works came the ideas for his first novels criticizing the government. He was primarily a champion of the poor and suffering; secondarily, he was a novelist. He saw that the officials were totally disregarding the Constitution of 1857 and were ruling Mexico with only their own interest and welfare in mind. In an effort to help his people, he found the novel a means of condemning the officials.

The style of his first novels sets a standard which remains much the same through all his works, with some deviations caused by outside influences. His greatest ability is
in characterization, and he is skilled in contrasting opposite types so that the characters become clearer. In his later works, he does this to a greater extent and more artistically, but even in his earliest attempts, he creates an impressive story around his characters. These works lack a certain polish which he acquired later; nevertheless, from the beginning their superiority is apparent. Their appeal to the Mexican people is found in their general theme—the criticism of the local cacique, of the hascedado class, and of the government official.

The first of these novels is María Luisa, whose story of the life of an interne and the girl who loved him is patterned on one of the sketches of Impresiones de un estudiante. Perhaps this novel deals less with his general theme than the succeeding ones, for he gives very little argument against his country's politics, but it begins his portrayal of Mexican life. The characters are not the peons but the poorer class of the town.

The story is built around the life of María Luisa, the beautiful young daughter of a boarding house keeper. This novel deals with some of Azuela's own experiences and with types with whom he came in contact during his own internship. In the novel he gives us a history of the origins of the story and why he came to write the novel. He admits that in structure it is quite different from his later works, for he says, "María Luisa detesta a Los de abajo. Y por
The setting for the most part is in the pensión of doña Cuca, a widow who supports her family by keeping this boarding house for young medical students. Here they meet to talk of their work, of their social life, or of politics, and in this group Azuela finds the opportunity to contrast the various characters. Doña Cuca, the easy-going, gay mother of María Luisa, has a sister, Juana, who is her exact opposite. Pancho, the student whom María Luisa loves, is heartless, grasping, and rather radical when contrasted with the average medical student, who is either conservative or liberal. Often Pancho loses by this contrast, but he is the one who gets what he wants.

His characterization of María Luisa is the outstanding element in the story. In his discussion at the end of the novel, Azuela tells something of the girl who was the original María Luisa. This same passage can be used to describe the girl in the story, for he says:

¿Quién era María Luisa? ¿Cuál su verdadero nombre? El estudiante nunca lo supo. Muchacha de dieciséis años, ojos negros de dulzura desgarradora, boca pequeña y plegada en una mueca de gracia—el último refugio de una coquetería que se extingue--, pobre guíñapo humano en un pobísimo camastro de hospital. Allí se detuvo el

1Azuela, María Luisa, p. 153
maestro a dar la clínica. "La querida de X", dijo algo
gulen en voz baja. X era uno de los compañeros; cínico
sin corazón que ahora fingía desconocer a su víctima
abandonada a todas las miserias."

Because of her love for Pancho, María Luisa decided to
go away with him. He did not realize how great her love was,
and his whole character is portrayed in this line: "La quería
suya, sin compromisos, sin dificultades para el por-
venir." She promised to go with him, and although she had
decided to leave when they reached the room he had rented,
she returned later that night. After that, María Luisa was
not permitted to return home, and she lost all contact with
her former life. She stayed alone in the house while Pancho
was at the hospital, where he spent most of his time among
his friends.

Pancho soon tired of her and stayed away from their
home more and more. He often saw Ester, the sweetheart of
one of the other internes, and later he discovered that he
had fallen in love with her. He finally abandoned María
Luisa completely. Since she could not return to her home,
she was forced to earn her living as best she could with the
people among whom she now lived. Her unhappy state and lack
of care made her a victim of tuberculosis. About three years
after her separation from Pancho, she had to enter a charity
clinic for medical care. She learned from one of the inter-
ernes that Pancho Ramírez was there, and she asked him to

\[\text{\textsuperscript{2}}\text{Ibid., p. 158}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{3}}\text{Ibid., p. 16}\]
tell her former lover that María Luisa, an old friend, was there. The interne forgot the message, and when Pancho entered the room to examine the patient, he did not even look at her; he merely pronounced her dead. Thus the tragic note which is a part of so much Spanish literature is also typical of Azuela from the beginning. The forceful wording and his ability to stir his reader are also characteristic even of the least polished of his works.

The European influence is clearly seen in this novel. The author himself acknowledges that he was greatly affected by various French romanticists, for he says:

"Pido perdón por mi atrevimiento a Alfredo de Musset, Alejandro Dumas, Murger: mi humilde María Luisa fue hermana carnal de Mimi Finnón, de Margarita Gautier, de Museta; hermana bastarda, pero de todos modos hermana."

Azuela's next work shows a definite advancement, both in thought and style. In Los fracasados he gives his first satirical picture of politics and religion, while using his birthplace, Lagos, as the setting for the story of a small town. He especially criticizes the judicial system he found in this town, and the graft and politics involved in the decisions of the court. Azuela knew these people personally in Lagos, and he directed his writing against them and the hypocrisy of society. The hacienda owner and his family also cannot escape attention in this novel that deals with all classes. It presents a full picture of Mexican life.

Ibid., p. 160
during the years of Díaz's power, told in a manner that is both interesting and clear. Since Azuela was still being influenced by the European writers, his style lacked that complexity which made his later novels more vague and harder to comprehend.

The character sketches in Los fracasados are above the average. Each person is clearly presented and each is representative of his type. This representation is not carried to a grotesque extreme; rather, each might easily have been a real person, living in Lagos instead of in the Alamos of the story. Even the minor characters are important in their roles, and they are described with clearness and accuracy.

The young lawyer, Reséndez, is the protagonist, although the depiction of him is not always as good as is that of some of the less important characters. He was a liberal who had left Mexico City because of the dishonesty connected with the whole government. He decided that he could do better work in a small city like Alamos, where he could avoid politics. With the hope and ambition of a young lawyer, he believed he was going to a place where there was freedom from Díaz's influence.

The best characterization depicts the Jefe Político of Alamos, the man who made all the decisions of the town, and who usually was paid and backed by some of the aristocracy. In him Azuela typifies all the grasping, evil politicians of that day, and one can almost feel as if the author hated him personally. From the very first, when Reséndez is speaking
of the man who will be over him, the reader feels this scorn for the cacique. Reséndez had heard the name and was asking himself who the man was:

--¿Quién será mi superior? --pensó. --Su nombre no me es extraño; si no recuerdo mal, fue, ha poco, comandante de la Policía en Guadalajara. Debo conocerlo. ¡Algun soldado brutal, seguramente! ¡Qué se va a hacer! ¡Para cosechar hay que verter antes el sudor en el polvo!\(^5\)

Too, the jefe was often the instrument of some politician even higher than he was. It was the local official’s duty to collect the town's money and to send it on to the cities. One evening in a tertulia, don Agapito, one of Alamos' most important citizens, spoke of this:

--La verdad es que maldito de lo que el gobier-no nos ha servido, que cuanto se ha hecho en este suelo, ha salido de nuestros bolsillos y nada más que de los nuestros. Y ahí tiene usted a nuestro señor Jefe Político haciendo el papel más desmenturado de la tierra, para comprometerlo a uno, cuota para la mejora N, cuota para el monumento H. A usted se sacan los cinco pesos, a otro los diez o los veinte, al que tiene hacienda, una corridita de toros gratis, y la cantera para el monumento y la cal para el mercado y el demonio. ¡El demonio!: he dicho bien. ¿Y todo para qué? Para que luego los desvengonzados aduladores, en discursos y periódicos, se lo agradecan todo a nuestro beneme-rito gobierno, que lo único que sabe hacer es cargar-nos de gabelas para que los de la capital tengan agua abundante, calles asfaltadas, drenaje, buenos sueldos y el demonio. ¡Ay, amigo; como decía madame Rolland: "¡libertad, libertad, cuántos crímenes se cometen en tu nombre!"\(^6\)

The history of the family of Agapito Amezcua is that of the family living on any large hacienda. He is the powerful ruler of his home and of half the officials of

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\(^5\) Azuela, Los fracasados, p. 9

\(^6\) Ibid., pp. 57-58
Alamos, the man whose opinion is listened to and heeded, for fear that he will ruin the person who ignores him. His wife and daughters are the self-centered, hypocritical, aristocratic women who are thoughtless in their attempts to get what they want. Of this society, there is only one who is worthy: the illegitimate daughter, Consuelo, whom Agapito brought to the hacienda for his wife to rear. She is the only intelligent and good member of the household. For this, of course, she is hated by her half-sisters.

Reséndez's arrival in Alamos went almost unnoticed except by some of the men who worked with him. Soon, however, he was invited to attend a celebration at don Agapito's home, and there he met all the aristocracy of the town. That night he fell in love with Consuelo, but he refused to admit it even to himself. He made inquiries and learned that she had been educated in Mexico City to be a teacher and had returned with liberal views, much to the disgust of the family. Soon the two realized their mutual love and began to see each other frequently.

When Reséndez asked one of the clerks in the office what Consuelo's story was, he learned that after padre Martínez, her godfather, had first come to Alamos, there had been a story about his relations with a young dancing girl, Chole. However, don Agapito said that it was he, not the priest, who had been seen at the door of the girl's dressing room. About three years later, Agapito confessed that he had a daughter who had been left with some poor
women in a nearby town. The priest insisted that it was Agapito's duty to bring the girl to his home and rear her with his other children. He himself talked with doña Recareda and obtained her consent for the girl to come to the hacienda. However, she was never able to bear the girl's presence willingly and was jealous of her beauty and intelligence. When the situation had become almost unbearable, Father Martínez had insisted to don Agapito that, as godfather, he should be allowed to pay for the girl's education.

The knowledge of her birth made no difference to Reséndez, and he continued seeing the girl. This and her friendship with the priest made the Amezcua family even more determined to force her from their home. Doña Recareda went with several complaints about her to the priest and said that she intended to tell the evil girl to leave. Martínez insisted that only Agapito could do this, and made her even more angry. Later, she forbade his coming to the house to see Consuelo except at regular visiting hours when the whole family would be present. When Consuelo was telling Reséndez of this, he related the story he had heard of her birth. From the things she heard, she realized that the priest, her real father, had only let Agapito believe she was the latter's daughter for her sake. In that way, she would be accorded all the privileges of an Amezcua.

Meanwhile, Reséndez had found some papers in the government office which proved that most of the high officials were dishonest and which also involved don Agapito. He had
written to some friends in Mexico and had been advised to reveal the documents. He took the papers to some of the officials, but no one seemed willing to help him. After an uprising in the town among the liberals and the Catholics, Reséndez was wounded seriously and taken to the home of a doctor who had befriended him. When he recovered, he learned that Consuelo and Father Martínez had fled to Mexico City. He decided to follow them because: "Si se había gastado la mitad de la vida en buscar algo imposible, la Justicia; bien podía gastarse la otra mitad en buscar algo posible, el hogar." 7

The old question of state versus the church is one of the major problems of this novel. The liberals who wanted to abolish Catholicism and to do away with the Díaz followers struggled against the landed gentry who defended the old system which, for a little money, allowed them to run their affairs as they pleased. The hypocrisy of the local politicians, who were always rather vague about their own ideas and championed whatever cause could help them, is seen in the following passage, which describes the Juez de Letras:

Dijo, y se hizo silencio solemne. ¡La voz del oráculo alamense! Sus palabras eran siempre las últimas; su parecer, definitivo. Obeso, pachorrudo, pausado en el hablar, pesado en todo, católico y liberal, según las circunstancias se lo iban exigiendo, tenía como lema la adaptación al medio. Al que hoy adulaba servilmente, si mañana no le reportaba utilidad alguna, lo detrataba con cinismo admirable. Dueño de una firme reputación de sabio, su ascendiente

7Ibid., p. 249
poderoso en todos los círculos sociales había puesto en sus manos el juego de la politiquilla local de donde sacaba lo suficiente para llenar la tripa, siendo su misero sueldo de empleado público de los que dejan apenas para mal comer y peor vestir.  

Not only the government officials, but also many of the other citizens of Alamos divided their loyalties between the church and the state. Doctor Niza was a professed liberal who talked against the priests and the church in all of the tertulias; yet he attended mass regularly every Sunday. This was true of nearly all the Amezcuas. Doña Recareda was very opposed to liberalism, defended Catholicism, and tried to seem very pious; however, she was always the first to condemn the clergy. Even the priests themselves did not escape Azuela's criticism, for he showed their hypocrisy also. The disgust with which the people viewed the clergy is seen in Dr. Niza's speech when he heard that a new priest was coming to Alamos:

---Magnífico! ---prosiguió ya de su cuanta el doctor Niza---; si el Cura Cabezudo le trae alguna verdad nueva a esta humanidad cansada de promesas y mentiras, si viene a ofrecernos siquiera un átomo de felicidad o algo más que fementidas esperanzas, que hable y que se munda en escombros las creencias caducas, que se abo- que en su propia desvergüenza esta sociedad hipócrita; pero si nos viene con la candidez de darme una monja; veinte siglos de ensayos y fracasos, entonces que se le encierre en un manicomio o se le separe del ejercicio de su profesión, por peligroso para las manos analfabe- tas.  

Through Reséndez, Azuela makes his first attack on the courts of Mexico. The lack of justice and intelligence on
the part of the judges, the part money played in their decisions, and the futility of the peon's pleas in court, are all revealed in his picture of the court scenes. One of the most pathetic of these was the case of an old man who had come to ask mercy for his son who had been beaten by don Agapito's overseer. However, instead of getting justice, he merely aroused the hilarity of the court. After witnessing this scene, Reséndez said:

--Cuando lo vi alejarse en medio de dos gendarmes con su mirada apagada de tristeza y la frente caída, sentí que algo me quería ahogar. ¡Creía en la Justicia! Tenía fe seguramente en las autoridades. ¡Pobre viejo!

--Y éste es el aprendizaje que aprovecho en estos vergeles de candor mantuano. ¡Esta es la justicia que yo debo impartir también! ¿Y los Maestros inmaculados? ¿Y la enseñanza de las aulas? ¿Los intocables principios del derecho, del deber, de la moral? ... ¡Sepulcros blanqueados!10

Through his experiences in Alamos, Reséndez realized that he could not find justice, no matter where he went in Mexico. He saw that superior intelligence did not gain prosperity—rather, intrigue and dishonesty were the quick ways to fortune. The disillusionment which enfolds him at the end of the novel is symbolical and almost prophetic of what was to happen to Mexico later. It is also typical of the almost cynical outlook Azuela often takes.

Life on the hacienda is best seen in Mala yerba, for the setting is on the large estate of the Andrades family. The tyranny and the cowardice of the hacendados are contrasted with the servitude and humility of the peons. In a

10 Ibid., p. 84
style less European, he tells of the haughty landed class who are only encouraged in their oppression of others by the protection of the law. Again, his characters are "types" and represent a median of Mexican life.

*Mala yerba* is one of the best of Azuela's works, and probably it is excelled only by *Los de abajo*. The style is almost equal to that of the latter novel, and there is very little of the foreign influence which curbed the freedom of writing in his first works. His true feelings for the long-suffering peons are more apparent than in the earlier novels, and he is less restrained about expressing them. His usual note of pessimism is even more prevalent in *Mala yerba* than in the others, for there seems to be little hope for the laborers on the *hacienda*; they are doomed to live under the rule of the *amo*. The novel almost serves as an introduction to his works on the Revolution. When asked about the novel, Azuela replied:

---*Mala yerba*, ambiente de Lagos? No sólo de Lagos, sino de todas las poblaciones de su categoría. Fui médico municipal y este empleo permitióme indagar en los delitos de los hacendados. ¡Quedé espantado del número de causas! Un terrateniente mata a un peón con el menor pretexto, o sin él. Durante el porfirismo, porque las cosas hoy son distintas, ¡qué de crímenes!  

The characterizations are also among his best. Marcela, the beautiful daughter of the *jefe* of the servants, is the central figure of the story. Her beauty gives her a certain assurance and arrogance which are unusual in a person of her

---Azuela, *Los de abajo*, pp. xvi-xvii
station; yet she has a natural humility which is a part of her inheritance. The struggle between these contrasting characteristics leaves her uncertain as to her position in society.

In Julián Andrade, Azuela puts all the hated characteristics of the amo of the large estate. His had been a noble Spanish family, and his ancestors had been daring adventurers when they came to Mexico, but few of their good qualities were to be found in the present master of San Pedro de Gallinas. He was arrogant, overbearing, and sometimes brutal in the treatment of his peons. He was rather effeminate in appearance and in actions. One day after he had killed one of the vaqueros out of jealousy, one of the servants described him—and all others like him—in the following manner:

—De valientes tenían para los abuelos de mis amo, los que de allá de las Españas, del otro lado del mar, vinieron a este reino. ¡Valientes! De veras que sí: ni quien se los niegue, ni quien se los quite. De éstos, de los de hoy en día, nada tengo que decirles; ustedes los conocen, ustedes los están viendo. ¿Cuándo uno de estos mancubitos ha peleado pecho a pecho y sin chicana? No, eso nunca lo verán sus ojos. ¡Kilos! cortarle la cara a una mujer, clarearle el estómago a sus queridas. ¡A los hombres! Cañarlos como a las liebres. No miento, señores, no miento. Aístá mi ahijado, aístá la muestra con este pobrecito muchacho. Porque, sí, señores, el tal Julián lo ha muerto. Mi ahijado estaba platicando sanamente con mi hija; el don Julián escondido entre los jaquales; y todo fue un decir Jesús: el tiro que suena y el muchacho que cae redondo. ¿Esos es ser valiente? raza de asesinos . . . raza de bandidos . . . Pero no lo murman, lo heredan.12

12Azuela, Mala yerba, pp. 30-31
To the *hacendado* it was only fitting to kill a servant who knew too much, or one who would make other people laugh at the *dueño*.

The servants are portrayed as the usual peons who lived by the word of the master, not trying to think for themselves and afraid to express whatever they might have wanted to say. For the most part, they were dissatisfied with the position they had, but they were unable to improve it. The only one who talked against the way they were treated was *señor* Pablo, Marcela's grandfather. By seniority, he was the chief of the peons; because of his age, he took the privilege of saying what he thought, without fear of Julián. His age made him almost useless as a worker, and his superstitious ideas often tired his master, but he could keep peace among the workers and his word was law with them. He is one of the most interesting types of the book, for he is portrayed with sincerity and almost with affection.

Julián was in love with Marcela and was jealous of her relations with any of the boys of her own class. However, Marcela in her independence would not allow him to rule her private life, and she had a sweetheart, Jesús Rodríguez, among the *vaqueros*. One evening after the work was done, Julián saw Marcela walking toward the river and followed her. He overtook her and tried to kiss her, but Jesús, who had been waiting for Marcela, saw them and knocked his master down. He tried to escape but Julián went after him, and in his blind fury he shot the boy. An investigation of
the death brought Pablo and Marcela to the village to testify. Pablo, who had witnessed the killing, told that the two had quarreled over his granddaughter, and the shooting had followed. Marcela had been prepared to confirm the story, but at that moment Julián appeared in court, and Marcela found it impossible to testify against the amo. She denied the entire tale of her grandfather, saying he was too old, blind and deaf to know what had happened. Julián thought that Marcela had done this because she loved him, and that night he went to Pablo’s house. When he tried to force her to leave with him, he learned that she hated him more than ever and would not go. He drew a knife with the intention of killing her, but did not have the courage to do it. He left the house furious because of the humiliation a peon had caused him.

After this, Marcela flirted with Gertrudis, another of the vaqueros, and later with a "Mister John" who had come to the hacienda to buy horses. Her acceptance of the American infuriated both Julián and Gertrudis, but when "Mister John" went to the city, Marcela went with him. She stayed with him only a few days and soon sent Gertrudis a note, begging that he come for her. When he reached the city, Gertrudis found her dressed and painted like the other girls of the streets, but she promised that she would return with him.

They lived in peace near the hacienda until one day when a saloon girl joked about Marcela’s spurning of an
Andrade. Julián was again furious and planned Gertrudis’s death. This time Marcela did go to testify against him and also said that he had killed Jesús. Believing that the patrón de una hacienda was safe from the law, Julián was surprised to learn that he might be indicted. That night he went to the hut and killed Marcela in order to protect himself. The following day, when the court secretary identified the girl as the one who had come to testify against Julián, he was rebuked by the judge for trying to involve an Andrade in murder. The judge refused to recognize any of the evidence and allowed Julián to go free.

This last scene, more than any other, shows the privileges accorded the hacendado. He not only felt it was his prerogative to kill the peons, he also felt free to kill them without any special reason. Rather than being punished by the law, he was encouraged by the judges, who would never accuse him. The final court scene of Mala yerba clearly shows that they believed that the amo’s reputation and good name were worth more than the life of a servant girl. Of course, the judge did not protect the rich merely for friendship; he also realized that much of his power had its source in the wealthy hacendados who could ruin him. He, like the peons, was afraid of the master. When Julián was being tried for the first time, Azuela also showed the assurance the hacendado had of going free:

Pensaba sobre Marcela el poder tremendo de la arrogante raza de violadores a quienes jamás ninguna de
sus víctimas entregó a la justicia. Machos hercúleos que con su brutalidad misma llevaban el encanto de su belleza y vigor físicos; atractivos incomparables y supremos y deleites de las hembras. No veía Marcela ya el producto degenerado, y enfermizo, al último retoño podrido, sino al amo omnipotente que se adueña de la mujer que se le antoja sin la más leve resistencia.  

Azuela usually spoke in good terms of the woman's place in Mexican life. Often he pictured her as being the equal of the man of the haciendado class. In later novels, she was the independent office worker. However, in Mala yerba he portrays her rather differently, showing that the woman of the hacienda was rather insignificant and below her husband in station. He describes Julián's mother as being a victim of great abuse and goes on to say:

Como es de regla en gentes de esta ralea, las mujeres no tenían voz ni voto en su propia casa; su misión era la de contemplar atónitas la grandez de sus terribles señores, estar prontas a adivinarlos sus menores pensamientos y a servirles de rodillas si ellos así lo pedían.

Azuela's usual note of sadness is also apparent in Mala yerba. This is one of his early attacks on the Díaz regime, and in it he tries to show all the evils of the hacienda system. At the same time, he shows the suffering of the peon. However, in the scene in which Jesús Rodríguez was killed and, later, when he was being buried, Azuela made a prophecy that this would not go on, that it must end. The people were beginning to sing the sad funeral song as they

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13 Ibid., p. 54
14 Ibid., p. 103
marched along. Azuela was touched with the thought that it was more than the death of an individual man and remarked:

Partió la fúnebre procesión por el campo real y de pronto rompióse el imponente silencio de los campos de nuevo con el "Alabado", aquel canto que brotaba de los varoniles pechos con desgarradora melancolía y tristeza sobrenatural. Dijérase el canto de muerte no de un hombre, sino de una raza entera, enferma de siglos de humillación y de amargura.  

In Sin amor, Azuela seems to have lost his enthusiasm for the Revolution, and except in a few instances he does not mention any of its phases. Contrary to his usual habit, he hardly refers to the peone but turns his attention to the middle class—the one which he has largely ignored previously. The individualism which was beginning to be apparent in Hable yerra is again dimmed in the effort to write in the style of the European authors. Except for some satire concerning the hypocrisy and immorality of the middle class, there is little more to the novel than the story itself.

Again he employs the technique of contrasting characters, but even in this, he falls below his usual standard. Whereas, in some places the characterization is vague and unfinished, in others he overdraws the types which he wants to describe. This is especially true of Ana María Romero, the protagonist of the story. She is the beautiful but poor girl whose mother aspires to marry her to Ramón Torralba, son of one of the town's wealthiest families. Ana

15 Ibid., p. 36
Maria's mother was successful in her attempts to educate her to want riches above all else, and the girl came to see wealth as the only means to happiness. The acquisition of money made her one of the aristocracy whom she had envied so much, and in becoming one of them, she also assumed all their false pride and arrogance. She was contrasted with Julia Ponce, a member of one of the old aristocratic families who had lost most of their money. However, the latter had gained a sense of values worth more than wealth.

The men of the story are neither strong nor well done. Ramón Torralba was weak, rather egotistical, and proud of his family's place in the town's society. He was the man who believed that his money gave him natural rights—the type that Azuela disliked in any society. He accepted the homage of the poorer ones as just payment for any favors he might show them. Hardly in contrast, but still very different, was Enrique Ponce, Julia's cousin. His family had also lost practically everything it owned, but he had soon learned the slight value of material wealth, and he had realized how superficial their social group had been.

Lidia, Ana Maria's mother, had wanted her to marry Ramón in order to become the señora of the Torralba home and fortune. She had used what money she had saved to send her daughter to the private school which the Torralbas and their friends attended. Later, she had even managed to send her to Mexico City with them. Ana Maria's beauty and
intelligence made the girls accept her, and after Ramón began to pay her special attention, she became one of them. However, one night at a dance Ramón, having had too much to drink, had openly insulted her because of her background. For a while, she refused his apologies, but one night she consented to marry him. Enrique Ponce, who had hoped to win Ana María's favors that same evening, turned to Julia.

Later, Julia was in danger of losing the last of the property left to her. When one of the men learned this, he realized that with a few thousand pesos she could save many more. He asked the men at the cantina to give her a collection which would help her. Some of the poorer ones gave what they could, but such men as Ramón Torralba, who could afford to contribute, gave only a few pesos each. These men were supposed to be Julia's true friends, but they found excuses to keep their money. This event is narrated in such a way that it shows the thoughtlessness of this middle class and conveys all the disdain Azuela had for them.

Soon after the marriage of Ana María and Ramón, Julia consented to marry Enrique, a lieutenant in the army, and to go to Mexico City with him. When she went to tell Ana María good-bye, Julia told her that the lack of money would not bother her, for she loved Enrique. Ana María confessed that she did not love Ramón, but that his wealth compensated for that lack, and that she would not be happy without his money.
Still, Ana María had not been truly accepted by Ramón's mother. Their family had not always been important and the prestige which they had gained had made them doubly conscious of their position. Doña Longoria did not believe that Ana María was worthy of the Torralba name. However, she was finally accepted after a son was born. Ana María began to understand their attitude of pride and their belief that a Torralba could do no wrong. She was pleased and flattered by the attention of the poorer people and began to demand it of them. Her vanity became greater to the extent that she came to ignore Julia and Enrique, who were her close friends. They had returned for a visit, but she was jealous of their happiness and ashamed of her earlier confession to Julia. Ana María believed that by marrying Ramón she had succeeded in obtaining all that she desired, and she had adjusted herself so that she wanted to think she was truly happy.

Azuela does not often write of education in Mexico, but in this novel he portrays Escolástica Pérez, who had a private school for girls, and through her he expresses some of his ideas. Escolástica herself had not been wealthy, but her long association with the rich had given her their disdain for the common people. One day they were discussing Ana María and wondering if she should be admitted to the school. In her speech, Azuela shows all the inconsideration and snobbery of their system, for Escolástica says:
Las muy ilustres y distinguidas damas en cuyas manos ha puesto la aristocracia de esta ciudad el cuidado de la educación de sus hijas, la misión altísima de velar por los principios intangibles que han de regir en el plantel de "La Santa Escuela", tendrán la amabilidad de atender a que éste, al parecer incidente sin importancia, es de la mayor trascendencia, ya que está estrechamente vinculado con el sostenimiento que debemos al prestigio de nuestra casa, sobre las bases de los beneméritos fundadores de ella. No deben olvidar ustedes que "La Santa Escuela" fue fundada y se mantiene con la mira en que en ella se eduquen sin impuros contactos las niñas de elevado linaje. La solicitante es una niña de origen ignorado, de familia oscura, de la clase plebeya seguramente, y que, el admisión sería echar por tierra el principio inspirado de esta fundación.

¿Qué mirada irónica o acusadora habría sorprendido a Escolástica Pérez en lo más brillante de su peroración? Se ha puesto roja como un clavel, recordando su humildísimo origen y reacciona saludablemente al instante. Protesta con energía, si a sus palabras quiere dárselas un sentido que no tienen. Ella jamás ha intentado atacar la instrucción de las masas. ¡Oh, el analfabetismo de nuestro pueblo! Y habla del progreso, del estado deplorable de la clase baja y de los horrores de la escuela sin Dios. Y se mete en un berejinal del que no puede salir en muchos minutos largos y fastidiosos. Acaba al fin: "Por último, distinguidas señoras y señoritas, tengo que agregar que no debemos dejarnos invadir por el contagio de las nefandas ideas de este siglo, virus mortífero que está intoxicando a las sociedades modernas. Cuanto sacrificio hagamos por alisar de estas corrientes corruptas, será poco en relación con el inenarrable bien que hayamos de conservar, ese legado de nuestros mayores que es nuestro más rico patrimonio: sus gloriosas tradiciones, la pureza de nuestras costumbres y la integridad de nuestras creencias."

Although there is little mention of the Revolution in *Sin amor*, Azuela discusses Porfirio Díaz. One of the characters said that the Revolution would not progress very far because Díaz had given employment to all the bandits, and without them there could be no Revolution. They believed,

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16Azuela, *Sin amor*, pp. 24-25
however, that in place of internal strife, Díaz would tie Mexico to the Yankees. They said that Mexico had always been for foreigners and would always be that way. Therefore, they could not have peace even if they stopped the fighting at home. In this, Azuela also found an opportunity to criticize the United States and her efforts to interfere in Mexican affairs.

After Sin amor, Azuela wrote two novels which connected this early period with the revolutionary period of his writings: Los caciques and Andrés Pérez, maderista. The former reverts to the story of the cacique, or local political boss, who seizes control of a small town. Here, there is a hint of the true revolutionary spirit, which is more fully developed later. The people of Mexico were just beginning to realize the significance of the Revolution to them and the necessity of revolt. They became aware of the blindness with which they had followed the orders of the cacique—whether politician or hacendado. Madero was a recognized leader who could help them rid Mexico of this tyranny, and they turned to him with the hope that he would save them.

The humble servant whose every move is dependent on the master’s word is Juan Viñas, a storekeeper who had worked for don Ignacio del Llano for many years, whose every opinion was based on the ideas of the Llanos and whose every move was directed by their orders. He faithfully believed that they were looking out for his welfare and that they were honest men. He was also loyal to the church and did
his duty to it. With this, he believed that he was living
as good a life as one could expect. However, Juan's life
was a little better than the average peon's, and his intel-
ligence was a little higher. He was among the first to
recognize Madero's cause, and he had been wise enough to
save up some money during his years with the Llanos. How-
ever, he realized to some extent the unfairness of the creed
by which they lived, for one day when he was talking to him-
self, he said:

--Debo de ser un financiero detestable. Tengo
veinticinco años de servir, yo que odio la servidumbre.
En veinticinco años, he criticado con saña sangrienta
cada proyecto de mis patronos; he reído con hondo pla-
cer de la estupidez de mis jefes y sus congéneres. Y
he aquí que mientras ellos siguen enriqueciéndose más y
más, sólo de canas me he enriquecido yo. Seguramente
que esta mi lógica de que tanto me envanezco, no es sino
el colmo de lo ilógico . . .17

The true Mexican patriot is portrayed in Rodríguez,
whose thinking was rather advanced for the average revolu-
tionist. Being a newspaper man, he was able to comprehend
a little more about the actual events than most of the peo-
ple of the town. His fervor for the cause was absolute,
for he said, "O el sacrificio inútil de mi vida o la Revo-
lución"18; yet he was never so blind as to overlook its
faults. He could stand up in political gatherings to de-
fend the poor against the tyranny of local bossism and the
evils of Díaz, but he would also admit that the Revolution

---Azuela, Los caciques, p. 109

---bid., p. 159
might fail because the poor were not capable of governing themselves. They had been suppressed under the rule of the cacique so long that they did not have the initiative and leadership necessary to establish a government. He also realized their other faults, for he said, "¡Pobrecillos! . . . de ser tan ruines, tan intrigantes y tan malévolos como los de arriba, son un poco más imbéciles!" 19

Throughout the novel the cacique is condemned, and his role in Mexican society is explained clearly. As Juan Viñas explained it to his family, a great deal of their trouble lay in their not knowing enough about the cacique. They were too ignorant to realize what was happening to them; however, even Juan was not able to tell them much, for he could only say they were very evil.

Juan had saved just enough from the earnings of his twenty-five years of work to leave his family in comfort. Since everything he undertook was done at the advice of the Llanos, he confided in them about his money and was ready to invest it in any way that they might suggest. When they told him to put it into the building of a tenement, he began plans immediately. He soon realized that such a project would take much more money than he had, and he accepted a loan from the Llanos with a mortgage on his small store. When he again exhausted his funds, he was unable to get a loan from any of the other caciques, and he could not repay

19 Ibid., pp. 144-145
his debt. The Llanos foreclosed and took his store, La Sultana, away from him.

Meanwhile, Rodríguez had realized the schemes of the caciques, and there was continual quarreling between them. One night they decided that he should be killed by their hirelings so that he wouldn't stir the poor people into action. However, Esperanza, his sweetheart and Juan's daughter, learned of the plan and warned Rodríguez. He was careful henceforth to avoid the political meetings and did not antagonize the caciques until one important meeting when he said the politicians had brought the poor people only sadness and suffering. Later, he was killed, but not before filling Esperanza and Juanito, her brother, with his hatred of the despotic bosses.

Juan Viñas and his family had been forced to move to a small hut, and the two children found work in a store. Even with his realization of the avarice and dishonesty of the Llanos, Juan did not condemn the caciques as Rodríguez had. However, before his death he admitted that they were causing the evils which were ruining Mexico. Not long after he had died, the maderistas came and Esperanza and Juanito were able to get enough oil to set fire to the house of the hated caciques.

The faith which the people had in Madero at the beginning of the Revolution is seen in the way these people accepted him. Juan said that the caciques called the revolutionists bandits, but that Francisco Madero was to end the
day of the caciques just as Benito Juárez had ended that of the priests. Later, he was again compared to other saviours: "Cristo, Redentor del mundo; Hidalgo, redentor de la raza; Juárez, redentor de las conciencias; Madero, redentor de los pobres, de los humildes . . ." Some of the people sincerely believed that he had come to deliver them from the rule of the rich and found in him a leader to take the place of the bosses who had led them previously.

The last novel of the period, Andrés Pérez, maderista, is the first real story of the Revolution. It is rather inferior in style and organization, and the story is not very important as such, but he does follow the development of the Revolution in a small town. The way some people blindly followed the cause, the organization of the revolutionary bands in towns, the sudden promotions of officers, and the hopelessness of the movement because of all these things, are revealed by Azuela. Such idealists as Madero could not continue to lead the bands; they were forced to give way to the shrewder opportunists who were quick to see that they could gain control of the uneducated revolutionary fighters.

There is less characterization in this novel than in any of his previous works, and the persons who do appear are not clearly drawn. The author spends very little time describing them, and the book suffers because of this. Such

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men as Andrés Pérez, Toño Reyes, and don Octavio present a general picture of the maderistas, but they do not seem to represent specific types, such as the cacique, hacendado and peon of the other novels. The contrast in the ways that they happened to join the Revolution is the best element in the novel, for they show three opposing views of the Revolution.

A disagreement with his editor had caused Andrés Pérez to leave the newspaper to go to the hacienda of Antonio Reyes, a boyhood friend. A notice was sent that he was to be arrested as a maderista. Andrés realized that this was a retaliatory act of his former employer, and he was uncertain about what he should do. Toño talked with the judge, and through his power in the town, he was able to free Andrés, with the promise that he would keep him on the hacienda. The word soon spread that a maderista was there, and Andrés did everything he could to stop the talk, for he was afraid he would be associated with a cause that was soon to fail. However, the peons were very respectful to him, and he learned that even Toño Reyes was sympathetic with the men who were preparing to revolt. Still, he was cautious about what he said in order not to involve himself too much.

The revolutionists of the town did not realize that Andrés was not sincerely a maderista, and they chose him as their leader. One night there was a small uprising, and all the people connected with the Revolution were imprisoned
--Andrés among them. He was visited by María, Toño's wife, who promised that he would soon be freed. Later, don Octavio asked that Andrés be allowed to go with him for a few hours. Andrés confessed to him that he had no interest in the revolt, and he asked don Octavio's help. The latter informed him of his unfortunate mistake, for he himself was a true maderista.

In the meantime, Toño and the other leaders of the town had organized a group to free the prisoners, and one night they led a revolt against the guards. They were unsuccessful in their attempt, and the following day Andrés learned that Toño had been killed. For the first time, he realized that Toño had been sincere in his talk of a revolution and that the affair was more than local. When another effort was made to free them, he realized it would be successful, and he led the other prisoners forward with cries of, "¡Viva Madero!" For his leadership and courage, he was made a colonel, and he really joined the maderistas—with only occasional pangs of conscience for the dead Toño who had fallen so bravely for what he really believed was right.

The story seems to end rather weakly, and the reader is left with doubts as to whether Andrés would ever be seriously interested in the revolution—unless he was certain that it would succeed. There is a feeling of scorn for his weakness and lack of conviction. Although there is sympathy for Toño, there is also a little disgust at his lack of intelligence, and his death seems almost unnecessary.
Don Octavio is merely another of the opportunists who appear wherever there is an uprising. He is shrewd enough to join the winning side, but also to leave them when they begin to lose.

The whole theme of the story can be found in a line which Andrés used when talking to don Octavio: "Es ley de la vida que el fuerte devore al débil y se nutra de él. Eso fue y será..." This was the code by which they both lived, and they both intended to be with the strong, no matter who the latter might be. The theme is again picked up in a later novel, Las moscas, which more fully describes the same type.

Both Madero and Díaz are criticized for their weaknesses in what they were doing for the Mexican people. The former was also praised, but the opposers of the Revolution declared that he was poisoning the masses with promises that he could not fulfill. Although Azuela worked for the Revolution, he realized Madero's failings and expressed his doubts through these men. For Díaz, he felt nothing but hatred and bitterness. Antonio expressed this as he was talking to don Cucú about Díaz:

"El nombre es lo de menos. El partido es el mismo: descendiente legítimo de los encomenderos enriquecidos con el sudor y la sangre del indio, el de los congregados de la Profesa, el mismo que hizo un trono para Iturbide y otro para Maximiliano. Ese partido que ahora no cree en Dios porque Dios ya no le sirve de nada; pero que si mañana lo necesita irá a

21 Azuela, Andrés Pérez, maderista, p. 90
One of the best discussions of the novel was between don Octavio and Andrés when the former was telling why he was a maderista. He said that it was a revolution for justice, and he wanted to bring it to Mexico. Azuela expresses the two sides of the problem by giving the opinions of the two men. Don Octavio realized that they might not secure justice for centuries, but he wanted to have a part in the movement toward it. Andrés was too much of a realist to look forward, and he was not interested in anything that would not have immediate and tangible results. Later in this same conversation, they were talking about criminals and their connection with justice, when they saw a sparrowhawk with a pigeon in his claws. At a shout from Andrés, the larger bird dropped his prey, which Andrés caught in his hand. Then he asked don Octavio:

—Explíqueme esto, don Octavio. ¿Ese gavilán es criminal? Esa torcaca que hace unos momentos estaba devorando gusanitos vivos sería también criminal? Andrés, who did not let the ideals of the Revolution influence his logic, reasoned that the maderista could also be as cruel and evil as the federalists.

This novel was the culmination of his criticism of the Díaz regime. Throughout this period he had outlined the

\[22\text{Ibid.}, \text{ pp. 57-58}\]
\[23\text{Ibid.}, \text{ p. 94}\]
causes of the Revolution and portrayed Mexico in one of her darkest periods of autocracy. He defended the lower classes without becoming so idealistic as to be unreal, and he showed the suffering which had become so intense and unbearable that something had to come to the aid of the peons. Mexico had come to another period in her history when her people again had to fight in order to progress. The actual fighting was to be portrayed as brilliantly in his later novels.
CHAPTER III

REVOLUTIONARY NOVELS

Azuela's greatest literary achievements are to be found in his three novels which deal principally with the actual period of the revolutionary fighting. They were published between 1915 and 1918, and the material was gathered, for the most part, during the three or four years immediately preceding their composition and publication. The incidents related are not those of a disinterested spectator, but those which the author himself experienced, for Azuela served as an army doctor in the forces of Julián Medina, rebel chief of Jalisco. He was with Villa's troops as they were trying to expel Huerta from the capital, as they fled northward, and as they were fighting the combined forces of Carranza and Obregón.

There appears at this time in his writing a fervor which surpasses the tone of his earlier and even his later novels, possibly because they were written at a time when all of Mexico was feeling political and social strife, and when the memories of his relations with the soldiers were still vivid. He was educated sufficiently to understand many of the problems of the Revolution, so far as such problems were to be understood, but still he was a man of the
people who underwent their sensations and reactions. He was sensitive to Mexico's political metamorphosis in much the same way the peon was, yet he understood that there were those who were fighting for the "ideals" of democracy, equality and freedom, those opportunists who were fighting for political reasons and found the Revolution a timely means to the acquisition of power, those who were fighting for the love of bloodshed and adventure, and lastly, those who belonged to this lower class who had no other choice than to join the fighting with little other hope or expectation than that they might return later to their homes--not asking for any gain but merely that their homes and families be there as they were.

It is without too much pessimism or resignation that Azuela portrays these people, for he is like them in that he pictures the Revolution as it is to him, not as he wants it to be. He does not paint it as a glorious uprising against tyranny, nor does he rage against it as unnecessary and bloodthirsty; he merely accepts it. There is an undercurrent tone of pride for his people--he is a loyal Mexican, and his satire, even ridicule, of some persons or situations does not detract from this loyalty.

His ideas are best unfolded in Los de abajo, The Underdogs, whose very title suggests its theme. He was in exile in the United States when he compiled the notes which he had taken during his years with the army, and in 1915 he published the story as a serial in an El Paso newspaper.
The chief interest in this first publication was shown by his personal friends, who were alarmed by the fact that he had sold the book to the editors of El Paso del Norte, a paper edited by carrancistas and subsidized by Carranza authorities. Other than this, there was little notice taken of the book; however, even the concern of his friends was never very great, for the carrancistas accepted the book with praise, a fact which Azuela explained by saying, "Es la verdad."¹ This lack of interest continued until 1924, when Azuela rose in fame as a true novelist and Los de abajo became known as the only novel of the Revolution. Even today in Mexico it is not always accepted as his best work, but generally, there and abroad, it is recognized as being superior to anything else he has written.

His literary style is best in Los de abajo, for he uses his words and phrasing to direct the emotions of the reader almost as much as he does the narrative element. Thus he subtly shows more about the character and disposition of these "underdogs", and too, by presenting them in this manner, he avoids the possibility of being extreme in picturing martyrs caught in the tide of political events. He shows the failings and imperfections they had before the Revolution, while at the same time he says the Revolution has made thieves of them all. In this, there seems to be a touch of pessimism, for the peon's humble role in society

¹Azuela, Los de abajo, p. xx
is accepted as inevitable, but in this way he also avoids sympathizing with or condemning them too greatly.

Demetrio Macias, a leader of a small band of revolutionary forces, is the central character through whom Azuela reveals many of his ideas. By following the activities of this jefe, Azuela shows in the very action itself the misery and hopelessness of these "underdogs." The story opens with the rather insignificant killing of el Palomo, Demetrio's dog, by the three federals; yet with this feeling of sadness he introduces the mood of the entire book.

The federal soldiers had come to his hut in search of shelter and food, and while waiting for his wife to prepare it, they learned they were in the land of the famed Demetrio Macias. The scorn which Azuela holds for these men is seen when Demetrio returned home, and they begged him for mercy. He allowed them to go, with the explanation to his wife that their hour had not struck yet, and he sent her and their small child to the home of his father, and went himself to the hills to join his men. After several hours of walking, he looked back down into the canyon to see that his home was burning—undoubtedly the work of the soldiers whom he had released. Throughout the novel there is that touch of pathos which arouses sympathy for the rebels and scorn for the federals.

Realizing that capture would mean certain death, Demetrio and his men were soon forced to make a stand against the soldiers who were now following them. This first
skirmish was a victory for the small band, but any feeling of triumph was blackened by the manner in which the federals had killed their captives. The sight of "los compañeros perdidos, pendientes de los brazos de un mezquite . . . con el cuello flácido, los brazos pendientes, rígidas las piernas, suavemente mecidos por el viento . . ."² was startling yet inspiring to them. The memory of these companions made the Revolution more personal and gave them a desire to kill.

The appearance of Luis Cervantes, the "thinker" who had joined the Revolution because of the ideals involved, was a fortunate one, for Demetrio had been wounded during the fight, and Luis could help him. It is probable that had he not been a curista, a man of intellectual speech and city habits would never have been allowed to remain. He went on with the band, but he was never to be understood, because the contrast in his background with that of the uneducated peons caused a chasm which neither side could cross.

Demetrio's subsequent victories made him first a colonel, then a general in the forces of Carranza and Villa. During this time various women joined the band as camp followers, and in Camila and La Pintada, Azuela portrays his two chief types of the revolutionary woman. Camila is the peon daughter, victim of fate, who is thrown in with the forces in much the same way the men were; there was simply

²Ibid., p. 11
nothing else for her to do. She certainly was not innocent, yet she could not be held entirely responsible for her position. On the other hand, there is La Pintada, the fiery cantine girl who is appropriately called the "painted one." During his association with these two women, the fighting, pillaging and the love-making, Demetrio sometimes found it almost impossible to remember the faces of his wife and son. This is not portrayed as a weakness in his character, but only as another characteristic of the revolutionary period.

Their victory, as were all the victories of this time, was short-lived, for Carranza and Villa split forces, giving the federals an opportunity to take advantage of the resulting confusion. Various defeats followed, and Cervantes, now disillusioned somewhat and less enthusiastic about the glorious cause of the Revolution, went to El Paso to become a doctor. It was not that he admitted defeat for the cause; he merely ignored the turn taken and went on to new accomplishments, following the recently acquired habit of looking out for himself. Demetrio and his men were beaten back to Durango, the very place where their march of triumph had begun. He was at home only a short time before he left again to join his men. His wife was distressed to learn that he was returning to the forces and had a premonition that tragedy would befall him. In answer to her question of why they must still fight, Azuela explains the force of the Revolution:
Demetrio, las cejas muy juntas, toma distraído una piedrecita y la arroja al fondo del cañón. Se mantiene pensativo viendo el desfiladero, y dice:

"Mira esa piedra cómo ya no se para..."\(^3\)

The next day Demetrio was killed in the same canyon where his first victory occurred. He lay there with his eyes fixed on the sight of the gun which he had aimed at the federals.

Fate had brought Demetrio into the Revolution in much the same way that she kept him there. The best portrayal of the futility in the lives of these men is in the explanation of why each man was there. Each one had his own particular reason, which, when contrasted with the subtle irony of Azuela's picture of Cervantes's idealism, presents the peon's role in the fight.

Since Demetrio was made chief of the revolutionary forces and his is the main characterization of the novel, his attitude would be the most important. His reason is best explained in his own words as he was talking to Cervantes soon after the latter had joined them:

"¿De veras quiere irse con nosotros, curro?... Usted es de otra madera, y la verdad, no entiendo cómo pueda gustarle esta vida. ¿Qué cree, que uno anda aquí por su puro gusto?... Cierto, ¿a qué negarlo? a uno le cuadra el ruido; pero no sólo es eso... Siéntese, curro, siéntese para contarse. ¿Sabe por qué me levanté?... Mire, antes de la revolución tenía yo hasta mi tierra volteada para sembrar, y si no hubiera sido por el choque con don Mónico, el cacique de Moyanza, a estas horas andaría yo con mucha prisa, preparando la yunta para las siembras..."

\(^3\)Ibid., p. 121
Bueno, ¿qué pasó con don Mónico? ¡Faceto! muchísimo menos que con los otros. ¡Ni siquiera vió correr el gallo! ... Una escupida en las barbas por entremetido, y pare usted de contar ... Pues por eso ha habido para que me eche encima a la federación. Usted ha de saber del chisme ése de México, donde mataron al señor Medero y a otro, a un tal Félix o Felipe Díaz, ¿qué sé yo! ... Bueno, pues el dicho don Mónico fue en persona a Zacatecas a traer escolta para que me agarra. Que disque yo era maderista y que me iba a levantar. Fue como no faltan amigos, hubo quien me lo avisara a tiempo, y cuando los federales vinieron a Limón, yo ya me había poleado. Después vino mi compadre Anastasio, que hizo una muerte, y luego Pancracio, la Cordobes y muchos amigos y conocidos. Después se nos han ido juntando más, y ya se ve: hacemos la lucha como podemos.

A discussion followed in which Cervantes wanted to know why Demetrio did not join Natera's near-by forces, insisting that otherwise he would receive only a "thank you" for his services and an order that he return to his home.

Demetrio answered that he wanted only to be left in peace so that he might return to his family. However, Cervantes continued arguing that Demetrio should demand more of the people who had brought him there:

--Como decía --prosiguió Luis Cervantes--, se acaba la revolución, y se acabó todo. ¡Lástima de tanta vida segada, de tantas viudas y huérfanos, de tanta sangre vertida! Todo, ¿para qué? Para que unos cuantos bribones se enriquezcan y todo quede igual o peor que antes. Usted es desprendido y dice: "Yo no ambiciono más que volver a mi tierra." Pero, ¿es de justicia privar a su mujer y a sus hijos de la fortuna que la Divina Providencia le pone ahora en sus manos? ¿Será justo abandonar a la Patria en esos momentos solemnes en que va a necesitar de toda la abnegación de sus hijos los humildes para que la salven, para que no la dejen caer de nuevo, en manos de sus eternos detentadores y verdugos, los caciques ... ? ¡No hay que olvidarse de lo

\[4\text{Ibid.}, \text{pp. 35-37}\]
más sagrado que existe en el mundo para el hombre: la familia y la patria

This idealism of Cervantes's is seen in more than one place. Through him Azuela characterizes the semi-educated opportunist who sincerely believes that he knows why the Revolution is being fought. He failed to understand the passiveness and resignation of Demetrio and his men, to acknowledge that much of it was the result of the blood-thirstiness of some few leaders, and to admit that the ideals to which he aspired were impracticable and impossible for Mexico. He continued the above argument with Demetrio by saying:

--Mi jefe . . ., usted me ha simpatizado desde que lo conocí, y lo quiero cada vez más, porque sé todo lo que vale. Permítame que sea enteramente franco. Usted no comprende todavía su verdadera, su alta y nobilísima misión. Usted, hombre modesto y sin ambiciones, no quiere ver el importantísimo papel que le toca en esta revolución. Mentira que usted ande por aquí por don Mónico, el cacique; usted se ha levantado contra el caciquismo que asola toda la nación. Somos elementos de un gran movimiento de nuestra patria. Somos instrumentos del destino para la reivindicación de los sagrados derechos del pueblo. No peleamos por derrocar a un asesino miserable, sino contra la tiranía misma. Eso es lo que se llama luchar por principios; tener ideales. Por ellas luchan Villa, Natera, Carranza; por ellas estamos luchando nosotros.

On the other hand, there are the other men of Demetrio's band who aid in the contrast among the various factions. Like Demetrio, they are there only because they were forced to fight in self-defense, and not for the

\[5\text{Ibid.}, \, p. \, 38\]

\[6\text{Ibid.}, \, pp. \, 38-39\]
achievement of republican principles. They know only that they will be captured by the hired killers of the cacique if his orders are not obeyed, so they have no other choice than to fight. La Gordeniz exclaimed that he had no reason for fighting, that he was not a soldier and never would be, and that he needed nothing; he had his land and his ten pairs of oxen. No fiery zeal had caused him to join the rebels; he had stolen a watch and several rings and was forced to leave. Here again, the peons were at a disadvantage: they who knew nothing of the art of warfare were thrown against trained fighters. True, in the hills around their homes they were favored by a thorough knowledge of the terrain, and their simple protective weapons were more effective than those of the federals. However, when they were trying to hold towns, the soldiers were an unequal match, and few of the revolutionary leaders were successful in holding any of the larger cities.

As for Venancio, another of the laborers, he was there because he had poisoned his sweetheart. There is also Anastasio, who, like la Gordeniz, was satisfied with his life as it was. The only difference in the story of each is the particular crime which had forced him to find refuge with the army. In explaining this to Cervantes, Anastasio used much the same argument the others had:

---A usted le hace falta la bulla de su tierra. Bien se echa de ver que es de zapato pintado y moñita en la camisa . . . Mire, curro: aí donde me ve aquí, todo mugriento y desgarrado, no soy lo que parece . . .
¿A que no me lo cree? . . . Yo no tengo necesidad; soy dueño de diez yuntas de bueyes . . . ¡De veras! . . .
Al que lo diga mi compadre Demetrio . . . Tengo mis diez fanegas de siembra . . . ¿A que no me lo cree? . . .
Mire, curro; a mí me cuadra mucho repeler a los federales, y por eso me tienen mala voluntad. La última vez, hace ocho meses ya (los mismos que tengo de andar aquí), le metí un navajazo a un capitánito facetio (Dios me guarde), aquí, merito del ombú. . . . Pero, de veras, yo no tengo necesidad . . . Ando aquí por eso . . . Y por darle la mano a mi compadre Demetrio.7

After hearing their stories, Cervantes talked to Solís about his companions and about his own views of the revolution. When questioned as to whether he might be tired of the fighting, Solís said that it was possible, because, "Yo pensé una florida pradera al remate de un camino . . . Y me encontré un pantano."8 He continued to explain this possibility of disillusionment, because everything in the revolution had failed:

"Amigo mío: hay hechos y hay hombres que no son sino pura hiel . . . Y esa nieve va cayendo gota a gota en el alma y todo lo amarga, todo lo envenena. Enthusiasmo, esperanzas, ideales, alegrías . . ., ¡nada! Luego no le queda más, o se convierte usted en un bandido igual a ellos, o desaparece de la escena, escondiéndose tras las murallas de un egoísmo impenetrable y feroz.

These deeds and gestures made the grotesque and horrifying mask of a race—of a lost race. Yet he continued in the Revolution because: "La revolución es el huracán y el hombre que se entrega a ella no es ya el hombre, es la miserable hoja seca arrebatada por el vendaval . . ."9

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7 Ibid., p. 33
8 Ibid., p. 55
9 Ibid., p. 55
10 Ibid., p. 55
Cervantes's enthusiasm for "la santa causa de los desventurados" at first remained very great. He believed he had joined them to fight for the poor slaves whose tears turned into gold for the caciques, and he insisted that their reason for being there was to improve their status. He knew that they were often called bandits who had grouped together in order to satisfy their thirst for blood, but for some time, he ignored this. However, after he had lived among them and talked with them, he began to realize that they were incapable of having ideals such as his were and therefore would not achieve them. It was this realization which caused Cervantes to begin talking less of principles and to see the Revolution as a means to profit for himself. He still believed that the revolutionists would be successful, and he reasoned that: "revolucionarios, bandidos o como quisiera llamárseles, ellos iban a derrocar al Gobierno; el mañana les pertenecía; había que estar, pues, con ellos, sólo con ellos."\(^{11}\) And Cervantes, the idealist who scorned the opportunism of los de arriba, truly believed that the tomorrow of Mexico belonged to the revolutionists, and he had every intention of being on the winning side when they did gain control of the government. Thus, while still outwardly defending his former beliefs, he had turned to the business of looking out for his own good. There is satire in his story, for when he learned

\(^{11}\text{Ibid.},\ p.\ 24\)
that Villa and Carranza were dividing and would then fight each other, he turned all his efforts toward becoming a doctor in the United States.

The fact that Cervantes was always finding idealistic aims for the Revolution, or searching for realistic wealth from it, was always to be a barrier between his reasoning and Demetrio's, for the latter asked nothing for himself. After Cervantes had changed his views, he was never able to comprehend the revolutionist's lack of interest in demanding gold of the leaders, who were becoming millionaires. He was one of the many who saw in Villa a hero of the people who robbed the rich to give to the poor, and he wanted Demetrio to get his share of the loot. Even in his idealism, he was too realistic to believe that the peon who had earned sixteen centavos a day wanted no more than that. He could, however, understand the pillaging and sacking of captured towns. He still insisted that robbing was bad for their cause, but that was no longer his true conviction, as he joined them in their plundering. Once when Demetrio faced Luis with the fact that he had taken two diamonds, the latter explained that this was an investment, for there was no way of predicting what might happen, and they needed to provide for the future.

The cruelty of these men is also portrayed, for Azuela follows their lives as they are fighting. Their desire to kill becomes greater rather than less, and their pleasure in seeing others suffer increases likewise. Camila is an
exception to this sadism and occasionally shows signs of pity. However, the men are subject to this barbarity, and even Demetrio cannot suppress his savage impulses at times, and the "eye for an eye" policy of the Revolution is best seen when he returned to Durango to burn the home of Don Mónico in payment for the latter's injustice to him. This is one of the minor incidents, though, for there are many other examples of the cruelty of these people, especially of their desire to shed blood.

Like the theme of "I stole," that of "I killed" was a recurring one in the conversation of the revolutionists. They needed no excuse for murder; they had a gun and it was to be used. Azuela shows this in the talk of several of the men as they were sitting idly in an inn:

--Yo en Torreón, maté a una vieja que no quiso venderme un plato de enchiladas. No cumplí mi antojo, pero síquiera descansé.
--Yo maté a un tendajero en el Parral porque me metió en un cambio dos billetes de Huerta --dijo otro de estrellita, mostrando en sus dedos negros y callosos, piedras de luces reflejantes.
--Yo en Chihuahua, maté a un tío porque me lo topaba siempre en la misma hora, cuando yo iba a almorzar . . . ¡Me chocaba mucho! . . . ¿Qué quieren ustedes! . . .
--¡Hum! . . . Yo maté . . .

The theme was inexhaustible.

The men often searched for the means that would make their victims suffer most. This was especially true of Margarito, who would not kill one prisoner because he enjoyed torturing him. He put his gun against the man,

\[11\textit{Ibid.}, pp. 69-70\]
cocked it, then decided to wait a while, so that the man lived in constant fear of death. Such actions were the result of impulse rather than reason, and one knew no other law than that of self-protection. When angered, they did not hesitate to kill, and it was in just such a situation that Demetrio murdered a man who had lied to them. By the rules of warfare his action was justifiable, but the way in which Azuela relates it brings out the element of the cruelty of the indígena trained in savagery by the Spanish themselves, for he says:

El viejo levanta su cara de indígena llena de arrugas sin una cana. Demetrio reconoce al que la vispera los engañó.

En un gesto de pavor, Luis Cervantes vuelve bruscamente el rostro. La lámina de acero tropieza con las costillas, que hacen "crac, crac," y el viejo cae de espaldas con los brazos abiertos y los ojos espar- tados.

—¡A mi hermano, no! . . . ¡No lo maten, es mi hermano! —grita loco de terror el paisano que ve a Pancracio arrojarse sobre un federal.

Es tarde. Pancracio, de un tajo, le ha rebanado el cuello, y como de una fuente borbotan dos chorros escarlata.12

They fought on like this, for theirs was a revolution of ignorance and of brutality; they were never able to realize the ideals of which Cervantes spoke. And certainly it was not political, because Demetrio admitted he knew nothing of voting for a provisional president, nor did he understand "these politics." When the two main factions split, he told Natera that he did not know which side to

12 Ibid., p. 52
join, that since he had been a general, he had merely fol-
lowed the orders Matera had given him. Cervantes insisted
that they were fighting for freedom, but these men seemed
born to serve and to obey; their ability to lead had been
too oppressed for them to be called upon suddenly to think
for themselves.

Still, in all this recklessness and sorrow, there were
times when these fighters were much more pensive and phi-
osophical. Azuela tells about these in language that is
almost poetical, and he shows deep feeling for these peo-
ple. As a contrast with the brutality with which he often
endowed them, he shows them in these scenes with other
calmer and more tender emotions. The best example of this
is in Solís, who was able to understand and talk with Cer-
vantes. One evening while watching the smoke from the
gunfire, they were talking about the Revolution:

Y sobre el caserío risueño se alzaba una alquería
de esbeltas columnas y las torres y cúpulas de las
iglesias.

--¡Qué hermosa es la Revolución, aun en su misma
barbarie! --pronunció Solís conmovido. Luego en voz
baja con vaga melancolía:

--Lástima que lo que falta no sea igual. Hay que
esperar un poco. A que no hay combatientes, a que no
se oigan más disparos que los de las turbas entregadas
delas delicias del saqueo; a que nuestra raza, conden-
sada en dos palabras: ¡robar, matar! ... ¡Qué chasco,
amigo mío, si los que venimos a ofrecer todo nuestro
entusiasmo, nuestra misma especie! ... ¡Pueblo sin
ideales, pueblo de tiranos! ... ¿Lástima de san-
gre.13

13 Ibid., pp. 63-64
At this same time Solís, who was watching, thought that he could discover in those clouds of dust a symbol of the Revolution. In this Azuela almost gives a history and prediction of the Revolution with a note of resignation, but not one of disgust nor of resentment. These "underdogs" were schooled to accept fate as it came, and Azuela reveals much the same characteristic in himself by the manner in which he tells this story.

The second novel written about this period is *Las moscas*, which is the satirical story of the various revolutionary bands, and of the fickleness of the people who joined them. There is a little of this in *Los de abajo*, but in *Las moscas* Azuela makes it the central theme of the book. Neither in story nor in literary style does it equal the former novel, but there are certain character types portrayed that are excellently done.

In the keyes Telles family there is no single character who is strong. Marta, the mother, tries to keep the family together and is an easily excited woman who is rather shrewd in her attempts to become acquainted with the military leaders on the train. Matilde, Rubén and Rosita are the younger members of the family who carry out Marta's plans to meet the doctor, the general, and the important political figures. Rosita had been a stenographer in the *Secretaría de Gobierno* but is now turning all her attention to the doctor in charge of the train's dispensary.
He is another of those connected with the Revolution who have become pseudo-philosophers because they are in a position to see a little of the action.

There are many military and political figures: Villa, Huerta and Madero, both praised and scorned; General Malacaros, who promises to help the Reyes Telles; the ex-tailor who became a procurador de justicia; and don Sinforoso, who is shown as a typical official of the time:

. . . un señor gordo trasudando grasa del sombrero a los botines y que hasta parado romsa, es el director de una escuela oficial, "una auténtica maravilla en materia de interpretación de códices y jeroglíficos," asegura don Rodolfo. Dos chicas pispirotas, pintadas de albajalde y azarcon, le hacen compañía. Son las Auxiliares. Don Sinforoso, sujeto doblado de carnes, bigotes hirsutos, cara de bull dog, revólver y daga al cinto, presidente municipal del Tunicate.14

There is little other story than that of the progress of the train on which the family rides from one town to another. Azuela gives an amusing picture of the travel situation in Mexico at that time, when no one was sure where the next uprising would come. Children were continually getting lost, people would board the train with large packages and poultry, and everyone was trying to secure a place on the already too-full coaches. They, like the Reyes Telles, were attempting to attach themselves to the various political figures and to the doctors, for through them they could go into the Red Cross cars, where

14Azuela, Las moscas, p. 28
conditions were slightly better. Rosita and Matilde were able to make friends of General Malacaras and of the doctor, who helped them some. They succeeded in getting the money for boots for Rubén, in meeting some of the minor leaders, and in getting to ride in the general’s automobile.

As noted above, the greater part of the satire is based on the instability of the people in regard to their revolutionary loyalties. This was indicated by Marta as she was talking to one of the ministers:

—Viviamos en Guadalajara, entonces. Fuimos siempre fanáticos por el señor Madero.
—Como ahora lo somos por el señor Villa . . .
—Y de sus ilustres colaboradores.
—Matilde y Rubén, a porfia, completan pensamientos y frases.
—Por eso, señor Ministro, nos hemos unido al partido que representa la parte honrada, la parte sana, la parte noble de la revolución . . .
—Por eso hemos preferido, señor Ministro, las privaciones del hogar, las amarguras del exilio, las penalidades de la vida nómade, a servirles a los ladrones.
—Porque no merecen, señor Ministro, otro nombre que el de ladrones esos carrancistas malhadados. 15

As they are praising Villa and welcoming him, as indicated above, so did they earlier call him a dangerous man whose deeds were said to be worse than those of a chacal. They hailed him as the man who had not lost and who never could lose. He was the fourth Francisco of the prophecy: Francisco León de la Barra, Francisco I. Madero, Francisco Carbajal and Francisco Villa. He was to be

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15 Ibid., pp. 55-56
their saviour, the one leader who could unify Mexico as no other had done; with him the period of revolutionary strife was to end. When Villa stood on the platform of the train, the enthusiasm of the crowds was overwhelming; however, this was not to last, for they were easily swayed from one "ista" cause to another. This is explained by the view taken of the government officials, who are described as being more stupid than bad, and, as Azuela explains:

--Ellos quieren hacer gobierno solos y son como las piedras lanzadas a las alturas que no fueron hechas para piedras. Caerán irremisiblemente, y como nosotros representamos una fuerza incontañtable, la fuerza de la inercia, o caen en nuestras manos o se aniquilan en plena anarquía.16

The cruelty of the Revolution is brought out in Las moscas as in his other novels. The panic and devastation wrought by the División del Norte left the civilians in great fear of these soldiers who had changed from peons to terrorists overnight. They had soon become bandits, and the difference between a revolutionist and a bandit became a moot question. The doctor and the mayor were discussing this:

--Los pensadores preparan las revoluciones; los bandidos las realizan. Ahora nadie podrá asegurar, "este es revolucionario y éste bandido." Mañana será posible, fácil . . .
--Tan fácil como un juego de niños --interrumpe el Doctor.
--Un problema de aritmética. Supongamos que quiero conocer el valor real del héroe don Fulano de Tal a quien llamaremos X. Digo: X antes de la revolución igual a $000.00. X después de la revolución,

16Ibid., p. 25
igual a $100,000.00, verbigracia. Pero como X no ha podido llegar ni a la unidad siquiera sin tomársele a quien la tenga, despejando resultado: X, igual a bandido.\textsuperscript{17}

This theme is discussed repeatedly. At each town on the way they encountered this differing attitude, but predominantly they found a fear of these men who were always reported to be on the way. In each city there was the fear that the forces would next begin their plunder there, for they knew that the carrancistas were moving toward Mexico City. The train had been stopped the preceding night for fear of the revolutionists who had been attacking. The morning came clear and peaceful, and the people awoke with new hope—symbolical of the Mexico that was to have "un mañana" of peace and confidence. This note indicated the occasional optimism of Azuela; however, the final note of resignation with which he ends many of his works follows:

En el hábito tibio de la noche llega de allá muy lejos un rumor sordo y misterioso, un rumor solemne como la voz del mar: "¡México se ha salvado!"
Y en el horizonte, la luna enharinada y bizca ríe . . . ríe . . . .\textsuperscript{18}

The last novel of this period is Las tribulaciones de una familia decente, which deals with a slightly higher social class than the two previous books. These are the hacienda people who are not wealthy, yet who are above the

\textsuperscript{17}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 15
\textsuperscript{18}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 88
revolting peons. Through them Azuela gives another view of
the Revolution, with many of the same ideas, it is true,
but now as the opinions of this familia decente.

The theme is developed primarily through the contrast-
ing personalities of the characters. There are Agustina,
the mother, and Francisco José, the poet son, who are por-
trayed on the one hand as the seemingly realistic, yet
rather impractical members. On the other hand, there are
César, the younger son and narrator of the story, and Pro-
copio, the philosophical and steadfast head of the family.
Their opinions vary on all subjects, and this difference
is notable with regard to the Revolution. Agustina and
Francisco José try to be very sensible, but in doing so
they often overlook everything that is not pleasing to
them. Procopio is usually rather quiet, expresses his
thoughts only occasionally, and is almost invariably right.

The person who often served as a subject for argument
in the family is Pascual, husband of the older daughter,
Emma. After living in Mexico a short while, Pascual was
able to obtain a mediocre position in the government and
soon made himself an official. He is portrayed so cleverly
by Azuela that the reader is deceived about him, just as
the family was. Here again is the opportunist who thinks
of nothing except being an acknowledged member of the win-
ning side and whose only goal is money. He does not see
the Revolution as an attempt for reform. With the other
characters, he presents the conflict of the story.
The family had moved to Mexico City after leaving their home in Zacatecas for fear that the revolutionists would soon be there. In the smug way of the secure people, they could not imagine that the revolutionists would attack them, for they were the best people in the town: they paid higher wages, were kinder to their servants, and made them happy. Still, they knew that they were the "landed" gentry and not likely to escape the pillagers. They had come to Mexico City with little money, since most of their holdings were represented by their land, but they managed to exist until Pascual secured his position and could lend them money from time to time.

Their situation did not worry them, as they heard various rumors about the progress of the Revolution. Agustinita, especially, was certain that "mañana" they could return to Zacatecas; however, this was not true, and the rumors were never realized. Finally one day a faithful servant arrived with the news that the soldiers had come to the ranch, had eaten everything they wanted, had taken other things, had ruined the house, and had made revolutionary aides of the "happy and faithful" workers there. They turned to Pascual, the son-in-law, for help. He came to visit them, but brought news that the government had heard they were helping the Huerta government—Agustinita had let the leaders have some money, and they would lose their hacienda entirely. His solution was that Procopio should made a pre-dated bill of sale of the ranch to him to avoid
losing the home. It was not until after he had gone that they realized that he was the only one who could have notified the officials, and that he had deceived them in order to gain the ranch for himself.

Throughout the novel Azuela philosophizes on the Pascual type of official. The desire for gold and power became so great that men would deceive their own families for personal gain. He portrays the drunken carrancistas who rode about in fine automobiles with women de mal vivir.

Upon seeing them, Procopio remarked that the founders of the aristocracy of tomorrow were to be found in them. The various types of revolutionaries were compared to animals by Francisco José as he watched a parade:

--¡Esto excede a toda ponderación, César! Mira, el que viene acá a la derecha es el hombre-lobo, el que va por la acera de enfrente es el hombre-coyote y aquel que viene por la izquierda el hombre-cerdo.
--Admiro tu perspicacia; pero yo no he visto más que dos en uno solo: el hombre chacal a ratos, y a ratos el hombre-borracho.
--Nos falta el tipo más interesante, fíjate. Debe de ser todo arrogancia, bravura, nobleza . . . ¿me has comprendido? Nos falta el hombre-león.
--Temo mucho que esa especie haya desaparecido de nuestra fauna --respondió a espaldas nuestras Procopio.19

Again he tells of the cruelty which accompanied nearly every revolutionary move. César declared that their eyes had become accustomed to seeing the gun smoke, their ears were used to the sound of firing. While he was talking about this, he continued:

19Azuela, Las tribulaciones de una familia decente, pp. 51-52
They were not astonished at any of the acts of the soldiers and even realized that the Revolution had reached such a stage that those people killed for the pleasure of seeing the blood run. Even some of the best people could not escape the contagion and became thieves and murderers. The characters of Los de abajo are now seen from another view--one that is less favorable to them, yet not less real. This family saw the people who had worked for them and others whom they had known, and they could not believe these were the ones they had known on the hacienda. César saw men who had told him stories as they held him on their knees when he was a child, who were so kind and humble, and who now were capable of even the most atrocious deeds.

In this criticism of the lower class, the family defended the middle class to which they belonged--an element which is not to be found in the other novels of this period. At the same time, there is given a contrast of life in the small towns with that of Mexico City; they compared their situation in Zacatecas, where they had been important, respected people, to their place in Mexico City, where they were no more than “una pequeñísima gota de agua perdida en la inmensidad de los océanos.” Here they became

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20 Ibid., pp. 53-54
so poor that they turned their fury against the rich, and they began to defend the revolutionary cause, which had, in part, become theirs. However, they were not reconciled to its cruelties and were never fervent about its cause. Procopio compared it to a calvary by which all their sins were to be purged:

Este largo periodo de gobiernos revolucionarios y el mismo preconstitutional que nos aflige todavía han sido para nosotros un calvario doloroso por donde vamos ascendiendo sin tregua y purgando cien y mil veces no sólo nuestros pecados sino los de todas nuestras generaciones. 21

Through their situation as members of a new society Azuela describes a part of the social revolution in Mexico which accompanied the political one. Procopio, as was natural for the part he played, was the person who first realized that they were not living in the Mexico of former years. He began leaving the house every morning and returning late in the evening. Lulú, who was afraid that he might have trouble with Pascual, decided to follow him. This led to the discovery that he was working in the offices of a factory and was apparently happy in his new position. She, too, was determined to work and was appointed as her father's secretary. One day while there, Procopio was seriously hurt and had to be taken home. He confessed what he had been doing to the others of the family and told them he enjoyed it. Azuela here portrays the advancement of Mexican thought, for Procopio is an hacendado who has

21 Ibid., pp. 132-133
consented to work with men whom he had considered inferior to him, and in a position which he had previously considered unworthy. He had an entirely different philosophy of life, and he told Agustinita that in his new life he knew more about true happiness.

—Mira, la verdadera dicha es ésta, la de las pequeñas alegrías diarias, porque la otra, la Dicha que se escribe con mayúscula, esa no existe, es miraje, mentira funesta. Los elementos de felicidad los llaman dentro con absoluta equidad. Todo depende de poner en armonía nuestro mundo interior con el de afuera . . .

Thus in his books of the revolutionary period Azuela covered a wide scope—both in the passage of time and in social change. Mexico is presented by a true Mexican as he sees it, not in a way that is always kind, but in one that is sincere. At one time or another he scorns nearly every rank of her society; yet he also sympathizes with them when they deserve sympathy. His greatest interest lies with the peon, for he was and is the man with the greatest need. In later novels Azuela carries his theme on and shows the effects of the Revolution on these same types.

22 Ibid., pp. 284-285
CHAPTER IV

POST-REVOLUTIONARY NOVELS

Even after the actual fighting had almost stopped and the Constitution of 1917 had been signed, the people of Mexico did not consider the Revolution ended. There were many social repercussions, and many changes continued to take place in her society. At times, conditions were as bad, or even worse, than they had been before the Revolution—with one master changed for another. Therefore, there was still a great deal of material for the writer. Azuela's interest in his country did not falter, and although the style changes in succeeding novels, there is still a forceful portrayal of his people. He continues to deal with the same types that he depicted in Los de abajo, but in these novels he has the settings more often in small towns or cities, rather than among the hills or on the haciendas. The Revolution has become more social than political, but much of the action develops from the events and life of the revolutionary days. He continues his attacks on the caciques and political leaders, for the Revolution had done little to rid Mexico of these men; rather, the new politicians were sometimes worse than their predecessors. They found that the peon seemed doomed to servitude.
Azuela's technique remains the same in that he still employs a character around whom he builds the story. This becomes even more obvious, and it is interesting to note that an author from Mexico, where women's lives are rather sheltered, chooses a woman as his protagonist in most of the novels of this period. He makes a psychological study of their personalities and through them portrays post-revolutionary Mexico. He had followed the same plan somewhat in his earlier novels, but in a more general manner. The works of this period at times show a different Azuela.

He himself admits that for a time he followed the tridentismo movement of Maples Arce and later wrote in a style reminiscent of Emile Zola. He was probably influenced by other movements and authors, and he became more rule-conscious than he had been in the preceding years. This seems rather unfortunate, for during the preceding period there had been a naturalness which made his novels seem entirely Mexican. He had not been restrained by rules of writing nor of thought; he had pictured Mexico without the traces of artificiality which developed during this last period.

This new style makes him portray a certain sordidness which had not been present before; he pictures the misery and suffering of a post-revolutionary country, and he has a new attitude which shows more pessimism, accompanied by sarcasm and irony, than he had admitted before.
It is only just to realize that there had been much social change in Mexico which had probably affected him as much as had the literary trends. He had never closed his eyes to the defects and failures of the Revolution and certainly had not prophesied any great changes for Mexico's future, but there is little cause for wonder at his being more bitter in his criticism of the injustice of his country's social system.

As in his novels of the active revolutionary period, the experiences he relates in these later novels are often his own or those that he has seen firsthand. He served as a juror for almost a year and was able to see the suffering and innocence of many of the people brought into the Mexican courts. He saw the prejudice and the injustice which were demonstrated by the officials, the part that gold and bribery could play in the decisions of jurors and judges, and the utter futility which the poorer class often faced in its search for justice. This had been portrayed as one of the evils of pre-revolutionary Mexico in Mala yerba and others of the early novels, but it is again stressed as one of her greatest failures.

The first novel of this period is La Malhora, the story of a girl of that name. Azuela relates many incidents similar to those which he had known when he served as a juror. He reveals the corruption and lack of thoroughness in the police system, found even when the officers were dealing with a crime as serious as murder. In speaking
of this novel and its theme Englekirk attempts to summarize Azuela's purpose:

... and again he came into intimate contact with the tragic life of the poor, misunderstood and maligned by those who were best able to help them—the courts and the medical profession. In La Malhora Azuela condemns the cold objectivity of the former and the crass commercialism of the latter, and satirizes the smug morality of those who have never experienced economic want.¹

La Malhora, a young girl of fifteen, had become a dancer in a saloon, El Vacilón. After being thrown aside by her lover, Marcelo, she fell "a los brazos de todo el mundo" and drank constantly. She seemed incapable of redeeming herself and fell lower and lower in the social scale. One night while she was dancing, shots were heard, and La Malhora learned that her father had been killed. In the description of the investigation that followed, Azuela expresses his opinions of the policemen with considerable sarcasm. He condemns the "Yo no sé" policy of the people who are questioned about the crime. They all realized that anyone might be the murderer and were afraid to speak. The policemen were satisfied with that attitude and made no attempts to continue their search. "Hombres de experiencia, los agentes de seguridad se despiden por haber cumplido ya con su deber,"² Azuela says of them with scorn. La Malhora was certain that Marcelo had committed the crime, but she was indifferent until she learned that the man who had been killed was her father. She tried

¹Englekirk, editor, Los de abajo, p. xxvi
²Azuela, La Malhora, p. 19
to convince the police that she could identify the assassin, but they would not accept her word, since she had not spoken during the investigation. They dismissed her as a victim of marijuana or drunkenness, and left.

Soon after that occurrence, Marcelo and La Tapatía, his new novia, attempted to kill La Malhora and Epigmenio, the ex-suitor of La Tapatía. They succeeded in killing the latter, but La Malhora escaped with a serious wound. She was saved by a physician and went to Irapuato to live with three women who were lay associates of a conventual order. They continued the cure the doctor had begun, and also tried to save their charge spiritually. They began this task by changing her name from the unfavorable "La Malhora" to one with more religious association, "Altagracia." For five years they were successful in their attempts: Altagracia no longer drank pulque; she forgot the language of the cantinas; and she led a quiet and pious life. However, her former ties had been too strong, and she returned to her home to find work.

She became the nurse and housekeeper of an old soldier, in whose home lived also a sister who hated Altagracia from the beginning. She couldn't bear the antagonism of the latter and the attentions of the former very long and returned to the saloon. There she was received rather coolly and could not achieve her previous position among her friends. She was unhappy and ill at ease, without understanding why. Finally, she released her hatred
by killing La Tapatía, which "talló dos cristales que cor-
rigieron su astigmatismo mental."3 Her five years in
Irapuato had influenced her only enough to make her give
her rosary to La Tapatía to pray as she was dying.

Unlike his earlier practice, Azuela gives more impor-
tance to the action. Before, the story was only secondary,
while his philosophy was revealed in the thoughts and words
of the characters. Now, although there is still some of
this characteristic, he uses the situations and events to
a greater advantage. He shows through the changes in the
life of La Tapatía the changes that have come in Mexico.
Even though she was in love with Marcelo and had become
accustomed to the cantina life, she sometimes looked back
to the days when she had had fine sheets and clothes and
had known cleanliness and comfort. The owner of the saloon
said that she was a girl of the future, but she herself
was uncertain as to the happiness she would know.

Azuela carries the story of the Revolution on into
this period with the portrayal of the old soldier for whom
La Malhora worked. He had become a different person, a
degenerate without hope and without pleasure:

---Sí, soy yo con mi uniforme de brigadier ... pero no de los de ahora. Soy viejo soldado, servidor
de la República ... Volóe pa acá. Cruz del Dos de
Abril, medalla de la Carbonera ... condecoración del
Sítio de Querétaro ... ¡Un pobre diablo! ... Sí,
un viejo servidor de la República ... ¡esa era ma-
dera! ... Purita gente decente ... Se fue nuestro

3 Ibid., p. 77

—No tienes tú la culpa, muchacha, sino el gachupín imbécil que no supo hacer contigo lo que el yanqui con los pies rojas . . . ¡Bello país! ¡La gran nación! . . .

In this passage is revealed all the hopelessness of the revolution, of its results and effects. It, like the old soldier, had become little more than an object for pity, or sometimes to be forgotten.

There is also some criticism of the Catholic Church as it existed in Mexico in the years following the Revolution. Throughout his works there is a touch of sarcasm which he uses when speaking of the Church, but he finds an opportunity in La Malhora to condemn the clergy openly. For example, the doctor who took care of La Malhora after she had been shot was speaking of his ability as a physician. He said that he had been described as having rare surgical ability but with only mediocre intelligence. He justified himself by saying that he knew a priest who still said mass, although he had been lost to God for five years. This, with the description of the three religious women, and La Malhora's life with them, serves as a direct disapproval of the Church.

The second story of this period, El desquite, is rather inferior to the majority of Azuela's works. It is like La Malhora in being the tragic story of a woman, but here the

4Ibid., pp. 63-64
similarity almost comes to an end. Its faults are to be attributed to his adherence to astridentismo and the resulting entanglement of idea and of action. The continuity of the story is lost in this, and his philosophy and thought are obscure and involved.

The characters are less clearly drawn than are those of any other of his novels. Their personalities are not strong, and their parts in the unfolding of the plot are less important. Although the novel centers around Lupe López, even she is dimly drawn. It may be in accord with the mood of the book that the characters are so below his usual standard, because the whole story seems to be weak. However, even when trying to insert such a tone of inferiority on other occasions, Azuela usually depicted his characters more clearly.

These characters can, therefore, be described briefly. His characterization of Lupe, the pretty daughter of an ambitious mother, mamá Lenita, is perhaps the best of the book. Hers is the tragic role of a woman forced into a marriage that did not suit her. Whatever traces of stability and strength she might have had were soon eliminated by her situation in an unhappy household. Martín was a young law student with rather ambitious ideas and a promising future, but he, too, became a victim of the situation and ruined his life. Elas was the worst of the group. To him, his wealth gave him the privilege of doing whatever he pleased, and he followed this policy with little regard
for others. His half brother, Ricardo, was the son of la Huilota, profesional del pecado, and Blas's father. As a boy he is pictured as a fine and sensitive child, but as he grew older, his inheritance became stronger than his training, making of him a ruthless and self-centered man.

Lupe and Martin were in love and wanted to marry, but mamá Lenita pressed her daughter into marriage with the wealthy and important Blas. However, the mistake was soon evident, for the latter was a heavy drinker and an unsuitable match for Lupe. They soon took Ricardo to rear as their own child, and for a while this proved to be a consolation for Lupe. She spent her days trying to make the boy forget his Jewish mother, whom he closely resembled, and in training him for the life of a wealthy Mexican boy. He responded readily for some time; then his enthusiasm and love for her waned, and as he grew older, there developed a hatred between the two. During most of this time the story of her marriage was tragic: Blas's anger because she had no children, his infidelity, and Ricardo's later attempts to cause trouble between them so that he might gain control of Blas's money, all contributed to her unhappiness. Lupe was able to convince Blas that Ricardo's accusations were false by dramatically handing him a gun and telling him to kill her. After a decision to rid herself of Blas, Lupe encouraged his habit of drinking by joining in his festivities, and thereby hastened his death.
Ricardo, enraged at having lost a chance at the family money, tried to make it appear that Lupe had murdered Blas and caused her to be arrested. However, Martín, who had become a lawyer, successfully defended her, and Lupe was freed. Soon afterwards, Martín and Lupe married, and the latter believed that she had found a chance for happiness. She soon learned that Martín had married her only for the money she had inherited, and she became even more unhappy, carried on the habit of drinking begun with Blas, and soon died.

In this story there is also less connection with the Revolution than in his others. The only relation to it is the strife and the unhappiness seen. This is not particularly a result of the Revolution, for Mexico had known a great deal of this before that period. However, in his picturization of the social evolution of Mexico, he does show more of the life of the middle class, the lack of morals, and the situation of the women.

There is a touch of the modern trend of thought in Azuela's picture of Lupe's trial--something reminiscent of North American ideas. The judges had acquitted her, but one of the men was still worried:

--Los jueces absolvieron, sí, señor. Pero queda algo que ni con todo el oro del mundo se compra: la opinión pública.5

This hint of a society with new thoughts and ideas appears throughout this novel and others following it.

5Ibid., p. 135
There are signs of getting away from the influence of estridentismo in Azuela's next work, *La luciérnaga*. There is more of his former freedom of style, and he reverts to his favorite theme—the Revolution. His meaning is expressed more clearly, and he again lays the emphasis on characterization, rather than on story-telling. In period, the book would probably be placed before *La Malhora* and *El desquite* because it is more closely related to some of the events of the Revolution; however, it, too, is post-revolutionary and treats of a newer Mexico.

Azuela follows the pattern of *las tribulaciones de una familia decente* by showing a contrast between members of one family: this time between two brothers, Dionisio and José María. The former is the more adventurous one, with little financial or business judgment. In José María is seen the pre-revolutionary Mexican, the hacendado type who is afraid of the new era, who is a devout Catholic, and who is almost miserly in guarding his fortune. There is hardly one similar characteristic in these two brothers, for each almost reaches an opposite extreme; each is almost fanatical in his way of life. This is truer of José María, because he is more the introvert, spending a great deal of his time in self-analysis and self-justification. Dionisio, less an intense thinker, acts as he does out of impulse, carrying his impulsiveness to an extreme, to his own loss. It is only the steadying influence of his wife, Conchita, that saves him from immediate disaster.
This contrast begins in the very first chapter with Dionisio's decision to take his part of the family fortune and to go to Mexico City to live. He had decided that Mexico's future lay in her capital, and he intended to go there, even against José María's will. The latter believed that they should stay in Cieneguilla and live as their forefathers had. This difference of opinion was best expressed by Conchita as she was telling an acquaintance of their leaving:

--Pues, nosotros somos --dijo Conchita marcando el acento de los de Cieneguilla --de las familias más decentes de mi tierra. Dionisio iba a ser millonario; pero la revolución se lo llevó todo. José María quiere ser presidente del Ayuntamiento; pero don Felipe, el chueco, está hecho un veneno: es el tesorero municipal. Porque José María es muy religioso y de mucha conciencia, Dionisio tuvo un choque con José María. Cosas de herencia, ¿sabe? Y también por nuestra venida a México: "Es un pecado mortal, hermano, que lleves a esos inocentes a la boca del lobo. México es la perdición del género humano. ¡Qué aprender ni qué aprender. Más valen burritos en el cielo que sabios en el infierno! Viva la gallina, Dionisio, aunque viva con su pepita." Pero Dionisio dice que para educar a la familia, México y sólo México.6

Their attitude toward education shows clearly the contrast between Dionisio and José María, between the old idea and the new. While discussing his proposed trip, Dionisio recalled having asked his mother why he had to get up very early to pray, and José María, hearing, answered, "Para que se enseñe a no preguntar lo que no debe."7 The experience had been an embarrassing one for the sensitive boy, one he

6Azuela, La luciérnaga, p. 27
7Ibid., p. 16
had not forgotten. Now he wanted to know if the older brother intended to educate him in the way of their ancestors. He rebelled against this as having been outmoded, and he wanted his children to grow up in Mexico City, where the opportunities for people of their class were greater.

In Mexico City, Dionisio entered several businesses: as partner with a druggist, who borrowed most of his money and could not repay it; as owner of several taxis, which soon broke down completely; as driver of another taxi. The last enterprise failed when his car was struck by a train, and he was forced to flee, leaving the blame to another chauffeur. He spent all of his money and did not have an income. His discouragement and failures caused him to begin drinking and almost to desert his family for the saloon. In spite of Conchita's pleadings, the only responsibility he felt for his family was to give them a little money occasionally.

Meanwhile, in Cieneguilla, José María had become very ill. He had been dishonest in the division of the family fortune, and, being of a religious temperament, he kept feeling that he should send Dionisio's part of it to him. Every time he received a letter from Dionisio, he determined that he would send the money "mañana." When the priest heard this, he told José María that he should give the money to the church for charity, and when the government official learned he had the money, he advised José María to give it to the government. By this time, however,
the latter had become so grasping that he did not even
send it to Dionisio. He lived in constant fear of dying
with this on his mind, yet he did nothing.

It was because of José María's avarice that the peo-
ple began to believe that he had lost his mind, and they
gave him the nickname "don Chema Miseries." They saw
him only as an eccentric and greedy old man, whose ravings
they could not understand. They could not see into his
mind to see that the apparent insanity which enfolded him
was a matter of his own conscience. He questioned every-
one's actions and condemned all his acquaintances, while in
reality it was another form of self-condemnation. Finally,
realizing he was going to die soon, he made his will and
left half his fortune to Dionisio. At his death his con-
science was clear, for he had settled the debt to his
brother.

The receipt of this money gave Dionisio an opportunity
to start another enterprise, one that was successful. How-
ever, his affairs were already too far gone for this newly-
found wealth to help him. His daughter, Cristina, had
committed suicide after an attempt to support the family
for some time, and Sebastián, his oldest son, had tubercu-
losis and was seriously ill. Still, Dionisio spent all his
spare time in the saloons and went home only to give them
money. Conchita threatened that if Sebastián should die,
she and the other children would return to Cieneguilla.
This threat caused Dionisio to seek help, but he had been
too long in deciding to go for a specialist. He returned home one evening to find the family had left.

Conchita’s return caused a great deal of talk in Cieneguilla, and for some time the children were ignored by their schoolmates because of the boycott cristiano, which forbade their association with the children of such a family. This situation did not last very long, however, for a fight united the children into one family. They were finally reestablished in the town, and once more became a part of its life. Conchita had no news of Dionisio until she read a newspaper article one day which said that he had been injured seriously and was in a hospital. She immediately prepared to return to Mexico City to help him.

In this novel there is more about commercial affairs than in any other of Azuela’s works. This, of course, is due to Dionisio’s several attempts to make his fortune. Through Dionisio’s words, Azuela gives a satirical portrayal of Mexico’s financial affairs. One day Dionisio, rather drunk, was talking to himself:

—Sí, tienes razón en espantarte —le respondió el otro Dionisio, el Borrachín experimentado por todas las flaquezas y felonías de la vida—. Con sus cuatro cabezas, Ayuntamiento, Gobierno del Distrito, Timbre y Consejo Superior de Salubridad, y con sus novísimos procedimientos de fiscalización individual (Libertad, Igualdad, y Fraternidad, o Salud y Revolución Social; bandera tricolor o rojinegra), el Gobierno tiene su ordena de comerciantes, agricultores, mineros, petroleros, profesionistas, industriales y demás fuerzas vivas del país, y les imprime hasta la última gota en su tonel sin fondo que comienza en el remozado palacio de la República o “agencia de contribuciones.”

—Muy bien —respondió el Dionisio dueño de treinta mil pesos oro nacional—; de toda esa literatura saco
en limpio que si hay despojados hay despojos, o lo que es lo mismo, que en la cruel disyuntiva tendré que decidirme por el odioso papel del lobo. Yo sé bien que si en vez de haberme venido a México con un canasto de quesos en cada mano, entro con un fusil en las dos, a estas horas no sería precisamente el dueño de todo el algodón, de todo el arroz, de todo el garbanzo de México, por ejemplo; pero cuando menés si de alguna hacienda no despreciable. ¡Lástima que me falte el espiritu militar! Pero trasunto otros caminos buenos también. Dicen que en México sólo los políticos y los rateros están exentos de contribuciones. Y José María me dijo un día: "si quieres hacer dinero pronto, arri- mate a quienes lo sepan hacer pronto; hazte ladrón o métete al gobierno que es lo mismo."

The advancement of Mexico is also seen in this picture Azuela gives of her business world. He finds an opportunity to criticize the tax system and the laws of his country. Dionisio had opened a store, and tax collectors were constantly coming in for "licencia del Ayuntamiento, liciencia del Gobierno del Distrito, Boleta del Timbre, Tarjeta de Salud, Income Tax, etcétera, etc., etc." He was forever being fined for not having paid a tax which he did not know existed. Finally, in desperation, he wanted to know where he could learn about all of these taxes. He was told he could go to the biblioteca de tratados, where there was a record of all taxes. However, the law changed every week, and one would have to spend half his life there if he wanted to keep up with the many changes. Then, it was also necessary to keep in mind the various interpretations of the same law. Dionisio was fined for failure to pay one tax, so he paid a stranger to try to

8Ibid., pp. 130-131
arrange it for him. Later, he learned that this man had no authority. The lack of system and justice in their governmental affairs is seen throughout the novel. He criticizes los de arriba for their ideals of la Redención del Indio y la regeneración de la Raza, when they impose such taxes and laws that these people can have no hopes of bettering their situation. And in doing this, he criticizes also the eternal mordida of all officials. He reverts to his former note of resignation to the fact that the Revolution would not help the Indian; in these later books he shows that as yet it has not done much to aid him.

Regina Landa is another story of a Mexican woman—the most modern of all his characters. Although the general style of the novel is inferior to Azuela's usual standard, this one character is especially well done. At the same time he satirizes the life of the typical government official. He shows the graft and dishonesty which take place in these offices, the jealousy and pettiness of the workers, and the farce of the employees' life. Before, he has criticized this phase of Mexican life through the eyes of other classes; now, he turns his whole attention to a direct portrayal of them.

Regina, the daughter of an ex-general of the Revolution, was forced to earn her own living. She left her home to go to Mexico City, where the opportunities would be greater. She became a stenographer in a government
office, where she found a great contrast to the life she
had known. Regina made friends of some of the other em-
ployees, but still she was different from them in many
ways. This is shown in her talk with one of the officials:

--Estoy sola en el mundo.
--Más de lo que te imagenes. Fuiste educada en
un mundo que no es el de hoy y te sientes descentrada.
Te enseñaron a pensar. Y pensar es sufrir. En tu
casa nunca imperó más dogma que el respeto a las creen-
cias y opiniones de los demás. Tu padre impuso ese
credo. Tu madre era católica sincera, una de tus tías
padecía la chiladura teosófica y el otro era ateo e
iba a misa. Jamás en la familia hubo pugna alguna por
la diferencia de criterios. Te obligaron, por tanto,
a pensar con tu propia cabeza. Y esa es tu tragedia.

Le faltó agregar que Regina estaba sufriendo el
choque violento de dos épocas en su mente. El con-
traste de un ambiente cargado con el lastre de los sig-
glos y el alisbo de una nueva cultura que impone el
despliegue total de la personalidad. Si ella había
alcanzado el desenvolvimiento físico y mental, sin las
trabas que regularmente encuentran las jovencitas en
su formación, esto le significaba una ventaja espiri-
tual, pero al mismo tiempo la situaba en el borde de
un abismo donde podría aniquilarse.9

By portraying Regina in this manner, Azuela was able to
symbolize the union of the two Mexicos, for she was the
product of the new era.

After Regina had been in the office for some time,
she realized that her manner of thinking had changed, and
she had a new sense of values. She attributed this to the
atmosphere in which she worked. Brought up in a strict
Catholic home, she found her former beliefs in collision
with those of her new position, where she now breathed the
air of servitude, listened to the propaganda of atheism,

9Azuela, Regina Landa, p. 30
and to the talk about the complete relaxation of customs and manners. Her confusion is personal, but it is also universal. Azuela says that she believed that she still held to the Catholic faith and the ideals of her home, but that this passive belief was the result of inertia and laziness rather than an effort to arrive at positive conclusions. These were the qualities that made all of Mexico so slow in responding to the Revolution.

While in this office, Regina met many types of people, but three were the most outstanding: the feminine office worker, the weak official, and the man who held to the ideals of pre-revolutionary days. Ester Mendiola was the exact opposite of Regina in disposition as well as background; they complemented each other. Her family had been ruined by the Revolution; she had seen her father assassinated by Villa's men and her brother killed in defense of their home. The family had gone to Mexico City, where hunger and misery awaited them. She was the true child of the Revolution, with all the disillusionment caused by its failures. She had none of Regina's ideals; instead she tried to convert her friend to the "modern" way of thinking.

The two men whom Regina came to know well were Miguel Angel del Rio and de la Torre. They, like Ester and Regina, represented the two extremes of society. Miguel Angel was the typical government employee, the cynical inhabitant of modern Mexico. De la Torre, on the other hand,
was of Regina's class. He scorned the shallowness of the lives of Regina's acquaintances and tried to convince her that it was not for her. He tried to make her retain the customs of her earlier life, while Miguel Angel tried, with Ester, to persuade her to become one of them.

Soon after Regina went to the office, Miguel Angel recognized her superiority and asked her to be his private secretary. Regina accepted the position with some misgivings, since she realized that people would probably talk. Their relations were very impersonal at first; then he decided to aid her in choosing her clothes and to educate her to live in the society to which he was accustomed. He did it so gradually that Regina did not realize that she was changing and that she was doing all the things that she had criticized in the group with which she now associated. However, one day at a Communist function, she met de la Torre, whom she had not seen for some time and realized that she was not satisfied. Contributing to her dissatisfaction was the increasing familiarity of Miguel Angel, so she left the office.

For some time, Regina had wanted to have a business of her own, so she decided to open a bakery with the money she had saved. She was not very successful, but for the first time in several years she was happy. She lost all contact with her former friends and led a rather solitary life. One day she recognized de la Torre as he passed by the shop. Several days later, he returned and entered. They renewed
their friendship, and after a time, he asked Regina to marry him. They planned to establish the independent busi-
ness both had dreamed of.

The sham and pretense of the society of the would-be rich is nowhere better portrayed than in the actions of Miguel Angel and Ester. The former considered himself an accomplished critic of art, music, and conversation, while he knew little of any of them. He was the man of "fads" through whom Azuela could laugh at all the Miguel Angels in the world. He took Regina to many of the concerts, social gatherings and art exhibits, which were popular with the group he lead, and he attempted to interpret them to her. His ignorance, which he did not acknowledge, made him almost comical. He was the typical self-important official, a product of the Revolution, but not one of which it could be proud.

While still talking of Miguel Angel, Azuela finds an opportunity to view Mexican art—as far as it is concerned with the lower classes. His interest still lies with los de abajo, and he now shows how they are pictured by the artists. He seems to be bitter about the degeneration of the masses, and he criticizes the picture the artist has given to the world of the indígena mexicana. Azuela's com-
ments in this direction form one of his best passages:

---. . . el desprevenido dirá con razón que sufrí-
mos una epidemia de tétanos: no hay pintura ni foto-
grafia en estos dos últimos años en que nuestro indio
no aparezca con el cuello rígido, tensa la nuca a
reventar y petrificadas las líneas. Lo de siempre: un poeta llamó rosa a la mujer y un rebaño de imbéciles la sigue llamando rosa. Einstein con sus maravillosas fotografías, nos ha traído esta lamentable serie de calcas. Perdonemos a este joven pintor su debilidad ante la moda del instante, en gracia a las cualidades fundamentales de su obra ... aparte no importa qué sectorismo; nuestros pintores actuales realizan plenamente su intención: darnos el alma de la raza. Estas figuras deformes de una estupidez tan manifiesta, asombra por la coherencia del dibujo, de su colorido y de su plasticidad. Si las carnes son de barro cocido, las ropas son de lodo seco. El sentimiento de repulsión irresistible que nos causan estos "monotes", (aunque por esnobismo pocos se atreven a confesarlo), es tan natural como justo. Es la repugnancia ante todo lo informe e inorganizado. Si fueran masas de piedra tendrían la solemnidad de lo inerte; si pólipos marinos, la inocencia de la vida ciega; pero son masas humanas en que la vida emerge en su forma primitiva de estupidez y realidad ... 

... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ...

Y aunque resulte de una trágica comicidad, esta divinización del proletariado, es la mejor obra de arte que la revolución mejicana le ha dado al mundo.10

Being written about workers in the government offices, Regina Landa naturally contains a great deal about the political system of Mexico. The author shows the prevalence of la empleo-mania, the mania for obtaining a government position, too often through political favoritism. He pictures the typical official as "un volcán en erupción perpetua y elemento insustituible para la realización de los 'postulados de nuestra ideología revolucionaria y del Plan Sexenal'."11 He also has Miguel Angel give an excellent and fitting definition of politicians:

---. . El político en la tribuna y en la prensa, el líder en los mitines, el burócrata en las conferencias

10 Ibid., pp. 82-84

11 Ibid., p. 20
culturales, todos se desgarran: "hermano obrero, la oficina y el taller son tuyos; hermano campesino, las tierras te pertenecen; hermano soldado, el cuartel es tu palacio." Y en efecto, todo es suyo, con excepción de su sudor y su sangre con lo que nos nutrimos, engordamos, vestimos elegantes trajes, tenemos residencias y queridas y todo lo despilfarramos...  

Since the state and the church were so closely associated, or, as now, in such conflict, it would have been almost impossible for Azuela to avoid some discussion of religion. In this novel he speaks specifically of Catholicism. He gives contrasting ideas on it, for in one instance his sympathies are with the Catholics, while in another he definitely criticizes them. In the first, he tells of a Communist demonstration against the Church and the Catholics' retaliation. Later, he says:

--La religión de Cristo es muy bella.  
--La más grande que ha habido en el mundo; pero como dijo alguien: "por causa del catolicismo se ha perdido a Cristo."  

As a whole, the novel ends on a note which is rather more optimistic than usual. As a prediction of Mexico's future, Regina says:

--Detrás de la farsa de estos cuistres está el mañana. Es la aurora de algo tan grande como jamás ha visto el mundo.  

The most modern of Azuela's novels is Avanzada. In style, there is nothing superior or outstanding about it, for it lacks the local color to be found in several of his

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12 Ibid., p. 158  
13 Ibid., p. 57  
14 Ibid., p. 188
works. He has almost completely abandoned estridentismo, leaving a much greater coherence. He still is deeply sympathetic with everything Mexican, but with the years he seems to have lost some of the fire and enthusiasm so characteristic of his earlier writing. Of course, in the years intervening between the time elements of the other novels and this one, Mexico itself had settled back into a more normal pace. Her political situation is still uneasy, but, as a whole, the country is in a less agitated state. Since Azuela always seems to be reflecting the mood of his people, it is not unnatural that he should have become resigned to post-revolutionary conditions which were far from being those which the Revolution had hoped to achieve.

The story, unlike most of the ones of this period, has a man as the protagonist. In Adolfo, Azuela introduces a new type, the Mexican boy educated in the United States who returns to his native land with the North American attitude of reforming and improving everything immediately. In the first part of the story, he is an enthusiastic and strong-willed young man, who wants neither to listen to the wisdom of his father, nor to benefit by the latter's experience. It is only through failure that he learns to respect age and custom.

Don Miguel and Maca are his parents, the owners of the hacienda of San Ignacio a Gutiérrez. They are two of the few members of the hacendado class left, living the peaceful life of people undisturbed by the Revolution and
the political turmoil. Don Miguel ran his ranch and business in much the same way his forefathers had. He sent Adolfo to the United States only because Mr. James, his teacher, had insisted that it would be good training for the boy. Doña Maca was the typical wife of the hacienda. In describing them, Azuela says:

Transuntos del siglo XIX, Maca y don Miguel eran auténticos milagros transplantados al XX, igual que su ruinosa casona con sus alicantes, murciélagos y demás alimañas. Maca tenía la esmerada educación de las mujeres mexicanas de aquellos tiempos y el talento necesario para hacerse inadvertida en el seno del hogar en todo aquello que no fuera hacer amable la vida a su esposo, a su hijo y demás personas que la rodeaban. Pero también la emolía suficiente para ocupar su sitio verdadero en los momentos difíciles de la familia. Tiempos aquellos en que al esposo le correspondía el mando y a la mujer la obediencia. A él proveer las necesidades económicas de la casa, a ella tener la limpia y abastecida en todo momento. Pero su obediencia no significaba humillación ni redundaba en desdoro de su condición humana. Sumisión implicaba seguridad y descanso absolutos en el jefe del hogar. Por tanto, nunca una esposa fue más respetada y gozó de tantas consideraciones dulces, con su palabra discreta e insinuante, era ella la que decidía invariablemente en los conflictos íntimos de la familia.15

The story opens with the return of Adolfo. His parents were awaiting him with mixed feelings of anticipation, happiness, and fear. Don Miguel was wise enough to realize that after five years in a progressive country, Adolfo would be uneasy and dissatisfied with the Mexico that he found on his return. They were not long in finding the truth of this, for Adolfo soon mentioned that he had seen men plowing with oxen in the same way that the Egyptians

15Azuela, Avanzada, p. 48
had done. Don Miguel had expected this and had told him he would find Mexico ugly and sad, or rather abandoned and uncared for, where "todo está por hacer." 16 Mexico had not lost the mañana habit which characterizes her to other nations.

After seeing the deteriorated state of the hacienda, Adolfo wanted to start immediate changes. He proposed borrowing money to order modern machinery from the United States so that they could start improvements. He argued that the crop yield would be so much greater that in one year they would be able to repay everything. Don Miguel, who had lived independently all his life, was at first adamant in his refusal; however, in the face of Adolfo's insistence, he gave in. At first, he believed that he had been mistaken, for Adolfo was able to do seeming wonders with the new equipment; however, just before harvest time, a hail storm ruined almost the entire crop. Adolfo's sense of failure and discouragement were as great as his former enthusiasm had been. He lost all interest in farming and did nothing to help don Miguel for a while. The latter had undergone a great shock upon learning that most of the crop would be lost, but he accepted the news with the calmness that age had given him.

In the meantime, Adolfo had become interested in a girl in Río Seco, a near-by town. They had met on the

16 Ibid., p. 19
train coming from the United States, and he believed that he had found in her a person who felt as he did about his country and its backwardness. To the dismay of his family, he often went to visit her. This displeased them because they had thought that he would marry his cousin, Margarita. When the latter realized how he felt, she went to Río Seco to work in a department store and later to train to be a nurse. It was while she was there that the crops were ruined. When Yolanda heard that Adolfo was not going to be rich, she immediately dropped their friendship. He then turned again to Margarita, but she explained that she was content where she was, and that she would not marry him.

Don Miguel lived only long enough to see his debt paid off, and Maca did not live long after her husband's death. They had lost much of their property, and Adolfo found nothing to hold him to the hacienda, so he left to go to work on a government project. Margarita boarded the same train and told him that she was going with him. They settled in the government colony, where Adolfo was soon promoted and Margarita was able to do some nursing. Adolfo became more important and soon was recognized as a leader. He told Margarita that those who had been used to giving orders would be giving them again. He became one of the leaders in the labor meetings and made an enemy of Zorri- llo, one of the Communist chiefs. There was some trouble among the laborers; Adolfo decided to take Margarita back to Río Seco for a visit; and then Zorriollo was killed. He
was brought to Adolfo's home, and Azuela says that the men surrounded the dead man with the same resignation shown when some worker had been killed by a cacique. It would appear, therefore, that these people had made little progress, even during the years following the Revolution.

In this more than in any other of his novels, Azuela condemns Mexico for her lack of progress. This is done through a comparison of that country with the United States, although the latter does not always benefit by the comparison. He finds an opportunity to laugh sometimes at the yanqui, and he does not fail to show the evils which may accompany progress. The North American's love of money is satirized, but at the same time Adolfo says that the intelligent person of the United States learns to make more money with less work than the Mexican does. Thus, he tempers his criticism of both republics.

The money theme is a recurring one throughout this novel. This was a delicate subject between don Miguel, who cared for nothing more than his independene and home, and Adolfo, with his ideas of becoming rich quickly. After Adolfo's return to his home, when he was trying to perfect his system of farming, Miguel spoke of him in these words:

--¡Pobre muchacho! Está gastando su dinero, su juventud, y, lo que es más doloroso, la vida de sus padres, en preparar un bocado a los tiburones del gobierno que lo despojarán de todo, tarde o temprano. No son éstos los tiempos en que el hombre honrado se enriquece. Época de valores nuevos --como ellos dicen--. El que trabaja apenas come y el que roba se
hace millonario. Que ese hombre se arrime a los ladrones de la administración y creeré en sus millo-
nes.\textsuperscript{17}

In this same speech, Azuela has brought out the old prob-
lem of the Revolution, that of the honest man who remained
poor, while the unscrupulous became rich. Adolfo believed
it was only a matter of progress and taking advantage of
their opportunities; he had not seen Mexico closely during
the Revolution and the years following it.

The subject of class distinction is discussed at
length in this novel. Formerly, Azuela portrayed the mem-
bers of the various classes, but he had not brought up
race and class distinction as a problem which was to be
combatted. After having read Tolstoy and other reform
writers, Adolfo believed that they needed to judge other
people more humanely and to erase the barriers between the
levels of society. Miguel answered that they had been
able to eat at the table with their servants with the same
ease they had when entertaining an archbishop or some gov-
ernment official. However, he added, this was because
each had been aware of his position and knew how to keep
his distance. Miguel believed this to be the only way to
have love among men. At that time Adolfo disagreed with
him, but later he himself said that some were born to give
orders and others to obey. Azuela, although he wants to
help the Indian, is realistic enough to know that they

\textsuperscript{17}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 96
cannot overcome the caste system in one attempt; he knows
that it may be many years before Mexico has freed herself
of it.

From this talk of classes came the subject of commu-
nism. The Sindicato Rojo had taken a firm hold in Mexican
politics, and it was often necessary to join that group in
order to find work. There is a criticism of the party in
the portrayal of Severiano and Zorrillo. The former is
the payaso, a man necessary in any society, but one who is
laughed at and made to appear stupid. He is the blind
follower of clever politicians. Zorrillo is the communist
leader, the pistolero mayor who takes the place of the ca-
cique in forcing the Indians to work under his group. He
is supposed to be abolishing the old system, while he only
carries it on under a different name. However, Azuela
does not limit himself to condemning the communists; he
also defends them against unfair judgment. Adolfo said
that the people were wrong when they called all communists
criminals. He continued, saying that many of the criminals
had joined the party to find protection, but that this did
not mean that all the members had done so. Catolicismo,
comunismo, and the other ismos had only served as banners
for the criminals that were in any society.

Thus, in this period, Azuela has portrayed Mexico up
to the present day. He shows her progress through a post-
revolutionary era in a just and fair appraisal of his coun-
try. Of course, there were times when the events were too
close to him to be evaluated very clearly, for it is difficult to record history as it is being made. He was near enough to these people to know their thoughts and reactions, but this nearness may have influenced his ideas to a certain extent. Throughout his novels he deals with the same types, and by doing this he allows a certain note of pessimism to come into his works. This cannot be helped, for the same overworked and underpaid peon of pre-revolutionary Mexico is, to a great extent, still being overworked and underpaid. Those who are getting more money have not bettered themselves a great deal socially. On the other hand, the haciendados who were ruined by the Revolution have been lowered socially and financially. This would put the classes on a more even basis, but it does not make their society a particularly better one. This is more or less summed up in Avanzada with a picture of both classes.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

As a novelist, Azuela has drawn a picture of Mexico that is educational as well as fascinating. It is educational in bringing to the world a Mexican's conception of his own country and in trying to explain and interpret a part of her history that is picturesque but bloody. He does not attempt to color his portrayal so that his people will seem more virtuous than they actually are, nor does he avoid presenting the tumultuous conditions of his country; he only shows the personalities of these people and the way that they react to the events of their time. Their temperament and the universal lack of education and civilizing influences made a period of bloody revolution and strife inevitable.

Azuela's novels are particularly enlightening to foreigners, but he does not seem to be writing for them; he is rather indifferent to the attitude that others may take toward his country. He is very loyal, and demonstrates this loyalty by believing that Mexico must and will work out her own destiny. He seems to feel this almost too strongly, because there are times when other countries could help her. This is especially true of the United States, which he ridicules in such novels as Avanzada, and
he seems to have a special defiance against interference from this country. However, when one realizes that too much domination by a foreign country could place the Mexican leaders in a subordinate position, his attitude is justifiable. Unfortunately, they have had an opportunity to see that foreign intervention has been mainly for the benefit of the capitalists from other countries, and although Mexico has derived some good from it, she has been exploited rather unwisely.

The total picture that he draws is fascinating in its vividness. He is so intensely interested in his people, and particularly in the masses, and is usually so adept at characterization that he creates characters of flesh and blood in his better novels. Carlos González Peña recognizes Azuela's ability to portray the Mexican scene and says of him:

Es un prosista robusto, un observador sagaz, un narrador lleno de ironía y de donaire; en páginas llenas de vibración y colorido ha reflejado tipos y escenas de la vida mexicana.¹

He gives an over-all portrayal of Mexican society, and one finds such admirable characters as Demetrio Macías in Los de abajo, de la Torre in Regina Landa, and Juan Viñas in Los caciques. Despicable, but equally well done are Julián Andrade in Mala verba and Miguel Angel in Regina Landa. There are also several women characters who are

¹Carlos González Peña, Historia de la literatura mexicana, p. 517
admirably depicted: Regina Landa, doña Cuca in Avanzada, and María Luisa, for example. Arturo Torres Ríoseco attributes Azuela's ability to characterize to his close acquaintance with these people:

Azuela ha logrado identificarse totalmente con sus personajes, porque los ha visto vivir, porque los ha mirado con profundo afecto, porque él mismo es uno de ellos.2

Thus, Azuela presents his country to all people. To the person who does not know Mexico, he gives a picture that depicts all classes of her society. To the reader who does know Mexico, he presents a society that is colorful and interesting.

In glancing back over these novels, one wonders that one man could have written all of them. It is true that the style of most authors undergoes changes, but his so definitely alters with his progress from one period to another that it is sometimes difficult to realize that all of these works come from the same pen. However, he also has certain mannerisms that are distinctly his own, and which appear in all of his novels. Too, at times his ability falters, but he may follow a poor work with an outstanding one. He can, at will, draw pity, contempt or praise for his characters; he is adept at changing the reader's emotions to sorrow or joy, as the mood of the story requires. On the other hand, there are times when

2Arturo Torres Ríoseco, Novalistas contemporáneos de América, p. 42
the characters are so poorly drawn or the plot is so weak that it is difficult to imagine that the author of Los de abajo and Mala yerba could have written Andrés Pérez, maderista and Sin amor.

Through all of these novels there is a certain note of melancholy which is understandable in the light of his heritage. It is characteristic of much Spanish literature that it seems gloomy to the average North American, and Azuela follows out this pattern. This melancholy is also explained by his principal subject: the tragic story of a people engaged in a civil war. He felt deeply for the indígena who was unable to help himself, and he could not have told his story without this touch of gloom.

This does not mean, however, that Azuela did not also have some humor in his novels. His satire, although at times biting, is often humorous and shows the clever and witty mind behind his works. In such stories as Las tribulaciones de una familia desente and Regina Landa he adds a note of lightness to his story.

While some of Azuela's works seem to have a tone of propaganda, others seem to originate from the artistic urge to draw a picture of his people. Attempts have been made to state his purpose, but in many instances there is none other than his desire to write of his country. Torres Riscoeco seems to be of the group who consider him as a propagandist and who believe his novels contain a moral
lesson. He has tried to show this by comparing Azuela to Emile Zola:

Como Zola, Azuela trata de ser un observador y un experimentador al mismo tiempo; como él, a veces exagera y deformá para dar apariencias alucinantes a los hechos; como él la propaganda se ristra en sus novelas y parece que el reformador se dirige más a las multitudes que a un grupo de lectores. Pero en vez de las taras sociales, en vez del fango que hay en la novela naturalista de Zola, hallamos en Azuela la maldad humana, siempre brutal, pero menos mal oliente que en las creaciones del gran francés. Y como en ambos novelistas franceses [Balzac y Zola] hay en Azuela una tendencia manifiesta al conflicto social, a la lucha entre los elementos liberales y reaccionarios, a la libre expresión de las pasiones humanas, a la superabundancia del color local, a los episodios románticos de amor, al fin moralizante, a la tragedia inexorable y ciega.3

However, Los de abajo and several other novels seem to be the outgrowth of the urge to write, for they present the Mexico Azuela saw, with the evil and good which are found there. He shows some of the admirable traits of these people: their desire to learn to read and write and their love of independence. On the other hand, he tells of their brutality, when this quality is evidenced. None of the people were totally good, and he was quick to admit their faults. Even Demetrio could not escape having some savage motives, and Adolfo in Avanzada, although he stated that he believed in democracy and equality, still felt that the old ruling class should go on giving orders.

Englekirk believes that throughout these novels Azuela has social conflict as his theme.4 He hoped that justice  

3Ibid., p. 35

4Englekirk, editor, Los de abajo, p. xiv
would truly come to Mexico some day, and he believed that future generations would attain it. Like don Octavio in Andrés Pérez, maderista, he knew that they would not achieve their goals during his time, but he wanted to have a part in establishing them. It is true that much of his writing, as with any author, is autobiographical, and he seems to portray himself in this character more than in the others. He, like don Octavio, would not seem to be of the revolutionary class, yet his sympathy is with them, and he uses what power he may have to help them. Whatever his purpose was, he was certainly hoping for a better place for the lower class in Mexico's society. He was their champion in literature, and he wanted to do what he could, through writing, charity, or actual service with their armies. In the latter capacity, he was to some extent Luis Cervantes in Los de abajo, yet of very different character. Azuela himself was wiser than Cervantes and had already realized the true significance of the Revolution when he joined their forces. He also foresaw the ultimate outcome of the fighting.

(died in 1932.)

Azuela is still writing, but he has passed the peak of his career and seems to have lost the genius that made his work outstanding. As with so many authors, fame has seemed to give him some self-consciousness which now restrains his writing. This was first seen in the influence of el es-tridentismo on his works, and even after he had abandoned that school of thought, there still remained some influence
of those strict rules. Since writing has never been his primary profession, and since, of necessity, much of his time has been given over to the medical profession, it is only natural that he not be as careful and artistic a writer as he might have been.

He has given a picture of the revolutionary period from its beginning almost to the present time, and this may be judged as his greatest contribution. His philosophy today is probably much the same as it was in his last novel, 

**Avanzada.** There is little left of the old aristocratic hacendado class which he so bitterly criticized; the cacique is a man of the past; the battles of the Revolution are gone; but that does not mean that Mexico's problem is solved. It would be interesting to see how he would portray the politicians of present-day Mexico, and to know his present hopes for the Indians, but that is not possible.

What Azuela expects of Mexico's future is also unclear. He knows that improvements will come, but he does not know when nor how. He seldom makes a prophecy for his country, and while those which he gave were usually rather optimistic for the future, he ended his last novel on his usual note of resignation, with little hope in their present system. Still, there is the faith that through a slow and painful process, improvements will be made, and Mexico will be rid of the conflict that has torn her apart for the last century. Azuela may not live to see the reform
for which he has worked so hard fulfilled, but he can bel-
lieve that his people will achieve it.

What the future importance of his writing will be in
Mexican literature is also uncertain. Just as the close-
ness of the Revolution made it difficult for him to eval-
uate it perfectly, so is it hard to know the true value of
an author's work during his own time. He has been called
Mexico's greatest contemporary author by many scholars,
but will this last? It is very probable that since he has
given an accurate and interesting record of the Revolution,
his novels will be valued for that alone, if not for their
value as literature. Since there are few Latin American
writers of recognized ability, it is probable that he will
remain an outstanding figure of this period. However the
future may regard him as an artist, his position as chroni-
cler of his time and as a strong ally of the revolutionary
forces is undoubtedly secure.
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