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REVOLUTIONARY ELEMENTS IN THE  
WORKS OF MARIANO AZUELA  
BEFORE 1915

Thesis for the Degree of M. A.  
MICHIGAN STATE COLLEGE  
John William Selleck, Jr.  
1948



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Revolutionary elements in the works  
of Mariano Azuela before 1915

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REVOLUTIONARY ELEMENTS  
IN THE WORKS OF MARIANO AZUELA BEFORE 1915

by  
JOHN WILLIAM SELLECK, JR.

A THESIS

Submitted to the Graduate School of Michigan State  
College of Agriculture and Applied Science in  
partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Foreign Languages

1948



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FOREWORD

Dr. Mariano Azuela is known throughout the literary world as the author of the revolutionary classic Los de Abajo. In reading this book one gains an unusually vivid picture of the whirling, uncoordinated action, of meteoric leaders who flash across the military horizon and are gone. But while being able to appreciate the author's ability to catch the essence of the Revolution of 1910 in Mexico one is also impressed with the impersonal, objective presentation seemingly impossible to a man so vitally and personally involved. In this masterpiece by Azuela a mood of pessimism is dominant. His is a crystal clear realization of the inefficacy of a particular leader, or a specific plan as the panacea of the ills of his Mexico.

That such a realistic, detached pessimism did not emerge full blown in this book seems quite evident, and this study is an effort to trace the origin and development of this revolutionary spirit peculiar to Mariano Azuela. The historical background of the Revolution of 1910 is outlined briefly in order to understand the basis for the logical development in Azuela's thinking. The more basic phase of this study is a consideration in a chronological order the works of Dr. Azuela before 1915 to illustrate the development of the author's special revolutionary spirit through noting the revolutionary elements expressed therein.

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## Part I

### EARLY SOCIAL AND POLITICAL TRENDS

To one who has studied the history of Latin America a few sympathetic statements will ring familiar: there is nothing easier than to become lost in the myriad details of plans, pronunciamentos, and revolutions. The countless names of caudillos that pass before one's eyes are confusing. The tourist who announced upon her arrival in a Latin American country that she had come to see one of their charming revolutions spoke with unwitting aptness. There were many and a short wait was sure to be rewarded.

It is difficult to trace through the histories of the various Latin American countries what seems by comparison to our more or less well ordered Anglo-Saxon tradition a significant trend of governmental evolution, but there has been a growth in experience and a growing interest of the people in certain ideals for which they are now striving. In this respect Mexico seems to have been unusually self-conscious and the succeeding revolutions there appear to have had a deeper meaning than in other countries. Thus, by way of background, and to justify the discussion of Mexico's Revolution of 1910, a brief consideration would seem appropriate of the historical struggles which had gone before with some indication of their significance. Were these revolutions fundamental in their cause? Were the Indians and Mestizos striving for yet unrealized Ideals?

Or were they the dupes of self-seeking leaders?

On August 24, 1821 the last viceroy of New Spain, Juan O'Donojú, signed the Treaty of Córdoba with Agustín de Iturbide and Mexico was independent. The "Three Guarantees" included in the treaty indicate the compromise character of the liberating forces for they specified the guaranteeing of (1) the Catholic religion and clerical privileges, (2) absolute independence and (3) racial equality.<sup>1</sup> Independence was a fact, the Catholic religion and clerical privileges were facts but racial equality and all its implications was to remain an unattained ideal.

This hour of liberation was Iturbide's greatest. He was the great popular hero of Mexico's newly achieved independence. But he was filled with selfish ambitions which were satisfied only when he had become emperor Agustín I. He was Mexico's first leader and his opportunities as such to achieve a stable peace and the good of the people were unlimited, but he was vain and dissolute, and a man in whom honor was secondary to ambition.<sup>2</sup> In the first period of Mexican independence he delayed forming a government while the spirit of mutual renunciations was still alive.

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<sup>1</sup> Herbert Ingram Priestly, The Mexican Nation, A History (New York, 1926), 248.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 249, 257.

With Antonio López de Santa Anna achieving his long nourished desire for power in 1832 Mexico had reached the nadir of her political fortunes. One author describes him as "a sordid opportunist quite willing to shift sides for his own advantage or amusement, he assumed and shed office with a remarkable agility."<sup>3</sup> He was an amazing character in the history of Mexico who by great skill always managed to be on his estate whenever some governmental crisis should arise, thus passing the blame and grief on to his vice-president.

Such were two of the "notable" personalities in the early history of Mexico. What were the political and economic forces at work during their time? Partly because of these two men but more in spite of them there were developed or discarded certain broad ideas of government. With the fall of Iturbide the idea of monarchy, at least of the domestic variety, was pretty thoroughly discredited. Now among the republican forces were those favoring a centralistic government and another group that thought a liberal government necessarily meant a federalistic one. In the constitution of 1824 the federalistic idea won out and Mexico, contrary to her history, was artificially divided into nineteen states.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Mary Wilhemine Williams, The People and Politics of Latin America (Boston, 1945), 457.

<sup>4</sup> Priestly, op. cit., 261.



By 1836, however the pendulum had swung the other way and the constitution of that year was the result of a nine-year struggle on the part of the military-clerical conservatives. In it there were property or income qualifications for voting and holding office. The powers of the provinces were again restricted.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, there was in this instrument a somewhat superhuman body known as the "Power Conservator" which could depose the president, suspend Congress, and invalidate judicial decisions. Checks on the executive were explicitly designed for Santa Anna who was expected to be president and whose ambitions were suspected.<sup>6</sup>

Now a vague outline of the battle lines characteristic of the history of Mexico begins to become apparent. On the one side there are the forces of conservatism, centralism, and the interests of the military-clerical group and the owners of vast estates. Opposed to them are the less well organized forces of liberalism, federalism, and the interests of the Indians and Mestizos.

In 1853, after the loss of Texas and the War with the United States, Santa Anna returned from his "perpetual exile". His return meant the end of the prospects for social reform. Late the same year he had himself pro-

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<sup>5</sup> Williams, op. cit., 261.

<sup>6</sup> Priestly, op. cit., 274.

claimed "perpetual" dictator, but his dictatorship was less lasting than his exile for on March 1, 1854 the Plan of Ayutla was proclaimed which called for the removal of Santa Anna and the calling of a constituent congress.<sup>7</sup> With this plan began a marked aboriginal participation in the affairs of the government.<sup>8</sup>

Benito Juárez, the spiritual leader of the Indian and Mestizo masses, was to be of significant influence in the history of Mexico from the Plan of Ayutla through the French intervention until his death in 1872. He was a full-blooded Zapotec Indian from Oaxaca, who in his youth had begun to study for the priesthood, but had shifted to law. He practiced with distinction in his native state, where he later served as governor with popular approval. He was honest and stable of character, and, having reached the conclusion that special privilege should be abolished for the good of Mexico, he spent the rest of his life working toward that end.<sup>9</sup>

The constitution of 1857 contained three leyes of significance. These were: the Ley Juárez, the Ley Lerdo, and the Ley Iglesias. The first outlawed all special courts. The second caused the church to sell all property not be-

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<sup>7</sup> Henry Bamford Parkes, A History of Mexico (Boston, 1938), 227.

<sup>8</sup> Williams, op. cit., 469.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 469.

ing used for worship in an effort to create a group of small landholders. But the people were reluctant to purchase, and the estates were bought up by the newly wealthy families of Creoles who had hitherto been landless. The third law limited the church's power in respect to burial, baptism, and marriage.<sup>10</sup>

These worthy measures failed to be realized for the first president under the constitution was the weak compromiser Comonfort, who, through his faltering policies protracted the strife for civil liberty, and plunged Mexico into years of foreign intervention.<sup>11</sup> Throughout this period of intervention from 1861 to 1867 Juárez remained in the field ever the champion of the liberal forces.<sup>12</sup>

The net result of the Maximilian interlude was to end all sentiment in favor of monarchy, and to create a growing national consciousness.<sup>13</sup> Meanwhile the liberal forces of Juárez reinstated themselves in power. Many of Juárez's friends advised him not to run for president again however, since by now he was beginning to be suspected for dictatorial tendencies. But he was adamant in his decision, for he felt that the good of Mexico demanded

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<sup>10</sup> Priestly, op. cit., 323-325.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 330.

<sup>12</sup> Wilfrid H. Callcott, Liberalism in Mexico, 1857-1929 (Stanford University, 1931), 50.

<sup>13</sup> Priestly, op. cit., 364.



his services as guardian and executor of the constitution.. None of the candidates received a majority of the votes and congress, left to the final choice, declared for Juárez. The disappointed candidate to lead opposition by revolt was Porfirio Díaz, popular hero in opposition to the French intervention. But the way was left open to him when Juárez died on July 18, 1872 after long illness.

One definite advantage which had been obtained in this first sixty years of independence was the divorce of the church from the state.<sup>14</sup>

Little enough had the peasants gained. The almost incessant strife had retarded the material development of the country. The theoretical liberal advantages gained were little comfort, if indeed understood by the great mass of the aboriginal population. But now the magnificent political star of Porfirio Díaz was in its ascendancy. What was the fate of the Mexican people which it foretold?

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 372.

## Part II

### THE PAZ PORFIRIANA

When Porfirio Díaz first became president of Mexico Mariano Azuela was three years old. The year was 1876. Díaz was to give peace until his final overthrow in 1910 to a nation which had scarcely known the meaning of the word.

His methods were direct. Those who were to surround him as ministers, judges, and provincial officials found that those who opposed him were either purchased or eliminated. The ones listening to reason were rewarded with large grants of land but at the same time they were removed from political influence when their rivals were recipients of official prestige. Naturally the beneficiaries were interested in the perpetuation of the peace and of Díaz in the presidency.<sup>1</sup> Díaz's method was to play off one against another the forces potentially opposed to him. The corollary was "Bread or the Club".

What were the motives and abilities of this big-boned Nixtecan mestizo? One author describes him as vain and ambitious, but a man who had ever been energetic and forceful, capable of seeing the material needs of his country. Not so for political needs; he checked political development in Mexico by restoring military dicta-

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<sup>1</sup> Priestly, op. cit., 380.

torship.<sup>2</sup> Another says of Díaz that he was an able politician dominated by two springs to action, "personal ambition and desire for the material development of the nation."<sup>3</sup>

First and foremost peace and the security of life and limb were essential. Under Díaz Mexico became possibly the safest country in the world. This he achieved by means of his guardias rurales, an efficient police force which included many a former bandit who now found it more profitable to serve Don Porfirio.<sup>4</sup>

In the field of foreign relations Díaz immediately set about improving conditions. He finished the payments of debts agreed to with the United States, and by 1888 treaties of friendship, commerce, and navigation had been signed and some ratified with Sweden, Norway, France, Great Britain, Ecuador, and Japan.<sup>5</sup> He had established Mexico's credit. Now he could encourage the investment of foreign capital.

The greatest evidence of material progress was the development of the railroads. In 1876 there were 691 kilometers of tracks, but by 1911 this figure had grown

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<sup>2</sup> Williams, op. cit., 480-1.

<sup>3</sup> Priestly, op. cit., 379.

<sup>4</sup> Williams, op. cit., 481.

<sup>5</sup> Callcott, op. cit., 121.



to 24,717 kilometers. In addition to building these lines Díaz managed by means of a huge loan to buy many of the lines and gain the controlling interest of the rest.<sup>6</sup> It was easy to comprehend what the peace created by Díaz was making possible.

In the field of financial reforms Mexico also was making great strides. This was due in large measure to the astute promoter-financier, José Yves Limantour. By the year 1896 he had balanced the budget, largely refunded the internal debt, and brought about the abolition of the alcabala.<sup>7</sup>

From the following statement some indication of the industrial development can be gathered:

During the Porfirian epoch factories grew by thousands, including sugar mills, smelters, cotton and woolen mills, chemical works, breweries. In 1910 the textile factories numbered 135, employing 33,000 hands. The smelters and mines employed many thousands more. And the growth of factories was accompanied by development of hydraulic power..... In Hidalgo the Cascada de Regla, in Mexico City the Río Tlalnepantla, and, more important than all, the great Necaxa reservoir producing 127,560 horsepower for the capital, were among the important developments of this order.<sup>8</sup>

With a consideration of the progress along material lines as indicated by the preceding statements we begin

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<sup>6</sup> Williams, op. cit., 483.

<sup>7</sup> Callcott, op. cit., 131.

<sup>8</sup> Priestly, op. cit., 392.

to see what a change had been wrought on the Mexican landscape through the efforts of the great Don Porfirio. Díaz "had no precedent in Mexican history; few of the benevolent despots of eighteenth century Europe equalled his majestic performance. He won the heart of his people, who long loved him while they feared him, who admired him when they wished his government ended, and who respected him in exile and mourned him in death."<sup>9</sup>

Díaz had become a living legend. All public utterances of the times abounded in adulation of the executive. But there were discordant notes to be sounded for in the splendor of the Díaz dictatorship there were elements of corruption and of hollow magnificence:

Díaz was not the apocalyptic angel imagined by Tolstoi, nor Binge's melodramatic tyrant; rather, an opportunist, determined to rule. As he strides ahead in power, he grows hazier as a moral figure concerned with principles, truth, the real beauties of life. Beneath this dinosaurian armor stood a morally puny figure, a product, not master of his race, time and circumstances, ever prey to the corrupt forces about him.<sup>10</sup>

The most serious indictments of the regime of Porfirio Díaz were in respect to land distribution, justice, education, the reinstatement of the church, foreign investment and favoritism, and governmental bureaucracy result-

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 393.

<sup>10</sup> Carleton Beals, Porfirio Díaz, Dictator of Mexico (Philadelphia, 1932), 299.

ing in corruption of the middle class.

It is said of Porfirio Díaz that he completed the conquest of the Indians in Mexico. This statement is made clear by the fact that in 1888 and 1889 Díaz ordered the breaking up of ejidos, or communal lands in the apparent desire that the individual Indians would become landowners. The result, however, was that the neighboring hacendados soon absorbed most of them.<sup>11</sup> Further concentration of land in the hands of a few resulted when real estate companies were given as recompense one third of all lands surveyed.<sup>12</sup> By 1910 nearly half of Mexico belonged to about three thousand families, and most of the Indians who had previously held their land in a community interest were now forced to become the laborers for the absentee hacendados.<sup>13</sup> The hope of Morelos, efforts of the War of Reform and the Ley Lerdo were officially backed by Díaz, while actually he proceeded to sell the lands with subsoil rights to foreigners, and otherwise distribute them among those rich with land. "Had the hacienda been efficient, this colossal looting might have been justified. But the hacienda, a self-sufficient feudal organism, promoted little commerce; cheap labor obviated the necessity

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<sup>11</sup> Callcott, op. cit., 136.

<sup>12</sup> Parkes, op. cit., 289.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 306-7.

of introducing modern machinery..... In 1892-93 Mexico imported over 6 million pesos of corn and wheat, in 1909 over 12 millions." 14

"Justice was, in short, a part of the machinery of the Porfirian state."<sup>15</sup> According to the constitution the lesser judges were to be appointed by the supreme court. Díaz dominated the latter body and therefore the whole judicial system. His general order of preference in regard to judicial decisions was: foreigners, especially Americans, second, Mexicans of wealth who had the dictator's approval, third, the Mexican people. But for this latter group justice hardly existed. Those who were undesirable to the governors of the states were "drafted" into the army. The celebrated rurales made the country safe--except for Mexicans.<sup>16</sup> "A bull-fighter killed a woman, and in the face of public clamor was released for a Saturday corrida. He escaped to the United States whereupon his brother was arrested, tried, and acquitted."<sup>17</sup>

It is said that under Díaz education of the people in general was considered to be no more desirable than the education of the slaves in the American South before the

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<sup>14</sup> Beals, Porfirio Díaz, 302.

<sup>15</sup> Ernest Gruening, Mexico and Its Heritage (New York, 1928), 497.

<sup>16</sup> Parkes, op. cit., 293-4.

<sup>17</sup> Beals, Porfirio Díaz, 293.

Civil War. In 1910 a report by the government indicated that there were about 800,000 pupils in schools of all types, or about five per cent of the total population. The normal school population of a country is between ten and twenty per cent.<sup>18</sup> From these figures it can be seen that illiteracy was only slightly eliminated for these figures were issued by the Porfirian government and would certainly not be an understatement. Díaz "did introduce normal schools and extend the public school system considerably, but nothing adequate was done--or even attempted--to make the population really literate and wipe out the dense ignorance which was an obstacle to the development of self-government."<sup>19</sup>

Previously it was stated that as a result of struggles up to and including the War of Reform that the Church was finally divorced from the State. It is true that its power was definitely reduced but under Díaz the church regained many of its former powers.<sup>20</sup> The ecclesiastical organization was growing; seven new bishoprics being organized and the number of priests more than being doubled.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Gruening, op. cit., 515.

<sup>19</sup> Williams, op. cit., 486.

<sup>20</sup> Beals, Porfirio Díaz, 342.

<sup>21</sup> Callcott, op. cit., 244.

Further grievances of the Mexican people grew with respect to privileges accorded foreigners, especially foreign capitalists. Americans had larger investments than even the Mexicans themselves, and the British were not far behind.<sup>22</sup> While Díaz was wise to encourage foreign investment he made a serious mistake in granting the sub-soil rights along with land rights, thus allowing foreign investors a free hand in the exploitation of the resources of Mexico.<sup>23</sup>

Another failure in the Díaz nation was in regard to a stable middle class. Díaz "was.....the savior of the middle class, ever buffeted by previous governments, lost in armed turmoil, sunk in the wide gulf between Indian helots and feudal overlords. But the new group was without morality, without patriotism, without native roots."<sup>24</sup> "The bureaucracy was.....expanding; between 1876 and 1910 the government payroll increased by nine hundred per cent .....only too willing to serve the dictator....."<sup>25</sup>

As a basis for departure in the consideration of the early works of Mariano Azuela an attempt has been made to

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<sup>22</sup> Parkes, op cit., 309.

<sup>23</sup> Williams, op. cit. 484-5.

<sup>24</sup> Beals, Porfirio Díaz, 231

<sup>25</sup> Parkes, op. cit., 294.

indicate the cultural milieu in which they were created. Without an appreciation of the economic, social, and political background of the Revolution of 1910 much of the meaning of the novels and short stories is lost. Without this knowledge the social conditions depicted seem merely sordid and without purpose; the courage of the author in presenting these issues, in part before the outbreak of the Revolution, cannot be appreciated. Realizing the condition and the needs of the people as expressed in previous struggles and in the discontent of the masses which existed in the closing years of the Porfirian era it can be seen why Azuela did not choose to write of "prettier things". If the morals, both public and private, which are portrayed seem degenerate it is apparent that they were in keeping with the times.



### Part III

#### MARIANO AZUELA: THE MAN

The author whose works are under consideration in this paper was born in Lagos de Moreno, a city of twelve thousand people in the state of Jalisco, in the year of 1873.<sup>1</sup> His parents were of the middle class and owners of a small hacienda, on which Azuela spent his youth and early manhood during the heyday of the Díaz regime. In spite of the modest economic circumstances of his family young Mariano received a good education which culminated in the year 1899 with graduation in medicine at Guadalajara. In addition to an education in medicine Azuela also picked up a lively interest in literature, especially in regard to the French nineteenth century novelists; the result being the publishing of his first work, seven short sketches appearing in 1896.<sup>2</sup>

After receiving his education he returned to his native city and established a medical practice. His interest in writing, however, was sufficiently awakened, and he continued in the double rôle of physician and neophyte

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<sup>1</sup> Arturo Torres-Rioseco, Grandes Novelistas de la America Hispana (Berkeley, 1941), I, 7.

<sup>2</sup> Jefferson R. Spell, Contemporary Spanish-American Fiction (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1944), 66-7.

novelist.<sup>3</sup> During the period of the first decade of the twentieth century Azuela turned out three novels and five short stories.

Since his student days Mariano Azuela had been in sympathy with the antiporfirista sentiment which culminated in the successful revolt led by Francisco Madero. After the latter had risen to power Azuela served as jefe político in Lagos. Later he joined the actual revolutionary forces under Julián Medina in opposition to Victoriano Huerta, no doubt during this period picking up information and experiences later portrayed in his masterpiece Los de Abajo. Upon the triumph of Venustiano Carranza he went into exile in El Paso, Texas.<sup>4</sup> Finally, in 1916 Azuela moved to Mexico City where he has remained since in the two rôles of author and doctor, no longer being identified with a definite revolutionary group.<sup>5</sup>

Now he lives in the unpretentious section of Santa María la Rivera where he owns a rambling old house, raises rabbits and chickens, and practices medicine in an absent-minded sort of way. Still, he is recognized as a sound medical authority and is consulted by the leading phys-

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<sup>3</sup> John E. Englekirk, "The Contemporary Period", appearing in An Outline History of Spanish American Literature, edited by E.H. Fesselt (New York, 1941), 147.

<sup>4</sup> Torres-Rioseco, op. cit., 7.

<sup>5</sup> Spell, Op. cit., 68.

icians of Mexico. Doctor Azuela is a mild, almost shy man, having a modest practice consisting mostly of poor people.<sup>6</sup>

Well over seventy years old, quite dark in complexion and of medium stature, Azuela disillusions somewhat the reader who may think of him as a picturesque representative of revolutionary ideals. His mildness is in contrast with the terseness of his literary style and the violence of his themes.<sup>7</sup>

Some hint of the selfless character of Mariano Azuela is seen through the quite legendary account of how he became employed in a public clinic. "He originally took the job to do a favor for a friend wanting a short leave of absence. He substituted for his friend for an entire year without pay, and would probably have kept on indefinitely if--in some mysterious manner, regarding which he is quite in the dark--he had not been put upon the payroll for \$2 a day."<sup>8</sup>

Although it is not the purpose of this study to deal with literary criticism of Azuela's early works, but rather to consider the evidences and evolution of a revolu-

<sup>6</sup> Carleton Beals, Introduction to The Underdogs (New York, 1929), viii-ix.

<sup>7</sup> Torres-Rioseco, op. cit., 5.

<sup>8</sup> Beals, Int. to The Underdogs, vii.

tionary spirit peculiar to Azuela, it is interesting to consider his literary views and thus to gain some further insight into his philosophy and probably the purposes back of his own works:

Me interesan los hombres que comprenden y los admiro con entusiasmo y fervor, porque son los que más me han enseñado. Los sabios que solo saben, me son totalmente indiferentes..... Sé que es muy decente ser un escritor bien; pero estimo de mayor decencia ser un escritor honrado. Y la simulación no es honradez. Por este motivo escribo lo que siento, sin preocuparme porque mis opiniones coincidan o difieran de las comunmente aceptadas. La lealtad y la honradez consisten, en un escritor, en dar su visión propia con valor y sinceridad.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Mariano Azuela, Cien Años de la Novela Mexicana (Mexico, 1947), 12-3.

## Part IV

### THE CONTENT OF REVOLUTIONARY ELEMENTS

#### Short Stories

The first of Mariano Azuela's works to appear after the turn of the century were five short stories which appeared in various periodicals either in Mexico city or Azuela's home, Lagos de Moreno. The earliest, "De mi tierra", was published in El Imparcial, Mexico city, in the month of June, 1903.<sup>1</sup> It is very simple in its plot: Teodora and Macedonio, two peasants plan to be married but they do not have enough money. Teodora, having gone into the mountains in search of wood, is caught in a storm and forced to take refuge in an old house. The master of the hacienda also seeks refuge there; and as a result Teodora is violated. In this short short story Azuela expresses the hopeless economic plight of the landless peasants. Teodora sighs:

¡Pobre de Macedonio! Le había prometido que si Dios lo ayudaba en la cosecha de chile, en las aguas se casarían seguramente. La cosecha fue buena; pero en la liquidación no alcanzó más que cuatro pesos y cuatro reales, como fruto de todo el trabajo de un año, de vivir pegado a la tierra a sol y agua, de día y de noche. Esa maldada tierra que solo enriquece a los amos.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Spell, op. cit., 67.

<sup>2</sup> Mariano Azuela, "De mi tierra", second edition of María Luisa (Mexico, 1938), 174.

Here is a fundamental indictment of the Diaz system and all that came before it: nearly all of the agricultural population was landless. The overbearing power of the hacendados together with their moral degeneracy left the ordinary peasant but little hope for the betterment of his lot.

A year later a second short story entitled "Víctimas de la Opulencia" reached print in El Defensor del Pueblo, published in Lagos de Moreno.<sup>3</sup> This morose little story tells of the death of a little boy by starvation because his mother finds it necessary to hire herself out as the wet nurse of a rich woman's child. It serves as a variation on the theme of social injustice, and a repetition of the complete disregard of the wealthy classes for the fate of the poor: it indicates the dangerous exaggerated gap which had developed between two classes.

Uno de los mimados del destino. De los que desde que nacen, viven a expensas de vidas ajenas. ¿Qué importa que la madre sea joven, hermosa y robusta, si hay muchas vacas humanas que se alquilan para sustituirla y con creces? La madre joven y rica no destruirá los encantos de su cuerpo ni prescindirá de sus caprichos de mujer desocupada y ociosa, si por unas cuantas monedas obtiene otros senos pletóricos de sabia para su hijo. No sabe ni quiere saber que un ser humano indefenso va a ser sacrificado bárbaramente en aras de su holgazanería y de su vanidad, porque con dinero paga lo que por dinero se vende. Su elástica moral burguesa está amparada por el cura gordiflón que dirige su

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<sup>3</sup> Spell, op. cit., 67.

conciencia y comparte el chocolate con las damas de alcurnia.<sup>4</sup>

If Azuela's attitude in the first story seemed somewhat matter of fact there is no room to escape the conclusion from the above remarks that he feels himself drawn in his sympathies to the side of the oppressed classes. In the last sentence of the above quotation Azuela in a veiled manner indicates his feelings toward the clergy which finds its interests tied to those of the wealthy rather than the humble.

In 1907 Ceios Literarios published the third of the short stories by Azuela, which was entitled "Lo que se Esfuma".<sup>5</sup> Of his shorter works this is perhaps the most entertaining because of its longer narrative and involved plot. It is the common tale of social aspirations. Intellectually bigoted Perico is home on vacation from school, and finds that he is acceptable to the "higher brackets" so he proceeds to scorn his old friends in general and his former sweetheart Lupe in particular. However one can scarcely sympathize with her for she has been moving rapidly in his absence. Perico finds himself at odds with the last in the series of Lupe's suitors and later kills him. Lupe apparently feels no remorse for

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<sup>4</sup> Mariano Azuela, "Víctimas de la Opulencia", in the second edition of María Luisa (Mexico, 1938), 167.

<sup>5</sup> Soell, op. cit., 67.

she too has higher ambitions:

.....Andrés tenía el defecto imperdonable de ser un artesano honesto que no buscaba entretenimiento fugaz sino una esposa que le diera hijos y la felicidad de un hogar sosegado. En ese tiempo Lupe tiraba ya muy alto y el humilde carpintero no podía ser la meta de sus aspiraciones.<sup>6</sup>

In the next chapter Lupe's financially happy married life is inconvenienced by the death of her aging husband. The last chapter opens with a vivid description of the lavish decorations of the church and the huge crowd of invited guests. The reader's suspicions are confirmed when Lupe and Perico appear as the wedding march begins:

Lupe, la millonaria del pueblo (¿quién se acordaba de la carnicerita de la plaza del Hueso?), arrogante, en plenitud de belleza, entró con el velo de novia, del brazo de Perico, enflautado en largo levitón de paño, sorbete, guantes y relucientes botas de charol. (Tampoco hubo quien se acordara del rancherito bajado del cerro e hijo de un himilde mayordomo).<sup>7</sup>

It is difficult to conclude that the whole story represents Azuela's theme of discontent. If this were so it would be inconsistent for Lupe and Andrés were originally of the same social and economic standing. Only the former's primary love is money and better social position. Her aspirations represent only individual motivation and not a class problem. Azuela's point seems to have been to depict again the deplorable disparity in the distribution

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<sup>6</sup> Mariano Azuela, "Lo que se esfuma" in the second edition of María Luisa (Mexico, 1938), 224-5.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 236-7.



of wealth, but more especially to slap at the existing conditions of justice which would permit Perico to go free after a killing which could hardly have been in self-defense. As noted previously Andrés would fall in the lowest bracket in the priority of justice. He was a peasant and Mexican peasants were the last to receive justice.

"En Derrota" first appeared in Kalendas, a monthly magazine published in Lagos de Moreno in 1908.<sup>8</sup> Juan Lanás is a new hand at the hacienda. He is apparently a Mexican Apollo of whom all of the women of the hacienda have become enamored. He, on the other hand, is very retiring, and apparently more inclined toward the affection of his dog. Actually he loves Camila who is the daughter of the mayordomo of the ranch; but he does not feel himself worthy of her.

¿Quién era él, pobre aventurero, sin familia y sin hogar, para aspirar a Camila, la hija del mayordomo y novia de Basilio, el más guapo y valiente entre los mozos de los alrededores, de Basilio el hijo del mayordomo de la hacienda vecina?<sup>9</sup>

Camila, however is not lacking in courage to face the situation and tells her love to Juan. They plan to be married but on the eve of the wedding Basilio with some rowdy companions comes and carries the novia away. Juan, drunk,

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<sup>8</sup> Spell, op. cit., 67.

<sup>9</sup> Mariano Azuela, "en Derrota" in the second edition of María Luisa (Mexico, 1938), 183.

follows the kidnappers who taunt him. Juan drowns himself in the river.

Without a definite statement Azuela makes the reader of this tale feel complete hatred toward Basilio directly, and indirectly to detest a situation in which the importance of his father's position allows Basilio without retribution to ride rough-shod over the plans of the peasant Juan. Between the lines Dr. Azuela says that the society which does not protect its most unfortunate element is rotten. It is bitter pessimism which causes Juan to be drowned. Azuela does not see the salvation of the oppressed classes by positive action as yet.

The last short story is entitled "Avichuelos Negros" and was published in the year 1909 by Ocios Literarios.<sup>10</sup> It is the terrifically pathetic story of a young man, who is dying of a pulmonary infection, and his girl who came to Rincon Grande in the vain hope of salvaging his health. He is the victim of the dust-filled unhealthy cotton cloth factory where nothing had been done for the workers. In his delirium the young man tells the plight of many men:

Y allí otra vez los crujientes aceros y los operarios envueltos en una nube de polvillo de algodón. El polvillo de algodón que a la fuerza se mete a las narices, alla boca y reseca la garganta ... ¡Qué sed! Ese polvillo me ahoga; que se paren las máquinas, que el maquinista cierre el vapor. Pero no, no puede ser, dice ese señor gordo y colorado que va pasando muy contento. Ese señor

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<sup>10</sup> Spell, op. cit., 67.

lleva mucho gusto porque el aire está lleno de polvillo de algodón, a ese señor sonrosadote y gordo no le hace daño el polvillo de algodón, al contrario, con él ha engordado.<sup>11</sup>

Porfirio Díaz had developed in Mexico a modern machine and factory equipped nation but the welfare of the worker, the ultimate basis for such a system, was ignored. The two pathetic figures arouse the alarmed interest of the "Sociedad de Arrepentidas" which bigoted organization takes as its goal the marrying of the couple, rather than any humanitarian interest in the health of the dying man. They prevent the girl from watching over the sick man while arrangements are being made. Finally they return triumphant:

La bandada de avichuelos negros ha entrado por la última vez al cuartucho, y se ha turbado. Llegaron con tanta alegría: una llevaba muchos buques de flores, otra el incienso, la otra las albas cortinas y la de más allá gruesas velas de cera.<sup>12</sup>

They have realized that in the meantime the young man has died. The satire on religious bigotry is very sharp and bitter.

This series of five short stories covers a period of six years in the period of decay of the Porfirian system. None of them is free from evidence of a spirit of discontent toward the corrupt society which put a premium on privilege, poverty, and religious bigotry. There is a

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<sup>11</sup> Mariano Azuela, "Avichuelas Negros" in the second edition of *María Luisa* (Mexico, 1938), 206-7.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 214.

progressive development of discontent depicted by Azuela from the comparatively mild protest against the overbearing position of the amos of the ranches in "De mi tierra" written in 1903; to the bitterness of despair in "En Derrota" and "Avichuelos Negros". If Azuela did not advocate revolution openly it is not surprising in view of the close grip that was held on the throats of all who might utter such a doctrine.

## María Luisa

This story, which is Azuela's <sup>first attempt</sup> at the genre of the novel, has as its setting the beautiful city of Guadalajara where the author took his medical training. It was first published in the year of 1907.<sup>1</sup> The protagonist of this story is María Luisa who is the daughter of a woman who runs a boarding house for medical students. The origin of María is obscure:

María Luisa fué hija de la casualidad. Nació cuando soldados de nuestras eternas revoluciones venían a los pueblos manchados con la sangre de sus hermanos, sedientos de placeres, dando la revancha a sus instinto poderoso. Después del cansancio de la muerte querían el cansancio de la vida. Y la vida se reproducía prodigiosamente.<sup>2</sup>

María's origin indicates the turbulent period which preceded the era of Porfirio Díaz.

María has lived all of her life among the medical students of her mother's boarding house; as a child they passed her from one knee to another. Now mature, she finds herself in love with one of them, Pancho Ramírez by name. The medical student persuades her to come and live with him and she finally agrees. However, on arriving at their rendez-vous she is smitten with remorse and

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<sup>1</sup> Spell, op. cit., 67.

<sup>2</sup> Mariano Azuela, María Luisa (Mexico, 1933), 20-1.

returns to her mother's home but her mother has learned through the hateful aunt Juana that María has not gone to her work in the factory. When María returns she is disowned by her mother and the break is irrevocable. María returns to Pancho.

From here the story follows its quite common plot. After a brief time of complete happiness Pancho's time spent with María come to be only short visits and are less and less frequent. Further, María is plotted against by a girl named Ester who used to live in the same part of the city as she. María had carelessly referred, in the presence of a servant, to Ester and her family as being somewhat stupid.

El Chato, a degenerate medical student, comes to visit María and persuades her to drink with him. It is the beginning of the end.

Así como al despertar de sus sentidos no había podido resistir la influencia de su raza degenerada, detenida solamente por artificios de educación, al encontrar en el alcohol el remedio de sus penas, una vez dado el primer paso, nada ni nadie sería capaz de contenerla; y empujada por la maldita herencia quedaría hundida para siempre.<sup>3</sup>

The steps of her downfall are inevitable. She is driven to despair, to drink, and finally to prostitution in order to support herself. In the last scenes of the

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 102.

book a professor of the medical school is lecturing to his students:

He aquí señores, un caso típico, diferente de los que hemos venido estudiando. Hecho de la más alta importancia que tendrán ustedes ocasión de observar a menudo en su práctica. Tuberculosis, alcoholismo, neumonia y ¡la débacle! Procesos desarrollados en un par de años o menos.<sup>4</sup>

María Luisa is dying unloved and unrecognized by Pancho. Later she regains consciousness and asks for him but she is dead when he arrives and he refuses to recognize her.

In this novel Mariano Azuela does not express in so many words the objections he had toward the social conditions which existed during his years as a medical student. However his feelings are quite evident. He has no love for the life of the students which includes so much of drinking and gambling. But this is strictly secondary to the underlying protest against a society and economic conditions which would cause, or at least do nothing to prevent the tragic degeneration and death of a beautiful but over-romantic young woman.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 146.

## Los Fracasados

The second of Azuela's novels, Los Fracasados, was first published in the year 1908.<sup>1</sup> The protagonist of the story is a young man named Reséndez, who has just finished his legal training. As the story opens he is arriving in Alamos where he has come to serve as secretary to the jefe político in order to gain experience in the law. From the outset it is apparent that Reséndez is an idealist and a visionary, many of whose views coincide with those of Azuela.

The idealism of Reséndez, however, finds no complement among the personnel of the jefatura. A few minutes after el licenciado has met his superiors it becomes evident what their major concern is:

.....tras breve preámbulo con reminiscencias de Guadalajara y ponderación de los progresos asombrosos del Estado bajo la sabia administración de sus dignos mandatorios, se reanuda la plática que sostenían el señor Agente y la primera autoridad. --Verá usted, señor compañero--dijo aquel.....--discutíamos el señor Jefe y yo sobre un tema en el que seguramente reparó usted a su paso por las aulas. Sostengo al señor don Emeterio que las ponderadas comedias de Corneille son un descarado rapto perpetrado en la obra de la más preclara poetisa, estrella magna de la literatura medieval, en una época de negruras donde se esbozaron apenas los destellos del romanticismo.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Spell, op. cit., 67.

<sup>2</sup> Mariano Azuela, Los Fracasados, Fourth edition (Mexico, 1939), 11-12.



It can be noted in the second line of the quotation above that Azuela included in his satirical remarks those who, probably for their own good, were uncritical in their appreciation of Díaz.

The learned discussion of literature continued at length. Finally:

Dieron la una y ellos seguían fumando.....y diciendo banalidades. Ya al despedirse y separarse a la puerta, una multitud de gente de pueblo se acercó a la primera autoridad con ánimo de hablar. Pero él los despidió bruscamente.

Extrañóle tal procedimiento al licenciado. Alguien rumoró que estaban esperando desde las nueve de la mañana. Y lo acabó de sorprender la imperturbabilidad con que todo el mundo se dispersó....., cual si aquel tratamiento les fuese familiar.<sup>3</sup>

Azuella had made clear his view toward the class of public servants who regarded their literary discussions as more important than any consideration of the problems of the people. The charge that Díaz had created a middle class of public servants without morality or seriousness of purpose, with decadent foreign tastes, and slavish in its adulation of the aristocracy, is justified in the sentiments of Mariano Azuela.

One chapter is given over entirely to describing the gathering at the Amezcua home. The family is wealthy and the wife and daughters have just returned from Mexico city with some new china. Azuela, in describing the

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 17.

situation, avails himself of the opportunity to throw a barb at a class which has come to consider itself superior through economic advantage:

Lolita era la primogénita de la familia. En ella se acentuaban las líneas de hierro de la casta, pero lo que en doña Recareda se disimulaba un tanto, su altivez grosera, en la muchacha resultaba grotesco: un rostro de vieja prematura en un cuerpo núbil y rebozante de savia.<sup>4</sup>

Again at the Amezcua home a dinner party is being given for a young priest, protégé of don Apapito, on his elevation to the priesthood. This is perhaps one of Azuela's best pictures of Mexican small town society before the Revolution. In one paragraph Azuela sums up the ridiculous, uncritical adulation toward the magic name of Díaz:

En otro grupo doña Recareda daba detalles de su viaje. Lo de los lentes de oro fué toda una historia. Ella no sabía que sus nervios ópticos estaban afectados. Pero al médico quien consultaron, un alemán de nombre muy alrevesado "el que cura a Carmelita"; sí Carmelita la esposa de don Porfirio.....Apapito nos dió recomendaciones para relacionar con toda la aristocracia.....No logramos hablar con Carmelita porque allá el tiempo se le va a uno en nada; pero tenemos correspondencia muy familiar.....Pues bien, el médico alemán dijo que sin los lentes me quedaría ciega.....¿Y que médico! Ocho pesos por consulta, y no crean que siquiera van a la casa de uno; hay que esperarlos en sus consultorios horas y más horas.....La calle se aprieta de carruajes de la gente más elegante de Mexico...Pero ¿cómo no! ¿El médico de Carmelita!<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 59.

A doctor needed no other ticket to fame and fortune than the patronage of the wife of Porfirio Díaz. Furthermore, at this social affair there were strong undercurrents of political thoughts. El Juez de Letras is opposed to violence in changing the evils of a regime if they exist; he is pretty well satisfied with his position. The licenciado Roséndez, who seems to represent the views of the author, says, when asked for his opinion in an involved discussion about which he is not familiar:

Ignoro quién será el señor cura Cabezudo, lo mismo que el asunto de sus prédicas; pero creo que las ideas no valen sino como ideas y peregrino sería sostener, por ejemplo, que la doctrina de Cristo fué mala porque echó por tierra hasta sus cimientos un sociedad caduca y enferma; que cimentó una civilización, arrollando cuantos obstáculos se le pusieron.<sup>6</sup>

Azuola further identifies himself on the liberal side.

The Licenciado has fallen in love with Consuelo who lives at the Rodríguez home. He can not help but notice the difference between her and the other Rodríguez girls. As the Licenciado rides about the city in the rain thinking about Consuelo and his life he recalls a scene of great injustice which has just taken place in the Jefeturfa.

Un viejo, jallán vestido de manta.....se presentó una mañana a pedir justicia. Su hijo, sirviente del amo don Agapito, sufrió una paliza de manos del mayordomo de la hacienda. ¿Por qué?

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 64.

Pues sólo porque al dicho mayordomo le ha entrado un brate por su nuera. Ella le hizo ascos; él se encalabrino y el que la pagó fue el pobrecito de su hijo. "¡Tamaños verdugones en el lomo!" dice el viejo. Y como al hacer su ingenua relación se rasca la cabeza, traga saliva, .....sólo consigue despertar la hilaridad de los empleados. El señor Jefe Político se niega a recibirlo. En urgente misiva, don Arapito Amezcua le pide que antes de dar audiencia a su sirviente, espere las explicaciones que personalmente le hará.<sup>7</sup>

There was no justice for the poor people, especially if those who opposed them were wealthy. The old man who had come to complain of the treatment of his son was arrested for his pains.

Meanwhile the origin of Consuelo is revealed to the reader. She is not the illegitimate daughter of don Arapito Amezcua as it was believed but the daughter of el padre Martínez, the priest in charge of the parish. Her superior intelligence is resented by the other girls and the mother.

Through the thoughts of his protagonist Azuela presents the corrupting influence which Mexican society has on the clergy:

Apenas aparece un hombre valiente y honorable que les predica su religión en toda su pureza, surge el conflicto; incompatibilidad de las reglas con su conducta, incompatibilidad del dogma con su ciencia.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 82-3.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 122.

It was indeed unfortunate that the clergy in Mexico during this period allowed itself to be susceptible to such corruptive forces.

The author satirizes religious bigotry when doña Recareda is telling a friend her dislike for Consuelo who has received an education which was not sponsored by the church:

- ¡Basta, señora! La escuela laica, la escuela sin Dios, en el seno del hogar cristiano. ¡El liberalismo, ese lenón de la masonería, infiltrando su ponzoña en una de las familias más honestas y piadosas!

- ¡Una lenona!.....¿Qué dice usted?.....

- Sí, una liberala hecha y derecha.

- ¡Ah!.....

- Que nos está escandalizando constantemente con sus maneras así.....con su desafecto a las cosas de la iglesia, con su poco respeto a nuestras devociones.....<sup>9</sup>

Liberalism in the eyes of the Amezcuas is the incarnation of everything disruptive and bad.

The Amezcua women, particularly doña Recareda, find Consuelo's presence in their household increasingly undesirable and doña Recareda decides to put her out de patitas en la calle.

Reséndez, the protagonist of this novel, more faithfully than any other character of Azuela's books seems to reflect the sentiments of the author. He is becoming increasingly disillusioned by the machinations of several of the dignitaries of the city to obtain the estate of

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 134-5.

Godínez:

En realidad pasaba por una época amarga: día a día iban cayendo sus ilusiones. Ante sus ojos tenía el espectáculo constante de la prostitución en todos los ramos administrativos oficiales. La repetición indefinida de la escena de holgazanería que sorprendió desde el momento de presentarse en su oficina, era insignificante comparado con lo que veía más tarde. El asesino, por ejemplo, recorriendo tranquilamente las calles y los paseos, porque con sus billetes había comprado su indulto, el desventurado artesano obligado a dar su trabajo a las obras públicas, sin retribución alguna.<sup>10</sup>

El Licenciado's accumulated bitterness and disillusionment is seen in one of the final scenes of the book. Reséndez had gone to the Amezcue home to see the only ideal that he had left, Consuelo, but he becomes involved in an argument with don Agapito and is wounded. As he is convalescing he looks out one of the windows of his quarters and sees some peasants gathered around a new statue in the park: it is that of Benito Juárez, one of Mexico's true liberals:

¿Quién será, compadre?  
Pos croque jué uno de los que defendieron la  
religión.<sup>11</sup>

When Reséndez learns that Consuelo has not been seen since the night in which he was wounded, he determines to leave immediately in search of her:

Si se había gastado la mitad de la vida en  
buscar algo imposible, la Justicia; bien podía

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 161-2.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 244.

gastarse la otra mitad en buscar algo posible,  
el hogar.<sup>12</sup>

This novel, Los Fracasaños, expresses one of the dominant feelings in the works of Mariano Azuela, and that is the mood of pessimism. Never at any time in his expression of liberal sentiments is Azuela very optimistic in regard to the immediate achievement of the liberal ideals which he expresses and which he feels are necessary to the welfare of the Mexican nation. Another general remark that can be made in reading these first two of Azuela's novels is the growing expression of discontent, particularly expressed in Los Fracasaños, the latter.

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 249.

## Mala Verba

This third novel by Mariano Azuela has its setting in rural Mexico on the hacienda of don Julián Andrade. It is the last book written by Dr. Azuela which was to appear before the outbreak of the Revolution, being published sometime during the year of 1909.<sup>1</sup> Of the rural life on the eve of the Revolution the author was well informed for he had spent his early youth on his father's small hacienda.

Marcela Fuentes, endowed with irresistible feminine charms, lives with her grandfather, señor Pablo, on the Andrade hacienda. For years Pablo has been the venerable and trusted servant of the Andrade family.

Don Julián, the master of the large hacienda, is singled out by Azuela to represent his class, that of the hacendados. His first description of the young man is far from flattering:

A Julián no le cabía el furor en el cuerpo. Sus ojillos azulosos flameaban, un cerco rojo brotó en sus carrillos paliduchos de producto degenerado, podrido; y en su rostro se expandieron manchas amoratadas de sangre descompuesta.<sup>2</sup>

From the outset the author depicts the hacendado class

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<sup>1</sup> Spell, op. cit., 67.

<sup>2</sup> Mariano Azuela, Mala Verba, third edition (Mexico, 1937), 23.



as degenerate, and as having outworn its usefulness.

Don Julián is interested in the beautiful young peasant and because of his position he is not the least hindered in going after her:

Sus apetitos, espoleados por la resistencia de la hembra, hasta el paroxismo, le daban una fuerza nueva a los alientos atavicos de su especie de machos demadores de doncellas. Y bajo el ímpetu irresistible de la bestia excitada caía vencida la muchacha, pronta ya a ofrendar el holocausto impuesto como una maldición a su raza pasiva y desventurada.<sup>3</sup>

The dominance of the hacendado class and the almost unresisting helplessness of the peasants is bitterly satirized by Dr. Azuela in the remarks above.

Don Julián is struck down by the cowboy that loves Marcela. The next day there is a funeral on the hacienda for the cowboy. The venerable Pablo delivers the indictment:

No miento, señores, no miento. Aistá me ahijado, aistá 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 jarales; y todo fue un decir Jesús: el tiro que suena y el muchacho que cai redondito. ¿Eso es ser valiente? Raza de asesinos...raza de bandidos...Pero no lo hurtan, lo heredan.<sup>4</sup>

The accusation is all the more bitter because there will

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 31.

be no retribution for the murder. The degenerate descendant of bandits will go free because of his power with the law.

Pablo further tells of the bandit origin of the Andrades and how his father had been killed by them because he knew too much. His hatred and desire for revenge is more than a personal matter:

Los peones se miraron. Y fué su silencio solemne y terrible: juramento tácito de callar y de vengar más tarde la sangre de tanta víctima desventurada.<sup>5</sup>

As to the matter of the death, don Julián has given the order through his henchman Uncle Marcelino: "Gertrudis, que digas en el Registro Civil que murió de fiebre."<sup>6</sup>

In two short paragraphs Dr. Azuela expresses realistically the moral condition of the peasants after years of being downtrodden. They are not all idealistic heroes filled with courage but poor beaten men, who, when faced with actual orders from their superiors are quite cowardly:

A los que momentos antes expresaron entereza, echando maldiciones de los Andrades, la presencia de tío Marcelino les convirtió en humo sus bravos arrestos. Apenas Gertrudis se atrevió a gruñir una insolencia, escurriendo el bulto rumbo a su casa, eludiendo a cumplimiento de la orden.

Partió la funebre procesión por el camino

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 36.

real y de pronto rompióse el imponente silencio de los campos de nuevo con el Alabado, aquel canto que brotaba de los veroniles pechos con desgarradora melancolía y tristeza sobrehumana. Dijérase el canto de muerte no de un hombre, sino de una raza entera, enferma de siglos de humillación y de amargura.<sup>7</sup>

Note in the second paragraph that Azuela sympathizes with the peasants and explains their docility and the ease with which they can be driven; they have been oppressed for centuries and their self-respect has been beaten into the ground.

Azuella further satirizes the conditions under which justice was administered:

Desde que había llegado al villorrio aquel diablo, como jefe del destacamento de gendarmería montada, el señor magistrado había tenido que desatender su hortaliza y su ordeña de chivas, con incontable número de procesos criminales.<sup>8</sup>

The naive new head of the mounted police had run across the funeral procession, had proceeded to uncover the truth and arrest don Julián! The indictment does not stick, however, for when Marcela is brought into the court she is confronted with don Julián and she covers up the truth. Don Julián is released.

Later Marcela explains to another why she lied in court:

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 41-2.

Pos sí, seña Refugia, cierto y muy cierto, si no ha sido por mí lo funden y ahí estaría mirando el sol por cuarterones. No dije nada, ¿pa qué? No le parece que es no más echarles odiosidades a los de la casa? A fin de cuentas ni les hacen nada; pagan y, en menos que se lo digo, ahí están otra vez de vuelta.<sup>9</sup>

Those who have money have "justice" on their side. Marcela realizes that don Julián has heard all of this and she fully expects that she will be killed. But her beauty triumphs, and after a lurid account of his persuing her across the moon-light drenched fields she returns to her hut:

Y volvió a caer de rodillas. Y ella, espantada de vivir todavía, se alejó de nuevo por el campo. Desnuda como una bestia salvaje, solemne cual si hubiese vislumbrado en su conciencia aquel momento de sublime vengadora de su infortunada casta, marchó serenamente en el silencio de la llanura....<sup>10</sup>

How much meaning can be read into the phrase concerning the vengeance of her race?

Through one of the peasants Azuela thrusts a gentle prod at the Yankees. Apparently an American engineer is coming to erect a dam for don Julián and the peasants are discussing it:

¿La que cargan esos gringos? Ya sé bien su diablito...Vamos, hombre, Gertrudis, no nos quieras poner los ojos verdes ni seas guaje; la que traín es la de llevarse toda nuestra plata pa su tierra.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 68.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 70-1.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 77.

Generally, however, there is little bitterness expressed by Azuela toward foreigners.

Marcela's one chaste love has been for Gertrudis, the groom for don Julián's fine horses. They had been childhood sweethearts but later Marcela had gone astray. Gertrudis still loves and finally asks her to marry him but she refuses, realizing that she could never be a good wife.

Azuela further expresses his pessimism when Gertrudis in despair because of his lost love, Marcela, turns to Mariana, a woman who has sought after him for some time. They sink together and the song seems to thrust them apart:

Gertrudis y Mariana no saben siquiera de aquel momento supremo y único de su vida, en que les ha tocado componer en sí mismos toda la melancólica poesía de sus oraciones desoladas y la intensa tristeza de su raza sufridora y resignada.<sup>12</sup>

Throughout the novel the train of action centers about Marcela and don Julián's efforts to regain her, for she has no real love for him. She, on the other hand, goes from one lover to another with Gertrudis forever remaining in the background. Don Julián will stop at nothing to regain Marcela, and in doing so he arranges the death of Gertrudis. Further he finds it necessary to eliminate his henchman in the affair and does so. Marcela has learned of the death of Gertrudis and determines

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 162.

to kill don Julián but in his presence she loses her nerve and don Julián takes his revenge on her.

In the final scene the clerk of the court "don Petronilo" has surmised the cause of so many deaths but the judge puts him in his place:

Pero, dígame, don Petronilo, ¿usted quiere hacer de la Justicia un juego de muchachos? ¿Desea usted que se pueda proceder por meras conjeturas que son del fenonio interno de un particular? Don Petronilo, no se le olvide que hay un delito muy grave que se llama "de difamación" y que ese delito se castiga fuertemente. Don Petronilo, mucho cuidado, que se rete en las once varas de la camisa.<sup>13</sup>

One guesses that Julián Andrade will be free from all persecution for the judge cannot be bothered with the travail of judicial matters. His goats and his garden are his primary concern.

Mala Verba, as noted previously, is the last novel written by Dr. Azuela which appeared before the outbreak of the Revolution and was written wholly within the secure environment of the Porfirian regime. This book represents the first indictment of the decaying conditions which existed in rural Mexico. It seems quite appropriate in retrospect that this last peacetime novel should deal with the greatest social and economic injustice which had existed in Mexico since even the time when it was wrested from the Aztecs and their allies. Since the beginning

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 263.

of Mexico there had been the landed and the landless.  
Without doubt and with the course of his convictions  
Mariano Azuela supported the landless peasant.

Andrés Pérez, Maderista

Dr. Azuela's first novel to appear during the period of the Revolution was published in the year 1911.<sup>1</sup> The setting of the novel is at first Mexico city but soon switches to the ranch of Toño Reyes which is called "La Esperanza."

During the first part of the story Mexico is still enjoying peace under the continued but now faltering dominance of the Díaz regime. The economic conditions which Azuela points out by way of background are far from pretty:

Este año del primero centenario de nuestra Independencia, los cereales han alcanzado un precio que no tiene precedente en la historia de la miseria del país. El jornalero mexicano, es decir más de doce millones de habitantes de la nación, se nutre sólo de maíz y de frijol. En donde un bracero gana treinta y siete centavos diarios, el maíz vale a siete pesos hectólitro y el frijol el doble. Pero el Gobierno gastará más de veinte millones de pesos en el embelecimiento de la metrópoli, millones de pesos en agasajar a los delegados extranjeros, llamados a festinar la primera centuria de nuestra emancipación política. Cuando menos, esos señores delegados irán plenamente satisfechos de la prosperidad desbordante de la República Mexicana.<sup>2</sup>

The author has indicated here a primary fault of the Díaz government. Don Porfirio put the material development of

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<sup>1</sup> Spell, op. cit., 67.

<sup>2</sup> Marino Azuela, Andrés Pérez, Maderista (Mexico, 1911), 5.



the country ahead of the education and improvement of the economic, moral, and political well-being of the common Mexican.

Andrés Pérez, the protagonist of this novel is a reporter for El Globo, a partisan newspaper of the Díaz government. The editor of El Globo expresses his opinion of the government's entertaining of the foreign delegates:

Si alguna vez ha sido indiscutible el tino del Gobierno, es la presente. Para vituperarlo se necesita pensar como cretino. El crédito de la nación estriba cabalmente en el concepto que de ella se forme el extranjero, y si el Gobierno ha conseguido dar una impresión fiel del innegable progreso que hemos alcanzado en cien años de vida propia, el Gobierno ha cumplido con su deber. Lo demás es imbécil.<sup>3</sup>

The editor has his own interests at heart when he speaks thus. He knows that his continued well-being depends on the continued existence, good or bad in respect to the welfare of the common people, of the Díaz government.

There is peace in the capital save for the disturbing student demonstrations, one of which Andrés Pérez is called upon to report:

"Grave escándalo provocado por la policía, niños perseguidos y atacados como....."

Un movimiento automático, adquirido en los quince meses que me llevo de reportero de "El Globo" me hace prontamente corregir el estúpido encabezado y sustituirlo en esta forma:

"Grave desordenes provocados anoche por los estudiantes. La policía forzada a tomar medidas

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 6.

de rigor para reprimir a los escándalos.....<sup>4</sup>

It is apparent from the above quotation that the newspapers in existence during the later Porfirian epoch were shackled. They reported the news in such a way that it cast the best possible light on the government. Andrés Pérez is well trained in his work.

Andrés receives an invitation from his friend Toño Reyes to visit him at his ranch some three hundred kilometers from Mexico city. Toño, a true altruistic liberal, and Andrés discuss the political situation at considerable length. The shady methods by which Díaz retains power after the election of 1910 is discussed:

--El Gobierno se ha burlado de estos pobres maderistas--pronuncié.

--El Gobierno se ha burlado de la manera más perversa y sangrienta, no de esas pobres maderistas, Andrés; se ha burlado de la nación entera; pero y te juro que esta burla puede costarle muy cara.

--En efecto, ustedes no saben cuánto malestar sacude, en corrientes subterráneas, a todas las clases sociales. Los mismos pancistas y presupuestívoros están divididos; los desacertados incansables de esta puerca administración tienen profundamente disgustado a todo el país. Pesa una atmósfera de plomo, y hay la vaga presunción de que algo muy grave va a ocurrir.<sup>5</sup>

Toño, the true liberal, is very much angered by the conduct of the government and Andrés points out to him that

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 20.

the air seems laden with discontent.

Meanwhile it has been learned that hostilities have broken out in the northern state of Chihuahua under the leadership of Francisco Madero. Toño and Andrés discuss its importance. Andrés is convinced that the government can handle the situation:

--Gracias, Toño--.....--pero este nubladillo no va a pasar más de una o dos semanas; el gobierno tiene fuerza suficiente para sofocar este estúpido movimiento revolucionario, y para que cesen estas persecuciones más estúpidas aun.<sup>6</sup>

From this remark and others Toño suspects that Andrés has no sympathy with the revolutionary movement. Toño is right but when an order comes from the government ordering the arrest of Andrés he is proclaimed as a Maderista, and, being an opportunist, he acts accordingly. Andrés becomes the local leader of the revolutionary cause. Ever a realist, Dr. Azuela from the outset satirizes the opportunists who are willing to join a cause for such completely selfish and personal motives. To this class belongs Andrés Pérez.

Those Mexican people who previously would go to a doctor merely because he was the physician of Carmelito Díaz now begin to become aware of quite another appraisal

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 42-3.

of the great don Porfirio Díaz:

¡Porfirio Díaz! ¿Qué puntos de contacto existen entre estos hombres? [Juárez, Hidalgo] Porfirio Díaz no ha sido más que una víctima de su propia ambición. Porfirio Díaz no supo ni cuando y ya había caído en las garras del partido contra el que cabalmente lucharon Hidalgo y Benito Juárez. Porfirio Díaz tiene su legítima filiación en Agustín de Iturbide, porque los que levantaron el trono para Agustín de Iturbide son los mismos que se han estado tracando a México, acaudillados por Porfirio Díaz.<sup>7</sup>

The apparent success of the Madero revolution had drained away any respect that had been conserved by the Díaz government. The inevitable had happened; and Porfirio Díaz, the dictator of Mexico for over thirty years, was being relegated to his niche in the history of a troubled nation.

Don Octavio makes perhaps a more accurate appraisal of the lasting significance of Díaz:

Por otra parte, ¿cree usted sinceramente que Porfirio Díaz sea nada más que un sucio borron en nuestra historia? Pues no señor, la figura odiosa del Dictador se fundirá en aras de la del Heroe de la Paz. Porfirio Díaz se destacará siempre grande, símbolo de una de la más urgentes necesidades del país, en el momento en que ha sentido su fuerza a punto de extinguirse; Porfirio Díaz ha side la inyección de morfina, que no cura, pero que da descanso y que da tiempo para almacenar fuerzas que permitan más tarde tolerar el cuchillo extirpador que debe curar.<sup>8</sup>

If peace in itself is a laudable achievement then Mexico owes much to Díaz.

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 59.

In dealing with the revolutionists Andrés Pérez learns from one of them, Vicente, how his ancestors had been robbed of their land:

Pues sepa el patrón que esa hacienda era una conreración, que, como legítima herencia estaba en propiedad de mi padre y cinco de mis tíos. Cuando don Porfirio mandó a los ingenieros del avalúo, nos robaron a todas nuestras tierras y nos echaron como a perros de nuestras casas, nos echaron a la desgracia a trabajar como burros para alcanzar a mal comer apenas.<sup>9</sup>

Andrés again expresses his complete pessimism and cynicism toward the success of this Revolution of 1910 or any other:

Los pueblos han derramado eternamente su sangre por arrancarse de sus carnes a los vampiros que los aniquilan; pero ni un sólo pueblo ha conseguido, ahora ni jamás, sino sustituir unos vampiros por otros vampiros.....Emperadores, Reyes, Papas, Presidentes.....no importa el nombre; pero serán siempre ellos.....porque la ley de la vida es el triumpho del fuerte.....<sup>10</sup>

The two main characters of the novel stand out in utter contrast to each other: Andrés is pessimistic, believing that no revolution can have any significance; and Toño, his good friend, enthusiastic idealist, supports the revolution although he personally has nothing to gain.

As the situation becomes more tense Andrés determines to flee to the United States. On his way, however he is seized and thrown in jail. In a skirmish between the government forces and those of Madero the maderistas are

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 93.

of the State of New York.

victorious, Andrés Pérez is released from jail and proclaimed a great hero. As Andrés comes forth he looks about him:

    Mi admiración tornóse en absoluto embobecimiento, cuando reparé en el coronel Hernández y su adlatere el periodista don Cuco...  
 ¡Los enemigos más rabiosos de Madero y de la Revolución, militando ahora en sus filas !<sup>11</sup>

Hernández, formerly a colonel in the federal army, had now become a general in the revolutionary forces! He was led only by his desire to maintain himself in a position of command.

In Andrés Pérez, Maderista, Azuela's first novel written during the period of the Revolution, the author expresses through the characters of the book some estimate of the previous period under the sway of Porfirio Díaz. Even during the regime of the great dictator Azuela was never inclined toward any uncritical appraisal of his regime. He had seen the essential flaws of poor distribution of property, lack of education of the common people, the economic dominance of foreign interests. In Andrés Pérez the author compares the governmental methods of Díaz to those of Iturbide. He was autocratic, and while he gave the peace and prosperity so essential to material progress, he failed to develop in the people respect for, and any experience in, the mechanics of government.

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 111.

Another special source of grievance to Azuela as expressed in this book was the demoralized condition of Mexico's press during the age of Díaz. Only those newspapers which depicted the government in a favorable light were allowed to exist.

In this first war time novel Dr. Azuela reiterates his feelings of pessimism which is so dominant in his works. His previously expressed discontent had blossomed now into action, but Azuela, ever the realist, saw in the Revolution the interplay of selfish motives which gave to any action in behalf of ideals the unmistakable tinge of personal ambitions. Mariano Azuela had depicted the spirit and character of the Revolution four years before Los de Abajo but perhaps not so dramatically. It is the opinion of this writer that Andrés Pérez presents the mood of the Revolution and that Los de Abajo has its superiority only in the dramatic pen pictures of revolutionary action.





### Sin Amor

The last novel by Dr. Azuela which falls within the period under consideration is Sin Amor which appeared in print in 1912.<sup>1</sup> It has as its setting the life of a small town as do two of its predecessors, María Luisa and Los Fracassados.

Ana María Romero is a sensitive young lady of good education who is wooed by Ramón Torralba, a wealthy but otherwise a contemptuously haughty young man whose family background encourages him to consider himself a very fine catch for any woman. He is morally degenerate, finding his greatest pleasure in gambling and drinking at the casino with his friends.

After preparing the reader to dislike Ramón Torralba and to hope that Ana María will not allow herself to marry Ramón, Azuela takes up the background of Ana María's mother and the young lady's early life. Lidia Delgado, the mother of Ana María, thought her life had been dominated by a desire for social position. In her youth she had dreamed of becoming doña Torralba but her plans had not materialized, and throughout the book her one dominating reason for existence is to see her daughter attain this coveted

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<sup>1</sup> Spell, op. cit., 73.

goal.

Lidia's first step in the "right direction" was in achieving her daughter's admittance to an exclusive girl's school. Her admission is contested by Escolástica Pérez, detestably haughty secretary of the school:

La solicitante es una niña de origen ignorado, de familia oscura, de la clase plebeya seguramente, y que, el admitirla, sería echar por tierra el principio inspirador de esta fundación.<sup>2</sup>

Lidia Delgado's desires prevail, however, and Ana María proceeds to receive an exclusive education at the desired school.

Azuella causes the reader to feel disrespect for Lidia who at every turn induces her daughter to avoid friends of her predilection and to associate with those whose companionship can have a possible advantage socially. It is a clever approach for Azuella in his campaign against class consciousness.

Another step that Lidia Delgado takes is to move to a better section of town where the contacts are to be preferred socially. She is able to do all this because she has a comfortable amount of money left to her by her husband. Lidia boasts to a neighbor of the fine friendships that her daughter is making:

Ana María vuelva ya muy alta, señor Luciano.

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<sup>2</sup> Mariano Azuella, Sin Amor (Mexico, 1945), Second edition, 24.

Ahí donde usted la ve, tiene ya sus grandes amistades con gente de la más alta aristocracia.<sup>3</sup>

But her mother had not anticipated the amount of expense involved in her social aspirations. Finally it becomes necessary for her to put a mortgage on their house. Lidia, however, feels it all worth while for Ramón Torralba is beginning to pay attention to Ana María.

Ana María does not love Ramón. She finally becomes so incensed with him that she breaks off their engagement. Her mother goes wild:

Entonces estalló la tempestad: gemidos, llanto, gritos, y las convulsiones que hacen retorcer las carnes.....de doña Lidia. Luego su voz se apaga sofocada, su respiración angustiosa se suspende por momentos y Ana María entra en seria alarma.<sup>4</sup>

Suddenly and inexplicably Ana María departs from her principles and her wishes and allows herself to be married to Ramón.

Throughout the book there runs another tale of Julia, a friend of Ana María, and Enrique Ponce. They are not concerned with marrying for financial reasons and for that reason they find happiness.

On the other hand, the once beautiful Ana María has been thoroughly indoctrinated into the ways of the Torralbas. Now fat and ugly she has become as haughty and

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 49.

hypocritical as they. In the last scene of the book she meets her old friend Julia but does not recognize her.

There is scarcely any mention of contemporary events in the novel. It does not seem to have been Azuela's purpose to describe them but rather to present a picture of the Mexican higher classes on the verge of an impending storm who fail to see in their treatment of the other people less fortunate than themselves their own eventual ruin. The intolerable snobbery and conceit of the characters of this novel cause resentment in the reader just as their living counterparts caused hatred among the lower class of Mexican people.

Enrique Ponce talking to Julia pretty well sums up the attitude of the people and of Azuela toward those who desire to place themselves above the common herd: "Hay aristocracias, primita, de hacerlo morir.....de risa. ¿A quién engañan estas pobres gentes con sus tontas pretensiones?"

## CONCLUSION

Mariano Azuela grew up during the glorious days of the Porfirian era, but unlike so many of his countrymen of similar economic background he never allowed himself to indulge in the luxury of uncritical adulation for the man who had ruled Mexico for so long. By nature a practical and clear visioned man, Azuela ridiculed those who unhesitatingly praised the great dictator, don Porfirio Díaz.

The dominant overall theme in the works considered is that denouncing social, economic, and political injustice and inequality. Dr. Azuela is a great commoner who felt no sympathy for a system which placed a premium on power, large fortunes, foreign investments, and railroads while at the same time it condoned ignorance, poverty, and myriad other evils especially the breaking up of communal lands together with increasing exploitation of the Indian masses.

Although there may be some danger in reading into Azuela's works more evidences of dissatisfaction of a revolutionary nature in retrospect than actually exists, in order to indicate a trend leading to a known point of view, there has been an attempt in this study to point out an increasing intensity of sentiment against certain social and economic evils previously discussed. This



is evidenced by an increased expression of bitterness and discontent. Furthermore, in Andrés Pérez, Maderista, the first war time novel, there is an expression of pessimism in regard to the results possible to be achieved through a particular leader or plan of action, which antedates a similar expression of that feeling so ingrained in the revolutionary masterpiece Los de Abajo. This latter work is a brilliant description of action but the former is a better analysis of the variously motivated elements which made up the revolutionary movement.

His last novel considered, Sin Amor, is largely a reiteration of a pre-war expression of discontent with existing social inequalities. It may have represented a reaction to the furor of the Revolution but more probably was a picture of the little-changed social and economic conditions as they existed during the early period of the Revolution when the older order of things was still largely undisturbed.

In a word, it has been the purpose of this paper to show the evolution of the revolutionary sentiment of Azuela through a period of expression of discontent developing into increased bitterness and culminating in a sentiment of pessimism and disillusionment toward the opportunistic supporters of the Revolution and the little-changed conditions still existing after its early phases. The economic, political, and social betterment of the average Mexican, the dream of Azuela, was still unattained.



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1. The first part of the document is a list of the names of the persons who have been named in the proceedings.

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