

# Mariano azuela's the underdogs

[Environment](#), [Animals](#)



Mariano Azuela's *The Underdogs*, is about a brotherhood of the Mexican people taking a journey with only one thing on their mind; revenge against Huerta and the Federales. In this story, we as the reader are confronted with characters, such as Demetrio Macias, who is destined to lead his people into the depths of retaining an incorrupt lifestyle and hopes to find peace from the effect of war. Although Demetrio is seen as one of the main characters in the novel, we are also briefly engaged in the other revolutionary forces under Pancho Villa, Carranza, Obregon, and by peasants under Zapata.

These appositional forces gain strength against the Huerta government as well. *The Underdogs* almost symbolizes a Robin Hood story, in which, Demetrio and his peasant guerrilla forces revolt against a higher commanding army of the government, that relies on corrupting the lives of innocent people. After reading the novel, the appendix which follows, brought on a wide range of comparisons and contrasts between the fictional story and the real events of the Mexican Revolution.

To begin, *The Underdogs* is depicted as a "circulatory novel" in which, Azuela suggests that Demetrio and his men never make any progress geographically, but instead are going around in circles. We can only assume that Azuela does this on purpose to make room for what he thinks is a literary connection between the story and the Revolution, in saying that the Revolution was ineffective and unsuccessful (p. 93). Although this example does not really tie into a universal agreement with the effects on the Mexican Revolution, it is interesting to gain an understanding on where Azuela's thoughts are within his novel.

However, the debate arises when the topic of 'ignorance and confusion' is introduced. The appendix argues that Demetrio and his army do not obtain a revolutionary mind set when it comes to fighting the Federales. Instead, they have more of a personal response. For example, one of the rebellious peasants under Demetrio, whose name is Guero Margarito, says "He[General Orozco] slapped my face when I was a waiter at Delmonico's in Chihuahua"(p. 62). We as the reader are submitted into a personal motivation that is driving Guero to take part in this Revolution.

We are also informed in the beginning of the novel that Demetrio has a personal reason for joining up with the rebel forces, when he was persecuted by a powerful landowner and political boss. There also lies a demoralization within Demetrio pertaining to revolutionary decisions. At one point he says, "Truth is I don't understand these here politics"(p. 71) and at another point in the story, he shows a puzzling understanding toward General Natera when Demetrio is asked if he's going to side with Villa or Carranza.

Both of these examples equally show Demetrio's fundamental comprehension of the Revolution, which further justifies his participation in it for personal reasons rather than political ones. Azuela also dramatizes on the caudillismo, which means, the tendency to follow the lead of strong men because of personal allegiance rather than political conviction. We see that Demetrio is a strong follower of this definition, in that he will gladly do what a strong man, such as Natera, will command him to do, without having to understand any political bounds.

In comparison to the novel to the history, it is true that Demetrio and his men were very poor and unequipped when it came to uniforms and

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weapons, as opposed to the Federales who did obtain a more bountiful amount of armory and new technological advances, such as the machine gun, which played a hefty role in demolishing the rebel forces. In contrast to the heavy duty weapons that the Federales acquired, the Mexican rebels only had the tools that they secured off of the enemy dead, like knives, homemade weapons and the limited amount of rifles.

Through the novel, Azuela writes as if we are seeing a small yet brave army with knives stand tall and victorious over a much larger group of soldiers with machine guns. However, when we read about a past historical battle between the rebels and the Federales, a revolutionary officer named Solis tells of how his soldiers were "mown down by the machine gun fire"(p. 97). But, in the story, we read that Demetrio and his soldiers charge up a hill and knife the Federales, while Demetrio "lassoes machine guns, roping them as if they were wild bulls"(p. 43).

We can only accept Azuela's decision to make it seem like the rebel forces had a chance against the Federales when indeed, they had a very slim possibility in succeeding. Although Azuela leaves out some true historical events, the appendix comments on how Azuela's unique and descriptive style of writing still leaves a meaningful connection between the novel and the reader. For example, in one passage, Azuela describes the Villista airplanes in action, referring to them as something the peasants in Mexico can relate to. He first compares them to a canoe, then to an automobile, and then to bombs to the act of feeding chickens.

However, it is important to note that Villa and his legendary Division del Norte are never seen in the novel, but the appendix does not argue that <https://assignbuster.com/mariano-azuelas-the-underdogs/>

Azuela's writing is very rich in respect to connecting the reader's perception of war with his words. This also generates the panoramic atmosphere that Azuela brings across in his writing when really he is rather focusing on a limited scope (p. 98). "Azuela's main focus in the novel is not trained on the vast historical sweep or ideological intricacies of the Revolution; his deepest interest is in its most humble protagonists" (p. 99).

This quote from the appendix invites a very important question; what was Azuela thinking when he named the book, *The Underdogs*? Demetrio and his men are against all odds of winning the Mexican Revolution, but if we think about this question in a wider retrospect, when we actually begin to understand Demetrio or Luis Cervantes's character even, we would agree with the appendix that these men are nothing compared to underdogs. Yes, they have come from the bottom of society, however, they are now fighting for something that they believe in, their interests, and "they are on the winning side" (p. 9). The reader is brought into a view of men who have decided to meet and rise into arms against the corruptions and injustices of their lives. In reconnecting back to the panoramic statement, the appendix comments on Azuela's approach on fragmenting his writing and lacking history within the Revolution. Within this technique, he decides to write about the things that he himself witnessed and merely ignores the experiences of famous leaders of the Revolution like Villa, Carranza, Obregon or Zapata.

Even when General Natera is in a scene with Demetrio, Azuela simply does not paint any interesting emotion within his character. Instead, Azuela is clearly focused on connecting the reader with the underdogs in any chance

he gets. The appendix describes that, " Their faces, expressions, actions, thoughts, hopes, and fears fill the pages of the novel"(p. 100). Azuela has also been deliberately attacked with accusations regarding his misunderstanding of the Mexican Revolution in regards to his fragmentary approach to writing *The Underdogs*.

However, he simply explained in an interview that he was just trying to show " the forest and not the trees" or the ignorance of the abuses and the personal benefit from the Revolution(p. 101). In this case, Azuela did succeed. In reading Anita Brenner's Review of the novel, she says that it is an " isolated masterpiece" however, she fears that there are still flaws within the novel. For example, she feels as though the story races and does not build like his other ones.

She thinks that a foreign reader of Azuela's work would " mistake fatigue for futility" and come to the conclusion that these rebel forces of men would have been killed for no practical purposes when their lives signified a spiritual change(p. 118). Since Azuela is not categorized as a post-revolutionary idealist, a reader may think that these men died for a less heroic cause, when this isn't true at all. Brenner also comments on the lack of feeling she gets when reading the English version of the novel as opposed to the Spanish version.

She ends with awkward and misunderstood phrases that the translator decided to use and remarks on how the " greatest modern book can only be retained in its true Spanish tongue"(p. 119). In conclusion, *The Underdogs*, by Mariana Azuela symbolizes a double-edged sword. In one viewing, it foreshadows the succession that Azuela mirrors within his words as applying

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a distinct focus on the protagonists; the picturesque and real emotions depicted by Demetrio and his army. And in a second, more authentic notion, almost fails to unite with the Mexican Revolution through Azuela's fragmentation approach and limit on historical events.