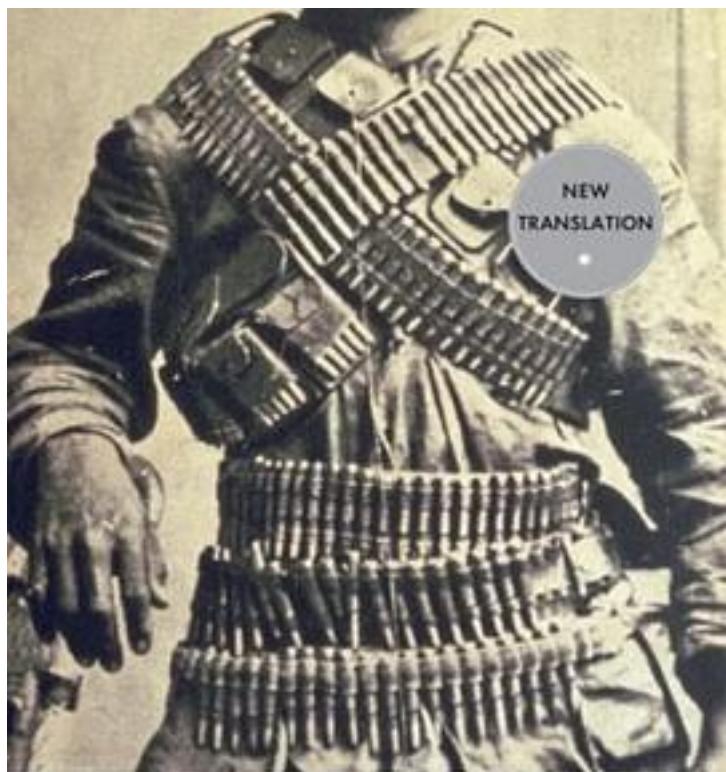


# The Underdogs



PENGUIN CLASSICS

MARIANO AZUELA

*The Underdogs*  
*A Novel of the Mexican Revolution*

*Introduction by CARLOS FUENTES*

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First published in 1915, Azuela's groundbreaking novel about a Mexican peasant who becomes a revolutionary leader is now being issued in a revised translation with a set of illuminating footnotes (notes and revisions by Beth E. Jurgensen). Demetrio Macias is the protagonist who joins the rebels in their efforts to overthrow Mexico's corrupt dictator, Porfirio Diaz, and Macias's brash approach to military tactics speeds his rise through the ranks. His background is articulated by journalist Luis Cervantes, who abandons the government to aid the rebels as he provides background on Macias in the early chapters. While the new general's forces engage in a series of hit-and-run battles with Federal troops, Azuela adds two romantic subplots, one about a difficult young woman named Pintada, who bonds with one of the other generals in the company; the other involves Camilla, a peasant girl who expresses her ardor for Cervantes early on, but ends up falling for Macias. The battle scenes are stirring, if somewhat underdeveloped, and Azuela highlights the conflict with a cameo appearance by Pancho Villa as the tide begins to turn against the rebels. Overall, the story is too incomplete to be labeled a classic by modern standards. What makes the book memorable is its portrayal of Macias as an archetype of Mexico's national character, as the peasant expresses his ongoing love for the process and pageantry of the revolution. The translation feels awkward, but Jurgensen's footnotes and the introduction (by Ilan Stavans) add colorful details and definitions while filling in some narrative and historical gaps.

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Azuela was one of several well-known Latin American writers, among them Martin Luis Guzman, Gregorio Lopez y Fuentes, and Rafael Munoz, who worked in the genre known as the "novel of the Mexican Revolution." Although Azuela (1873-1952) wrote *Los de Abajo* (The Underdogs) in 1915, it didn't begin to have a following until almost a decade later. Azuela received the Prize in Letters from the Mexican National Society for the Arts and Sciences in 1940 and remained Mexico's foremost novelist until his death. The novel chronicles the conflict between the revolutionaries and the federales (government troops), focusing on war and its effect on the people. This translation, accompanied by critical essays, is the first volume in a series that promises to introduce authoritative new English editions of classic works. Recommended for libraries that purchase Latin American literature.

- Peggie Partello, Keene State Coll., N.H.

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?Mariano Azuela, more than any other novelist of the Mexican Revolution, lifts the heavy stone of history to see what there is underneath it.?? -- Review --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

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