

Seeing Monstrosity in Mariano Azuela's *Los de abajo*

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“The nineteenth-century abnormal individual is distinguished by a kind of monstrosity that is increasingly faded and diaphanous and by a rectifiable incorrigibility surrounded by apparatuses of rectification.”

-- Michael Foucault, *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1974-1975*

“Un país increíble, lleno de maravillas y monstruos”

-- Rodolfo Usigli, *El Gesticulador*

Assessing the current reception of Azuela

The usual case of how Mariano Azuela came to be praised as the quintessential novelist of the Mexican Revolution has been well documented. The medical student's unheralded vault from Grub Street obscurity to literary glory during the second half of the 1920s was precipitated by the ‘discovery’ of a novel Azuela had written to little fanfare roughly ten years earlier—*Los de abajo*.¹ The novel first appeared in 1915 in El Paso, Texas, where Azuela published it in serialized form in the journal *El Paso del Norte*. In the years following, Azuela continued to edit his manuscript even while searching for a publisher. Although it is possible that 1916 and 1917 editions of the work existed at one time, what is known with certainty is that Azuela, unable to convince others of his novel's worth, chose to finance its publication himself in 1920.² Azuela would remain a virtual unknown for yet another four long years, during which time Pancho Villa was assassinated, José Vasconcelos published *La raza cósmica* (1925), and Plutarco Elías Calles, as President, spearheaded the process of institutionalizing the 1910 Revolution.³ Within this historical context, Azuela received his big break.⁴

In this essay, I examine *Los de abajo* by activating Raymond Williams' concepts of dominant, residual, and emergent culture—which he first elaborated in 1977's *Marxism and Literature*—and which proposes that culture should be understood as a constantly shifting set of relations. Specifically, I explore the elements of *Los de abajo* that Williams would understand as ‘residual elements’—the meanings, values, and social practices that were engendered and cultivated at a time predating a text's creation. Residual elements, although oftentimes appearing

anachronistic and muted, remain salient even within a transformed socio-historical milieu (121-127). More specifically, here I analyze not those elements of *Los de abajo* which suggest the text's relationship to the scientific discourses that saw a heyday during the period previous to the 1910 Revolution: namely, the Porfiriato, era in which Mexico, under President Porfirio Díaz (1876-1911), experienced the combined forces of modernization, economic expansion, and political stability. Under Díaz, Mexico was largely managed under the guise of scientific rationality and positivism, a school of thought of European provenance that tasked itself with transforming the social world via ideologically-sound investigation and subsequent, enlightened intervention.⁵ *Los de abajo* includes many notions of scientific reasoning; Azuela employs rhetorical strategies that were buttressed by scientific knowledge and used—most significantly during the Porfiriato—in order to undermine undesirable social behaviors. More specifically, in *Los de abajo*, Azuela recurs to scientific discourses in order to describe unfamiliar social phenomena: namely, the Mexican Revolution itself.

I signal two primary examples of how scientific knowledge is included in *Los de abajo*. First, I show that Azuela employs the language of pathology—that is, the study of the causes and effects of diseases—in order to understand his own literary creation and, moreover, the Revolution itself. Second, I demonstrate that teratology—the study of anatomical abnormalities or ‘monsters,’ which garnered immense interest during the Porfiriato, and which was intimately linked to Mexican nationalism—is activated in order to comprehend certain characters in the novel. In sum, with the following, I examine *Los de abajo* not as a “precursor” of the novels of the Mexican Revolution (Dulsey 383) but rather, as a text located against the backdrop of the scientific discourses that defined Díaz's Mexico.

Pathology and teratology

The Díaz government promoted scientific reasoning in order to both legitimate its authority and to transform the Mexican nation-state: to rid society of disease, to reorganize urban spaces, and to promote modernity.⁶ In order to achieve these goals, Díaz's phalanx of technocrats necessarily sought out society's aberrations, its disorderly elements, its maladies. Thus, Mexican scientists were to led both to diseases and to monsters.

Gabriela Castañeda-López details how both pathology and teratology were studied contemporaneously in Mexico during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, oftentimes via the same language, and furthermore, even in the exact same locale. For instance, within Mexico City's Hospital de San Andrés, deformed bodies—anatomically abnormal curiosities—were put on display in the hospital's Museo Anatomopatológico even while, but a few steps down the hall in the hospital's Bacteriological section, infectious diseases, only viewable via microscopes, were being studied.⁷ This combined investigation of pathology and teratology was realized under the direction of Rafael Lavista (1839-1900), director of the Hospital de San Andrés. Lavista founded the Museo Anatopatológico in 1895 and a year later, in 1896, the museum was expanded to include a bacteriology section.⁸ When its organizational scheme was eventually completed, the entire center, dedicated to the study of infectious diseases, was christened as the Instituto Patológico.⁹ The museum in the Hospital de San Andrés, in turn, housed three different sections dedicated respectively to anatomic pathology, clinical pathology, and bacteriology.

The Pathological Institute's dual interests were not merely a matter of happenstance. For Porfirian positivists, both teratology and pathology demanded the same scientific method: observation, measurement, classification, and—if necessary—action. In a real way, it was believed that both monstrosities and bacteria differed not so much in kind but rather, in scale.

Monstrosity was, thus, not outside the limits of scientific comprehension: it only occupied the extreme end on a spectrum of pathology. Among those scientists who had laid the groundwork for Mexico's long-standing interest in teratology was obstetrician Juan María Rodríguez (1828-1894), whose investigations of monsters often appeared in *La Gaceta Médica de México*.¹⁰ All told, pathology and monstrosity were at the heart of Mexico's battle for modernity in the latter half of the nineteenth century, as the nation fought against both disease and social aberrations.

Moreover, Mexico's hunt for monsters was not only associated with wiping out illnesses: as Frida Gorbach explains, in Díaz's Mexico, teratology was also related to nationality. Like the association between teratology and pathology, the connection between monsters and Mexico was both spatial and temporal. Thus, 1895 saw the inauguration of the 'salón de teratología' [Teratology Room] located in the Museo Nacional de Historia Natural in Mexico City. Directed by zoologist Jesús Sánchez (1842-1911), the museum aimed to present Mexico in its totality, from its indigenous past to the present day: included among its collection were not only Aztec artifacts but also, deformed biological specimens. During a single visit, museum-goers could see the gigantic statue of Coatlicue located right beside two-headed sheep preserved in alcohol, six-footed pigs, and photographs of hermaphrodites.

Intellectuals of the day also saw monstrosity in the Mexican character. Nineteenth-century *científicos* employed the authority of the biological sciences in order to prove the remarkableness of Mexican identity, even if that meant focusing on traits that could be regarded not only as unique but even freakish. Vicente Riva Palacio, in *México a través de los siglos* described Mexicans as "truly exceptional" due to their lack of body hair and notable substitution of a canine tooth for a molar.¹¹ As Roberto Moreno reports, intellectual elites, inspired by the work of Darwin, prefigured the type of discourse that José Vasconcelos would refer to in the

twentieth century as “the cosmic race.”¹² Roger Bartra, too, does well to point out the monstrous quality that oftentimes found its way into Mexico’s discourse of national exceptionality during the twentieth century.¹³ In sum, both pathology and monstrosity were very much part of the ongoing promotion of science and nation in Díaz’s Mexico.

Looking for revolutionary pathogens

As is well known, *Los de abajo* recounts the 1910 Mexican Revolution from the perspective of a ragtag group of Villistas who take on Federal troops. Yet the soldiers, led by a sullen man made for armed conflict, Demetrio Macías, generally lack any strong sense of political ideology. Travelling around the state of Jalisco, Macías and his men enjoy occasional success on the battlefield, but generally have little sense of what they are fighting for. The novel ends with Macías having returned to his hometown of Limón, defeated yet unable to put down his arms. Although the novel has been interpreted in a number of ways, as of yet no study has examined the text’s representation of the Revolution as a product of disease and monstrosity—that is, the novel’s pathological and teratological elements. First, I shall examine images of contagion in the novel.

The metaphor of disease is included early on in *Los de abajo* and most specifically revolves around the character of Luis Cervantes. Cervantes, a journalist and a medical student, joins Macías’s soldiers claiming to be a deserter from the Federal army, claiming to have been mistreated by them. Cervantes, an intellectual, quickly learns how to manipulate the brutish and oftentimes cruel Macías. Moreover, and more important for this investigation, I propose that both Cervantes and the revolutionary movement itself proceed through the text very much like pathogens.

Immediately upon his arrival, it is explained the “Luis Cervantes, pues se hizo acreedor a la confianza de la tropa” [Luis Cervantes, therefore, won the confidence of the troops] (26).¹⁴ Like a disease, he invades his hosts and begins to manipulate them. After Demetrio is wounded during a skirmish, Venancio (whom is usually called on by the troops for medical issues) jealously warns Macías that “curros” [city slickers] evince a preternatural ability to get under the skin of others: “son como la humedad, por dondequiera se filtran” [like humidity, they seep in anywhere] (39). Cervantes’s movements and manipulations are not very different from those of virus. Yet, even while Cervantes, in becoming the spokesperson of Macías’s troops, comes to represent the revolutionary movement, he also has the capacity to ‘cure’. As fellow soldier Anastasio Montañés explains to Macías while cajoling him to request Cervantes’s medical know-how, “—Si viera, él se cura solo y anda ya tan aliviado que ni cojea siquiera” [You should see how he cured himself, and he’s already so much better he doesn’t even limp] (37).

Yet other ideas and characters move through the narration like pathogens, having the ability to wield notable influence on others. Like disease, they can ‘infect’ other characters or, adversely, be ‘infected’ by them. Instances of interpersonal influence, I propose, appear not as logical processes but rather, as unpredictable and invasive transmissions. For instance, when Cervantes is asked incredulously by another soldier, Solís, how it is that he had joined the Revolutionaries, Cervantes replies: “--¡La verdad de la verdad, me han convencido!” [The real truth is that they convinced me!] (68). Similar, too, is the relationship between Demetrio and Camila, the young peasant girl who he takes a liking to. “Demetrio estrechó a Camila amorosamente por la cintura, y quién sabe qué palabras susurró a su oído. —Sí—contestó ella débilmente. Porque ya le iba cobrando “voluntá” [Demetrio embraced Camila lovingly around

the waist, and who knows what words he whispered in her ear. “Yes,” she answered weakly. Because “he was growing on her”] (115).

In yet other instances, news items and feelings move among the troops in contagious ways. Particularly illustrative is how revolutionary fervor runs through the troops like a disease when it is reported that Pancho Villa himself is due to rendezvous with Macías’s men:

-- ¡Que viene Villa! La noticia se propagó con la velocidad del relámpago.

-- ¡Ah, Villa!...La palabra mágica. El gran hombre que se esboza; el guerrero invicto que ejerce a distancia ya su gran fascinación de boa.

-- ¡Nuestro Napoleón mexicano! – exclama Luis Cervantes.

[“Here comes Villa!”

The news spread with the speed of lightning.

Ah, Villa!...The magic word. The great man appears; the unvanquished warrior who even from a distance can charm like a boa.

“Our Mexican Napoleon!” exclaims Luis Cervantes] (73)

Even when they finally reach their hometown, after their long journey, Demetrio’s men experience thoughts and emotions as a collective. The narrator goes so far as to describe these shared feelings as infectious. “Los soldados caminan por el abrupto peñascal contagiado de la alegría de la mañana... cantan, ríen y charlan locamente” [The soldiers walk along the rough stony mountainside, infected by the joy of the morning...the soldiers sing, laugh and talk wildly] (148). Crazy ideas about the Revolution have become totalizing.

Violent impulses, too—indeed, the defining character of Macías’s ‘revolution’—become infectious among the troops during their dizzying march through Jalisco. Thus, when one of Macías’s men, Codorniz, buys and subsequently smashes an Oliver typewriter—one of the many

items of war booty taken by the troops—other soldiers, too, are inspired by his savage deed and follow suit:

La Codorniz, por veinticinco centavos, tuvo el gusto de tomarla en sus manos y de arrojarla luego contra las piedras, donde se rompió ruidosamente.

Fue como una señal: todos los que llevaban objetos pesado o molestos comenzaron a deshacerse de ellos, estrellándolos contra las rocas. Volaron los aparatos de cristal y porcelana; gruesos espejos, candelabros de latón, finas estatuillas, tibores y todo lo redundante del “avance” de la jornada quedó hecho añicos por el camino.

[For twenty-five cents Codorniz had the pleasure of taking it in his hand and then throwing it against the rocks. Crystal and china objects flew; heavy mirrors, brass candlesticks, fine statuettes, vases, and all the days loot considered redundant were left, smashed to pieces by the roadside] (71)

Indeed, during the peak of scientific thinking at the end of the nineteenth century, even social phenomena were investigated as if it expressed the same qualities as living, biological beings. With the previous passages, Azuela is likely indebted to Frenchman Gustave Le Bon's 1895 tract *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind*. Here, Le Bon links crowds to cells that, when operating as a whole, oftentimes promote civil unrest: “[i]deas, sentiments, emotions, and beliefs possess in crowds a contagious power as intense as that of microbes” (78). The Frenchman's theories, in which social contagions were cultivated alongside theories of bacteria, were influential among the Porfirian intelligentsia.

This brings up a second point. Confronted by so many contagions—social or otherwise—characters in Azuela's novel are naturally tasked to see more clearly the pathologies of

revolution. Throughout the novel, great efforts are made to visually discern the reality of the insurrection. Not unlike another famous Frenchman, Louis Pasteur (1822-1895), whose ocular investigations into disease blurred the distinctions between the human and the non-human,¹⁵ in *Los de abajo*, characters find themselves straining to ‘see’ the true nature of disease, the attributes of the armed movement. We are tasked to ‘see’ the truth of the Revolution.

The theme of ocular inquiry echoes throughout Azuela’s text. While Louis Pasteur employed the newest techniques in order to hunt ‘invisible monsters’, *Los de abajo* privileges the visual in hopes of describing the pathological or the aberrant. It is not mere coincidence that “ojo” [eye] is included thirteen times in the text while “ojos” [eyes] is included an amazing fifty-three times. Much like a 1911 cartoon found in the journal *Multicolor*, Azuela’s characters, too, wonder the extent to which they can ‘see’ the encroaching insurrection (See figure 1).

From the first pages of the novel, attempts are made to optically comprehend the social pathogen that is the Revolution. Thus, when Federal troops first arrive to Macías’s house, effectively invading the domestic sphere, Macías’s wife peers out into the darkness, trying to better see the invaders. “La mujer fijaba sus pupilas en la oscuridad de la sierra” [The woman’s eyes searched the darkness of the sierra] (7). Towards the end of the novel, Macías, unsettled by the sheer number of soldiers that have joined his troop, attempts to adjudicate whether the new men aren’t, in fact, turncoats: Have they fled Villa’s ranks? Thus, lining them up, leader Demetrio Macías accuses them. “—Ustedes no son pacíficos, ustedes son desertores. ¿De dónde vienen? – prosiguió Demetrio observándolos con ojo penetrante” [“You aren’t *pacíficos*; you’re deserters. Where are you coming from?” Demetrio continued watching them with a sharp eye] (137).

Characters are constantly straining to see so as to better understand their particular situation, no matter how dire their circumstances or how grim the scene. For example, we see La Pintada, Demetrio's continually jealous and nosy lover, peer through a keyhole of a closed door. Here, she sees what was expected: namely, one of the most savage soldiers in Demetrio's camp—Güero Margarito—having his way with a young girl that Luis Cervantes had already claimed as his own. Demetrio, in turn, is known for his ocular acuity, particularly in relation to his marksmanship. "Demetrio apunta y no yerra un solo tiro... ¡Paf!... ¡Paf!... ¡Paf!... Su puntería famosa lo llena de regocijo; donde pone el ojo pone la bala" [Demetrio aims and he doesn't miss a single shot... Paf!... Paf!... Paf! His famous marksmanship fills him with joy; wherever he aims the bullet finds its mark] (151). Finally, city slicker Luis Cervantes, too, strains to see in the dark countryside during his first moments among Demetrio's men. "Luis Cervantes no aprendía aún a discernir la forma precisa de los objetos a la vaga tonalidad de las noches estrelladas, y buscando el mejor sitio para descansar" [Luis Cervantes was still not used to discerning the precise shape of objects by the dim light of starlight nights, and looking for the best place to rest] (25).

Perhaps the most striking example in *Los de abajo* of how scientific discourses having to do with visual acumen and disease are employed is seen in Chapter 8, when Luis Cervantes treats his gunshot wound. While he bandages himself, using microbiological knowledge perfected by namesake Louis Pasteur, Camila, the young country girl who falls in love with Cervantes, narrates her shock while watching the procedure. Tellingly, at the center of the discussion is the inability to 'see' pathogens:

¡Oiga, ¿y quién lo insinó a curar?... ¿Y pa qué jirvió la agua?... ¿Y los trapos, pa qué los coció?... ¡Mire, mire, cuánta curiosidá pa todo!... ¿Y eso que se echó en las manos?... ¡Pior! ... ¿Aguardiente de veras?... ¡Ande, pos si yo creiba que el aguardiente

nomás pal cólico era gueno! ¡Ah! ... ¿De moo es que musté iba a ser dotor? ... ¡Ja, ja, ja! ... ¡Cosa de morirse uno de risa!... ¡Quesque animales en la agua sin jervir!... ¡Fuch! ... ¡Pos cuando ni yo miro nada!...

[“Hey, who taught you to tend a wound?...And what’s the water for?...And the rags, why’d you boil them?...Well look at that, such a fuss bout everything!...And what’s that you put on your hands?...No!...*Aguardiente*, for real? Go figure, and I thought *aguardiente* was only good for colic!...Ah!...Were you really gonna be a doctor?...Ha, ha, ha!...I’ll die laughing yet!...Things you make up!...Animals in unboiled water!...Yuck...Anyways, when I look I don’t see nothing!...] (32).

In the theatrical version of *Los de abajo* from 1929, Camila’s shock is even more palpable, and even greater emphasis is put on the strange sophistication of Cervantes’s advanced modes of seeing. Cervantes uses the terms “microbios” and “desinfectar” explicitly,¹⁶ and Camila wonders aloud “¿Qué visión es ésta? (III, 27). Indeed, it is Cervantes’s acute ability to ‘see’ which provides him the capacity to manipulate others. His understanding of the Revolution, tellingly, is also described in visual language:

Y Luis Cervantes, que compartía ya con la tropa aquel odio solapado, implacable y mortal a las clases, oficiales y a todos los superiores, sintió que de sus ojos caía hasta la última telaraña y vio claro el resultado final de la lucha.

[And Luis Cervantes, who already shared with the rank and file that surreptitious, implacable, mortal hatred for all noncoms, officers and all superiors, felt the last cobwebs fall from his eyes, and he saw clearly the end result of the struggle] (28)

With this, Luis Cervantes, the most scientifically-minded of Macías’s troop, sees the Revolution for what it is: a plague.

Seeing monstrosity

Having shown how thoughts, emotions, and characters move through *Los de abajo* like pathogens, and furthermore, how both readers and characters are tasked to more accurately observe those pathogens in order to divine the Revolution's essence, I shall now examine the other aspect of the scientific discourse used by Azuela and that I have already signaled above—namely, monstrosity. Some scholars have already hinted at the 'monstrous' character of Azuela's text. Indeed, Renaldi is correct in stating that, [s]ome characters are distorted, revealing only some grotesque quality, while others are sustained in semi-anonymity behind never-disclosed facial details" (36). Mansour, too, does well to mention that many of the men in Demetrio's troop are described as bestial or monstrous.¹⁷ Yet both critics fail to signal the scientific discourses that undergird such descriptions, nor do they link those discourses directly to nationalist ideology. The point bears repeating: in *Los de abajo*, the Revolution—this monstrous, seemingly contagious event, as well as its grotesque perpetrators—is presented as the text's object of analysis. Finally, in this sense, too, Azuela writes within his historical moment. Indeed, the Zapatista movement was commonly characterized as either an infection or a monstrosity.¹⁸ As Mraz explains, "[a]lthough Zapata's struggle against the Porfiriato had initially invoked sympathy, some came to view him as a "monster" (236).

Various characters—especially those within Demetrio's troop—are described by way of a deeply monstrous typology. Characters' moral and political deformities are reiterated by their physiological traits. For example, one of Macías's men, Pancraccio, expresses an "inmutabilidad repulsiva de su duro perfil de prognato" [and Pancraccio, the repulsively immutable, hard profile, with his projecting jaw] (18). Another of the soldiers, Meco, is described as "un individuo que sólo en los ojos y en los dientes tenía algo de blanco" [all dark except for the white of his eyes

and teeth] (15). The rural, poor townspeople that Demetrio and his troops encounter during their march are similarly described in terms associated with deformity. Thus, it seems that the moral aberrations of one of the camp's prostitutes, María Antonia, are underscored by her physique—she is one-eyed, “cacariza y con una nube en un ojo” [pockmarked and with cataracts] (53). The cruelest member of Demetrio's posse, Güero Margarito, is described as “hombrecillo redondo, de bigotes retorcidos, ojos azules muy malignos que se le perdían entre los carrillos y la frente cuando se reía” [a little round man with a handlebar mustache and truly evil blue eyes that disappeared between his cheeks and his forehead when he laughed] (89). Ironically, it is he who will describe other characters as deformed. We see him shooting at a short barman's feet, causing him to ‘dance’ and ridiculing his physical features: “¿Ya ve cómo se sabe bailar los enanos?” [You know how to do the dwarf dance?] (127). Finally, when Demetrio's troops arrive back in their home in Juchipila, we see the ravages of war described in monstrous terminology. “En las bocas oscuras de las chozas se aglomeraron chomites incoloros, pechos huesudos, cabezas desgreñadas y, detrás, ojos brillantes y carrillos frescos” [The dark mouths of the huts were crowded with colorless *chomites*, bony breasts, disheveled heads, and right behind them, bright eyes and fresh cheeks] (20). Cervantes, typical of a medical student and a journalist, surveys the men, describing them as deformed:

Contempló a sus centinelas tirados en el estiércol y roncando. En su imaginación revivieron las fisonomías de los dos hombres de la víspera. Uno, Pancracio, agüerado, pecoso, su cara lampiña, su barba saltona, la frente roma y oblicua, untadas las orejas al cráneo y todo de un aspecto bestial. Y el otro, el Manteca, una piltrafa humana: ojos escondidos, Mirada torva, cabellos muy lacios

cayéndole a la nuca, sobre la frente y las orejas; sus labios de escrofuloso entreabiertos eternamente.

Y sintió una vez más que su carne achinaba.

[He observed his guards lying in the manure and snoring. The faces of the two men from the previous evening were revived in his imagination. One of them, Pancracio, was blondish, freckled, had a hairless face, with a jutting chin, a flat sloping forehead, and ears glued to his skull, and was, on the whole, beastlike in his appearance. The other, Manteca, was skin and bones: sunken crossed eyes, with very straight hair falling on his neck, over his forehead and ears, his scrofulous lips eternally half open.

And he felt once again that he was getting gooseflesh] (28)

The most striking example of seeing monsters in *Los de abajo*, tellingly, is juxtaposed alongside images of Aztec artifacts. That is, not unlike the Teratology Room located in the Museo Nacional de Historia Natural in Mexico City, Azuela, too, situates that which is understood as traditionally, characteristically Mexican—Aztec culture—next to monsters. While Demetrio's soldiers march on, the following description is provided:

El paisaje se aclara, el sol asoma en una faja escarlata sobre la diafanidad del cielo. Vanse destacando las cordilleras como monstruos alargados, de angulosa vertebradura; cerros que parecen testas de colosales ídolos aztecas, caras de gigantes, muecas pavorosas y grotescas, que ora hacen sonreír, ora dejan un vago terror, algo como presentimiento de misterio.

[Gradually the mountain ranges emerge like monstrous lizards with angular vertebrae; mountains that seem like colossal heads of Aztec idols, like the faces of giants,

fearsome and grotesque grimaces, that now make you smile, now fill you with a vague terror, a mysterious foreboding] (97)

In this way, I propose, *Los de abajo* can be understood as a telluric novel—meant to describe the customs and behaviors of a singular nation.¹⁹ In Azuela's novel, the monstrous is not only associated with pathogens: it is also at the heart of what it means to be Mexican. Not unlike Octavio Paz, for whom *machismo* would be the symptomatic trait of *mexicanidad* less than half a century later, in Azuela's novel, deformities and diseases, for better or for worse, are pointed to as uniquely Mexican.



Figure 1. "Con los anteojos al revés." *Multicolor*. June 22, 1911.

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¹ See Leal's "Prólogo."

² Robe 73.

³ See Benjamin for a description of the process of the Revolution's institutionalization.

⁴ Azuela's novel came to gain fame after literary critic Francisco Monterde García Icazbalceta, in the newspaper *El Universal* on December 25, 1924, published a column entitled "Existe una literatura mexicana viril" [A Manly Mexican Literature Does Exist]. The author celebrates Mariano Azuela as the writer most committed to celebrating the Mexican Revolution via literature.

⁵ See Tenorio-Trillo and Galvarriato A. Gómez.

⁶ "En años recientes se ha despertado en México el interés por estudiar la relación entre los discursos científicos y la idea de nación y, en este sentido, ya muy pocos pueden esquivar la pregunta por las relaciones entre saber y poder ni dejar de lado la necesidad de desenmascarar la ideología a través de la cual la ciencia europea adquirió sentido en México" (Gorbach 119).

⁷ As Castañeda López underscores the association between pathology and deformity (or monstrosity), stating, “[e]n principio, la patología se limitó a estudiar las alteraciones morfológicas visibles, para luego pasar a su análisis microscópico” (52).

⁸ Servín 39.

⁹ Priego 86-87.

¹⁰ As Gorbach explains “la teratología alcanzó a permear no sólo la discusión médica de entonces, sino también los fundamentos de nuevas disciplinas como la biología y la antropología. Por eso puedo afirmar que también en México los monstruos fueron casi omnipresentes” (22). Furthermore, she proposes that, in the case of Mexican scientists, “[l]a fisiología demostraba que lo patológico era un concepto idéntico al de lo normal y que por tanto lo monstruoso formaba parte de la línea continúa que unía ambos estados. [Juan María] Rodríguez insistió muchas veces en ellos; para él, la organización monstruosa no era muy distinta de la normal; aunque extravagante, decía en su primer estudio de caso, ella no está “sujeta a otros principios distintos que los que presiden lo normal de los seres perfectos”; había monstruosidad, pero no era que, para definir lo monstruoso, necesariamente había que distanciarse de la fisiología y mirar lo normal ya no en relación a sí mismo, sino desde lo patológico y su diferencia con lo monstruoso” (2008 48).

¹¹ Gorbach (2001, 57-63). Also see Gorbach 2008.

¹² “La raza indígena, juzgada conforme a los principios de la escuela evolucionista, es indudable que ésta en un period de perfección y progreso corporal superior al de todas las otras razones conocidas” (cited in Moreno 326).

¹³ “Mexican culture in the first half of the twentieth century created a formidable myth in which Mexicans carry the Indian, the barbarian, the savage, or the child like homunculus within them” (Bartra 77).

¹⁴ All translations of Azuela’s novel come from Pellón’s 2006 edition.

¹⁵ Goldhammer remind us, “[e]ven today, the balance between Homo sapiens and Louis Pasteur’s ‘invisible army’ of microbes is by no means decided...” (26).

¹⁶ The entire passage from *Cuadro 2* shows the following:

Cervantes: Eso es para matar los microbios.

Camila: “¿Y qué es eso de microbios?

Cervantes: Unos animalitos que andan en el agua y se mueren cuando hierve.

Camila: (Mirando muy atentamente el fondo de la olla.)

¡Fuche! ¡Qué mentiras! ¡Cuando ni yo miro nada!

Cervantes: Ahora, ponme un chorro de aguardiente en las manos.

Camila: ¿Aguardiente en las manos? ¿Y eso?

Cervantes: Para desinfectarlas.” (Azuela 3: 27)

¹⁷ “Los personajes principales, pues, son bestias brutas e inconscientes o son perros, animales insignificantes, fieles sí, pero dependientes y fácilmente humillables. Da la casualidad que todos símiles o las metáforas que se crean con estos animales se refieren a los pobres, sean soldados o no. Cervantes, Solís, Valderrama, Natera, nunca participan de este tipo de figuras retóricas” (Mansour 311).

¹⁸ See “El Zapataismo y los Hacendados de Morelos. El caso Escandón.” *El Imparcial*. November 15, 1912. Print. Also see “¿El Zapatismo es Zapata?” *El Imparcial*. October 12, 1912. Print. Also, “La última declaración del Señor Presidente es Retardada, es injusta y no es verdadera.” *El Imparcial*. November 20, 1911 2. Print; “La orgia de la sangre y de la muerte.” *El*

Imparcial. August 14, 1912. Print; finally, “Un perfil de la anarquía zapatista.” *El Imparcial*. December 21, 1911. Print.

¹⁹ King considers *Los de abajo* a telluric novel: “Azuela (1873-1952) captured realistically the hinterlands and peasants of Northern Mexico in the middle of a civil war (later called the Revolution); he mocked the role of the elitist writer with his character, the ironically named coward Cervantes, who, instead of being the intellectual leading the masses, typically benefits from his opportunism, while his peasant hero dies pointlessly. Azuela adapted nineteenth-century realism, an evident debt in his other novels, while journalistic deadlines ironically enforced a modern, cinematic quality, capturing the novelty and violence of social change in Mexico.” (89)