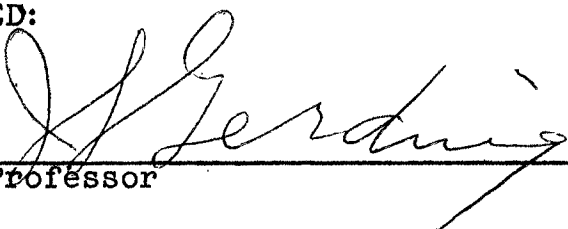
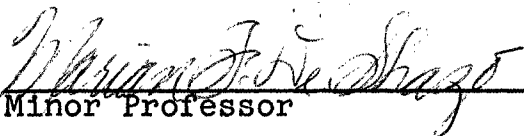
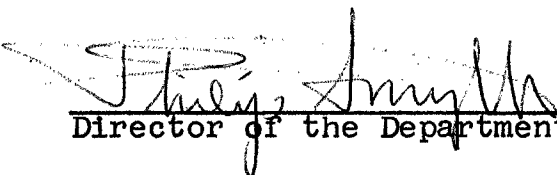


THE ANTIHERO IN THE NOVELS OF
JUAN ANTONIO DE ZUNZUNEGUI

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THE ANTIHERO IN THE NOVELS OF
JUAN ANTONIO DE ZUNZUNEGUI

THESIS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Juan Antonio de Zunzunegui was born December 21, 1901, at Portugalete, a village located at the entrance of the estuary of Bilbao. His parents were don Casimiro de Zunzunegui y Echevarría and doña Rosa de Loredó y Vicuña, both of Bilbao. His father was a businessman with interests in iron mining and was well-to-do before the Spanish War. One year before Juan Antonio was born his father had leased one of the best iron mines in the Biscay area. Upon his father's death, Zunzunegui closed the mine and went to Madrid to be a novelist. In his introduction to Mis páginas preferidas he tells his readers: "Todo esto lo cuento para indicar que mi niñez, adolescencia y juventud han sido confortables y muy holgadas."¹ He has always been proud of the fact that he declined a position of wealth and prestige, and states that now, thanks to his writing career, he is an "orgullosa nuevo pobre."² Zunzunegui was an only son and had six sisters. Of the sisters, one became a nun, three married, another remained a spinster, and one died.

¹Juan Antonio de Zunzunegui, Mis páginas preferidas (Madrid, 1958), p. 7.

²Ibid., p. 7.

Zunzunegui began studying for the bachillerato in 1911 at the Jesuit colegio in Orduña. In 1916, he entered the Universidad de Salamanca. Here he studied law, and also matriculated in the Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, where one of his professors was Miguel de Unamuno. At Orduña he played football, which entered Spain through the Basque Provinces and now rivals bullfighting in popularity. In 1924, he studied at the Lycée in Tours. When he returned to Bilbao, he worked in his father's office but soon tired of this and began to travel and study again. For a time he attended the University of Perugia in Italy.

In 1926, he published in Bilbao, at his own expense, Vida y paisaje de Bilbao, a collection of short stories. These stories vividly portrayed the customs and environment of Bilbao and were received quite favorably. Unamuno, a fellow Basque who was in exile, wrote to Juan Antonio expressing his appreciation for the author's having inspired in him nostalgic reminiscences of the Provinces. Zunzunegui continued to live in Bilbao and traveled in the summers to England, Holland, Belgium, Switzerland, and Portugal. He went into the printing business with a partner, naming their company Máquinas y Libros (Mayli). In 1929, his family moved to Madrid, and in 1935 Juan Antonio published the first series of his Cuentos y patrañas de mi ría, which he entitled Tres en una, o la dichosa honra. When the Spanish War broke out in 1936, he took refuge in the Mexican Embassy

for reasons unknown, left Spain, and returned in 1937. He then became the editor of a literary review, Vértice. In San Sebastián he wrote a political novel, No queremos resucitar, which was never published. His second novel, El chiplichandle, was written between 1932 and 1935, and was received with acclaim upon its publication in 1940. This novel was in the process of being published when the Civil War broke out, and Zunzunegui fortunately salvaged it before he went into exile. In 1941, he published the second series of Cuentos y patrañas, entitled El hombre que iba para estatua. In 1945, Ediciones Aguilar published an anthology of Zunzunegui's short stories, El binomio de Newton y otros cuentos. He was elected to the Real Academia in April of 1957 to fill the vacancy left by Pío Baroja.

Zunzunegui has recently married and still lives in Madrid, preferring a somewhat secluded life, although he has many friends. He is a voracious reader, has an enormous library, and reads French, Italian, English and Portuguese. His favorite writers are Baroja, Eça de Queiroz, Faulkner, Steinbeck, and to a lesser degree Hemingway and Dos Passos. He is one of the few Spanish writers who are able to support themselves from their writing. Zunzunegui has stated: "Hay que escribir novelas para vivir."³ His output is amazing, for since his first book was published in 1940, he has

³John C. Dowling, "Juan Antonio de Zunzunegui. A Biographical Note," Hispania, XXXV (November, 1952), 427.

averaged about one book a year. He prefers to write only about three months out of the year, but in this short length of time he can produce a novel of six hundred pages. The author himself says of his regimen: "Yo escribo con pluma y un tinterillo. Cuando trabajo lo hago por las mañanas entre las nueve y las dos. Redacto con facilidad sin apenas tachaduras."⁴ His novels average from five hundred to six hundred pages, although his short stories tend to be quite brief. His "flota" includes to date seven "novelas de pequeño tonelaje" or short stories, and twenty "novelas de gran tonelaje" or novels. None of his works has yet been translated into English, but they are quite popular on the Continent. There have been translations into French, German, Italian, Portuguese, Dutch, Hungarian, and Finnish. His novels sell well and are published in editions of five thousand.

Although Zunzunegui could be chronologically classed with the Generation of 1898, he did not become well-known until the 1940's. Nevertheless, his style is in complete contrast to the bold experimentation of the Generation of 1898. Zunzunegui, like many contemporary Spanish writers, is reluctant to employ literary styles in their extremes. He theorizes that an extensive novel such as he writes cannot allow for boldness of stylization and must adhere to objectivity. His work is characterized by a detached, cold

⁴Juan Antonio de Zunzunegui, Mis páginas preferidas op. cit., p. 10.

style, an emphasis on the common traits in the everyday lives of the characters, and long paragraphs of uninterrupted dialogue. Zunzunegui's role as a writer might be compared with that of a newspaper reporter or photographer. His novels are created from external observation and are devoid of psychological delvings. He has been called a camera writer because reality for him proceeds from mere observation and the accumulation of data about life. The entire life of the protagonist is the central point from which the rest of the novel is derived. Zunzunegui's novels are therefore detailed biographies which follow a character, on a day to day basis, from the cradle to the grave. Zunzunegui is a link with the nineteenth century since he has attempted to preserve the traditionalism characteristic of that time. He has derived great inspiration and influence from Pérez Galdós, believed by many to be the most distinguished novelist of the nineteenth century in Spain.

Zunzunegui composes his novels from the outside inward, and this method has resulted in prolonged dialogue and a consequent disproportion of materials which has been the subject of complaint by many critics. He has never achieved positive objectivity due to his penchant toward moralizing. This moralistic preoccupation often takes precedence over plot and character, and as a result both of the latter literary elements suffer. In portraying a protagonist for didactic purposes, Zunzunegui often resorts to a

caricature which results in what Eugenio de Nora refers to as "deformación humorística,"⁵ a comic-grotesque rendering of a character which is fantastic rather than realistic.

As for his merits, Juan Antonio de Zunzunegui is a novelist of astounding breadth, and his works are a storehouse of his many-faceted knowledge. Using recent Spanish history as a background for his novels, he provides the documentation of the period beginning with the defeat of the Monarchy and the short phase of the Republic, describes life in Spain during World War I, and probes the details of the Spanish Civil War. The most valuable information for the foreign reader is the portrayal of the life, customs, history, and people of Bilbao and Madrid. These two cities are the main settings for the majority of his novels. The encyclopedic knowledge which Zunzunegui has gleaned from his extensive readings also contribute to the informative nature of his novels. He includes, for example, detailed information about such professions as ship-building, politics, soccer, the antique business, and thievery. His vast knowledge is sometimes a detriment to his writing, for he does not concern himself with the deletion of material extraneous to the plot. This is because he believes that realism is created by the recording of every minute detail of daily life. Torrente Ballester states: "Zunzunegui. . .

⁵Eugenio de Nora, La novela española contemporánea (Madrid, 1962), p. 319.

considera que la realidad de una novela se obtiene de la comparación con la realidad empírica; de ahí su insistencia en elementos externos. . . "6 In his earlier novels, Zunzunegui had the peculiar habit of including pictorial representations of such items as invoices, magazine advertisements, and election ballots, perhaps to create greater reader identification with the novelistic occurrences. However, he evidently decided that these details did not constitute realism, for his later novels do not contain such stylistic devices.

One of Zunzunegui's most important merits is his extensive vocabulary. As a result of his voracious reading habits, his varied experiences in life, and his travels both in Spain and abroad, he has developed a skillful command of words. His esoteric vocabulary includes words peculiar to such professions as sailing, carpentry, medicine, the priesthood, and engineering, to name only a few. His novels are also enriched by colloquialisms and regionalistic speech. There is, for instance, the peculiar and amusing Malagan speech of Agustinito Blásquez in El premio. Zunzunegui also dexterously portrays the regionalistic Andalusian speech of the character Rosarito in Un hombre entre dos mujeres. The novelist has often been criticized for his use of obsolete

⁶Gonzalo Torrente Ballester, Panorama de la literatura española contemporánea (Madrid, 1956), pp. 391-392.

and scholarly words. Critics have also complained about his habit of creating a word when he cannot think of an appropriate one. However, many of the words reputed to be Zunzunegui's neologisms are later discovered to be legitimate words which are so obscure that they are unknown even to scholars. He has manifested his preoccupation with vocabulary in the following statement: "Mi mayor preocupación en este aspecto [el estilo] es, desde hace mucho tiempo, lograr un manejo expresivo del idioma."⁷ However, Eugenio de Nora complains that this obsession with vocabulary has caused Zunzunegui to sacrifice the unification so important in a novel because of his "amor a la palabra por la palabra."⁸

In spite of his literary shortcomings, it is undeniable that Zunzunegui occupies an important position in Spanish literature today. Although some of his works may perhaps fall into eventual obscurity, others, such as La vida como es, could well become classics in later years. In literary history Zunzunegui is important mainly because he forms a link between nineteenth century literature and the contemporary movement. He is the most representative writer of the realistic classical novel and is a significant member of the novela social movement in literature. He is popular today, in Spain as well as in other parts of Europe, due to

⁷ de Nora, La novela española contemporánea, p. 322.

⁸ Ibid., p. 320.

the amount of his production at a time when the works of most Spanish authors are quite meagre in comparison. Discussing Zunzunegui's voluminous output, Juan Luis Alborg has stated: "Después de Baroja, ningún novelista ha puesto en fila, sacados de su numen, tal escuadrón de libros."⁹

Zunzunegui himself is obviously gratified by his industry and dedication to his craft. He has defended himself from critics by saying that it is easy for an individual to write criticism, but it is not so easy for a writer to compose the many thousands of pages that he has produced.

At the end of the Spanish Civil War there was almost an absolute poverty of novelistic endeavors in Spain. José María Castellet says that from 1939 to 1949, there were only about half a dozen literary works which even deserve simple mention.¹⁰ Spanish novelists, however, gradually acquired a consciousness of the dramatic existence of a nation which, in the middle of the twentieth century, had been immersed in a civil war that had parted it from the course of history. This consciousness has manifested itself in a "critical realism," translated into historical realism as the decade of the 1950's advanced. The post-Civil War generation felt a kinship to the Generation of 1898 in their discontent with

⁹Juan Luis Alborg, La hora actual de la novela española (Madrid, 1962), II, 138.

¹⁰José María Castellet, "Veinte años de la novela española," Cuadernos americanos, CXXVI (January-February, 1963), 294.

the government and the conditions in Spain. There were varied degrees of awareness of the War's effects, depending upon whether or not the writer had directly participated in or been an innocent victim of it. The Generation of 1898 linked the novelist with his surroundings; the Civil War solidified this bond, inspiring a keener awareness of national difficulties. José María Castellet writes of the generación de postguerra:

Casi obsesivamente los jóvenes novelistas, entre el recuerdo de una guerra civil en la que no participaron y un incierto futuro político, intentan estudiar, analizar, describir, y explicarse a ellos mismos la situación actual de su país, su estructura social, las consecuencias de la guerra civil. . . ¹¹

There are several different currents of Spanish literature today. A number of them can be grouped under the general heading of traditionalism: Galdosian realism, regionalism, and rural costumbrismo or novels of the soil and peasantry. One of the foremost exponents of traditionalism is Juan Antonio de Zunzunegui, who employs a blend of Galdosian realism and regionalism. The most intellectual group of novelists are proponents of the novela objetivista, who attempt to eliminate subjectivity and reproduce a photographic type of reality. The objetivistas describe only the external actions and avoid psychological analysis or interpretation. Many objetivistas lean toward existentialism but do not espouse it as a philosophy.

¹¹José María Castellet, op. cit., p. 295.

Another literary category and one of the most important in Spain is the novela social. It is similar to the realistic and regional novels but is more intent on social reform. Most of the "new wave" writers are often identified with the novela social. The novels in this category usually deal either with the wretched state of the poor or the frivolity of the rich. Most of Zunzunegui's novels could be classed in this category of the novela social since they have a specific social intent.

Zunzunegui's novels are an attempt to analyze the ills of twentieth century Spain. He singles out almost every segment of society for criticism and seeks the reasons behind the evils of these various groups. He is most concerned with the economic inequities among the Spaniards and the fact that his countrymen are usually either very rich or very poor. He is obsessively preoccupied with the effect that money, or the lack of it, can have upon an individual. Of the characters who are intensely concerned with wealth, there are usually two types. One is the individual who was born wealthy and has allowed his whole life to become corrupted by his riches. The other individual determinedly works his way up from abject poverty and thenceforth emphasizes prosperity above all other considerations, such as loved ones, political adherence, or learning. Regardless of the origins of the individual's wealth, Zunzunegui believes that it will eventually have an undesirable effect

upon him if he does not utilize it wisely. The author demonstrates by portraying some characters whose families turn against them, some who lead indolent and profitless lives, and some who become debauched or emotionally unstable. The author portrays also the individual who obtains economic security by dishonest means. He devotes his lengthiest work to a society of thieves in a certain sector of Madrid who also teach their progeny the profession of thievery. In addition, Zunzunegui characterizes the individual who utilizes political power in order to profit economically. He believes that many of these profiteering politicians have arisen since the Civil War.

Zunzunegui also exposes the condition of Catholicism in contemporary Spain. He exposes Spanish Catholicism as an outdated religion which has not kept up with the changing world. He criticizes the rituals, the outward trappings, the hierarchy, and the unrealistic demands made by the Church upon its members. The author believes that the decline of a meaningful religion in contemporary Spain is a consequence of the tendency of many people to delude themselves that they can justify their immoral behavior by ostentatiously participating in formal religious ceremonies and practice. He thus blames the bankruptcy of Spanish morality upon the lack of a realistic and significant faith. Most of the characters in Zunzunegui's novels practice religion in a hypocritical way, to assuage their consciences,

for instance, or to seek refuge from the hard realities of life. The wealthy characters in the novels utilize religion as a means of prestige; one prosperous couple, for example, hires an archbishop to perform their daughter's marriage. Many of the characters expediently rid themselves of all feelings of guilt in the confessional.

Zunzunegui is concerned as well with the problem of ignorance. Few of his characters, with the possible exception of his "spokesmen," are educated men, deep thinkers, or intellectuals. Most of them are so obsessed with material values that it might be assumed that their quest for economic success has obliterated their intellectual values, if they had any in the first place. Of the wealthy or more fortunate characters who are educated, almost none of them utilize their learning for beneficial purposes. One of the characters, for instance, studies for many years, but becomes skeptical and confused. Another character has a university education and is a voracious reader but cannot even provide for his family. Few of Zunzunegui's protagonists are able to reason in an unbiased, impartial, or enlightened manner.

Most of the characters are overconcerned with themselves and care little about others. Zunzunegui believes, as did Salvador de Madariaga, that the prevailing egotism of most Spaniards has had one of the most harmful effects upon the country, because it has been a detriment to social,

political, and economic reforms. Zunzunegui contends that the Spaniard's constant emphasis upon yo rather than nosotros has been a serious deterrent to progress in Spain. The author devotes one novel to the analysis of an extreme egotist who is able to reach a high political office and use his influence to further his own interests. Zunzunegui frequently blames Spanish society as a whole for the evils of a few by portraying the group as collectively tolerating the vice and hypocrisy of one individual. In one novel, a scoundrel is elected to govern the Republic because of the ignorance and confusion of the electorate. In another novel, the townspeople, rather than to work for the town's well-being, prefer to continually flatter a philanthropist in exchange for his contributions.

Zunzunegui attacks his fellow Spaniards by means of the non-hero or antihero, a person with such bad character traits that he is despicable to the reader. The novelist demonstrates by means of this one individual the evils which he attributes to the whole of Spanish society. Besides the protagonist, most of the characters in his novels exhibit negative character traits. The prevalence of these non-heroes indicates that Zunzunegui's main concern is with moralizing rather than storytelling. Often these individuals or segments of society are representative of broader categories such as the Basques, the Spaniards, or even

universal mankind. When criticizing the Spaniard in particular, he emphasizes that the events of recent history, such as the Spanish Civil War, have served as an impetus for an individual's corruption and misanthropy. In some of his works Zunzunegui actively expresses his disapproval by excessive moralizing, but in others his opinion is more subdued, especially in religious and political matters, possibly because of a desire to avoid censorship.

Because Zunzunegui is characteristically Spanish and Catholic, he has included, whether consciously or unconsciously, all of the deadly sins for his gallery of evildoers. Some of the individual protagonists exhibit almost all seven sins in the course of their novelistic lives, but covetousness is the most common of the characters' vices. Although, as has been stated, some of the author's works are not so moralistic in intent as others, it will be seen that each one of them criticizes a particular bad trait in the protagonist which leads to unhappiness or defeat, either for the character himself or for someone close to him.

CHAPTER II

THE NOVELS OF JUAN ANTONIO DE ZUNZUNEGUI

Chiripi

Chiripi, subtitled Historia bufo-sentimental de un jugador de foot-ball, was written in 1926, and is generally unknown or forgotten nowadays. Although it was the novelist's first effort at writing, one can see in it many indications of his later style, including his penchant for digressions, his underlying social criticism, and his numerous secondary characters.

Although Chiripi has been called by Juan Luis Alborg an essay in fragments rather than a novel, it does have a unifying plot and a main character. The novel was written mainly as a criticism of the Basque obsession for soccer and its hero-worship of the players. Zunzunegui creates Chiripi (José Gómez) to show his readers that an athlete's existence may not be so enviable as some people imagine. Chiripi lacks any commendable qualities beyond those which he demonstrates on the playing field, and can definitely be classed among the numerous antiheroes which are found in Zunzunegui's novels.

The story is divided into four sections, and the vocabulary is liberally seasoned with technical terms pertaining

to soccer. Its setting is Bilbao in the final days of the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera. Chiripi, a national soccer hero, is rumored to be preparing to sign a contract with a Catalonian team. This sets Bilbao in an uproar since Chiripi is the most important player on the Basque soccer team. Chiripi dispels the rumors, however, saying he will remain with his team and maintain the "honor de Bilbao."

A flashback describes Chiripi's life before he became a celebrated athlete. Previous to his debut as a soccer player, he worked as a mechanic and chauffeur. Intranquil, he never spent a long time in any position, and usually he ended up in a dispute with his employers that cost him his job.

When the Sociedad Automovilista Bilbaína plays a soccer game against the taxi drivers, José Gómez brings victory to the Sociedad. This is the first time he has ever played soccer. The opposing team of taxi drivers protests that the victory was a "chiripá" or stroke of luck. José is at once nicknamed "Chiripi."

Later Chiripi is recruited into the professional team of Bilbao to play Madrid for the national championship. He plays well, but Bilbao loses by a score of three to one. Bilbao is again defeated, this time by a "B" team, to add to the insult. Because of the losses, Chiripi's popularity decreases and his fans become less fervent in their admiration. He gradually comes to the realization that he is

not just a sportsman who can come on the field for the pure pleasure of physical exercise, but instead is a skilled, paid player who must make as many goals as possible.

Chiripi suffers an injury which causes an accumulation of fluid in his kneecap and prevents him from playing. Some of his fans are of the opinion that this is a merciful injury since he had been playing badly. Chiripi entertains himself during his incapacitation in the company of numerous female admirers.

Seeing that his leg is slow in healing, the athlete becomes restless, especially when he reflects that it is important to maintain continuous prominence in the competitive sport of soccer. He decides to frequent the Soccer Club so that he will not be forgotten: "Tengo que ir al club mañana mismo," pensó, "a gritar, a que me vean. A pedir explicaciones de cosas cuya única explicación es no tener ninguna. A exigir, a mandar, y sobre todo que me vean. Que me vean todos, del presidente al último socio."¹ He goes to the club and is snubbed, and it is now that he becomes aware of the fleeting aspect of fame. He recalls the idolatry of the fans and the celebrations after his victories, and there burns in him the desire to play again, as much for pride's sake as for a means of livelihood.

¹Juan Antonio de Zunzunegui, Chiripi: historia bufo-sentimental de un jugador de foot-ball (Madrid, 1957), p. 70.

His injury stubbornly persists and he is forced to return to chauffering since he knows no other occupation. In this lowly position he dreams of the past glory which inspired the applause of fans, the association with wealthy admirers, and the affairs with beautiful women. Refusing to abandon his dreams of fame and wealth as an athlete, he begins preparing for the coming contest of the Bilbao team against their neighbors in Abra. He submits himself to a strict physical regimen in order to remain in good physical condition. In order to insure that he not be completely forgotten as a player, he increases his visits to the Soccer Club, in spite of the cool reception he received previously.

Chiripi is allowed to play against Abra, but the game unfortunately takes place in the driving rain. The combination of the bad weather and his unhealed knee cause him to play badly, and this final failure terminates his career. The "Chiripi" of soccer fame gives way to "José Gómez, the chauffeur." No longer wishing to hear the name of soccer mentioned, he ends his previous companionships with soccer enthusiasts. He attempts to renew an affair with a former sweetheart, but she knows that he does not desire a lasting relationship and rebuffs him.

The Bilbao team begins to improve, and Chiripi, foreseeing the possibility that they could become finalists in the race for the championship, decides that in this eventuality he would have to seek exile from Bilbao out of shame

for his own failure as a player. His fear of ridicule compels him to hope secretly for the team's defeat.

Chiripi's mother dies and he moves to a boarding house, where he becomes acquainted with an Andalusian student and poet, Antonio Luis Sánchez-Puertas. The recent loss of his mother causes Chiripi to suffer great anguish, and he begins frequenting bars and houses of prostitution with Luis and other dissolutes. The group usually drinks all night, becoming so inebriated on occasions they lose consciousness before they arrive home. Luis at times feels remorseful about his libertine existence but believes that he is powerless to behave in any other manner. He tells Chiripi: "Toda mi vida ha sido un remitir el trabajo para no hacerlo nunca...; soy un enfermo."²

Chiripi himself does not even feel regret, and continues to escape reality and responsibility with his nightly excesses. One night he drunkenly stumbles in front of a car, is injured, and is taken to the hospital. The press, learning of the accident, calls the emergency room to obtain the details. When asked by the press who the injured party is, an orderly answers:

--Naa...; un borracho a quien ha pegado un boquetazo un taxi...; pero no es de cuidado.

--¿Es algun señorito conocido de buena familia?

²Ibid., p. 251.

--Yo no le he visto nunca..., parece un pobre diablo; debe de ser un intelectual, ahí anda diciendo poesías.³

In the final chapter the author addresses himself to the reader, stating that he has decided to let the latter decide on Chiripi's fate. He gives the reader three possible endings from which he may choose: 1) Chiripi again becomes a famous soccer player and enjoys prestige throughout Spain; 2) Chiripi goes away to America; 3) Chiripi marries, has children, and becomes a respectable family man. In case the reader is not pleased with any of these dénouements, Zunzunegui places Chiripi at a table on the terrace of the Café del Boulevard and states: "Desde ese momento ustedes pueden hacer de él lo que les dé la gana."⁴

This abrupt ending seems to prove that Zunzunegui has created such an antiheroic and unworthy character that he does not even care to contrive for him a definitive solution for his problems. Juan Luis Alborg has written of the protagonist: "...no está logrado, no acaba de ser nada."⁵ Zunzunegui seems to have made a deliberate effort at fashioning a character type rather than a realistic

³Ibid., p. 262.

⁴Ibid., p. 325.

⁵Juan Luis Alborg, Hora actual de la novela española, Vol. I (Madrid, 1962), p. 149.

individual. In many of his novels he resorts to types to illustrate a moral. Chiripi is so lacking in admirable qualities that he almost loses his identity as a human being and serves only as a connecting thread for the author's ideas and moralizing.

Chiripi's main fault is lack of will-power. It is possible that Chiripi could have been more than a chauffeur, but since he could not maintain his status as a soccer player, he had no desire to do anything else. This lack of drive eventually led him to a completely ambitionless existence and finally to debauchery and alcoholism.

Serving as a contrast, there are a few characters in the book who are worthy of consideration. Don Rafael, the aging president of the Bilbao Club, represents the old seignorial Bilbao. He resists the changes that have been brought about through technology and rapidly changing customs. He longs for the austerity and simplicity of customs and thought that were characteristic of the Bilbao of his youth, and feels that the status of sports is an indication of the increasing tendency toward emotional excesses and unrestrained behavior. "Don Rafael temía la gran querrela de los pueblos por el deporte. En su dilatada experiencia, nada conocía que llevase a la gente a tal extremo de pasión. Su brutalidad social había alcanzado el ápice."⁶

⁶Zunzunegui, Chiripi, p. 145.

The poet Luis, although he could certainly not be called admirable, at least is cognizant of the motives that impel him to debauchery, and, unlike Chiripi, is remorseful. He regrets his dissolute and profitless existence, and would prefer the relative stability of regular employment:

"Créeme; tengo envidia de todo el que tiene un oficio, sabe algo y gana unos cuartos."⁷ Luis blames himself for his shortcomings, but Chiripi prefers to vent his resentment on the fans who deserted him rather than to acknowledge that he has been personally incapable of realizing his ambitions.

El chiplichandle

El chiplichandle was written between 1932 and 1935. It was in the process of being printed in Bilbao at the outbreak of the war, and Zunzunegui was fortunate enough to rescue it before he left Spain. The book was received with acclaim upon its publication in 1940. This novel and Zunzunegui's other picaresque work La vida como es have received enthusiastic praise from the critics, many of whom consider these two works his best. However, El chiplichandle, like Chiripi, is an earlier work and is not so well-known among Zunzunegui fans as some of his later works. With the appearance and favorable reception of El chiplichandle Zunzunegui established himself permanently in Madrid. The novel is episodic in plot structure and embodies a series

⁷Ibid., p. 240.

of vignettes replete with minor characters and loosely connected by the narrative thread of the protagonist's life. As in the classic picaresque novel, the humor is omnipresent but serves mainly as a means of social satire. The novel portrays the state of society during the final days of the Monarchy and the beginnings of the Republic. Zunzunegui criticizes the confused prosperity that prevailed during and immediately after World War I, and the financial euphoria of the middle class during the Republic of 1931. The novelist's fundamental concern is with a society that will tolerate with collective hypocrisy a pícaro such as Joselín. Joselín's petty crime and deceitfulness are characteristic of the pícaro's antiheroic tendencies, but the blame in El chiplichandle is placed on the social order which allows these vices to prevail.

Juan Luis Alborg thinks this is one of Zunzunegui's best novels but complains that it is technically imperfect. The plot takes a haphazard course and is narrated in great detail, with frequent digressions. But the critic cannot ignore its other virtues: "Toda la novela mantiene un ritmo vivísimo, desbordante, un derroche de animación y de color, y una riqueza lingüística..."⁸

The author's brief character sketches and anecdotes contribute greatly to the novel's value. The secondary

⁸Alborg, op. cit., p. 152.

characters serve as a composite to illustrate the social structure of the times. For instance, there is a brief description of Teconleche, a boy who is educated in England by his upper-class Basque father, and who, upon his return, is subject to both ridicule and admiration for his English customs and dress. His nickname, Teconleche, is derived from his English taste for tea with milk. The confused state of politics in Republican Spain is exemplified by El Bremen, a mentally disturbed candidate for political office. In the author's words:

El Bremen está loco. Grita una especie de jerigonza, que es su manera de hablar. No modula más que palabras sueltas:

Casa.
Barco.
Mar.
Tabaco.
Méjico.
Maquinista.⁹

This jerigonza is perhaps a satirical poke at the bombastic, sometimes meaningless speeches made by some politicians. There is a character sketch of el Niño Cádiz, a simple but lovable man whose humble life and death are skillfully portrayed in poetic prose. Zunzunegui briefly describes two characters, Nogalina and Adolfo the guitarist, in what he terms as "retratos al carbón" and portrays more extensively a girl named María Luisa in a "retrato al pastel." These

⁹Juan Antonio de Zunzunegui, El chiplichandle (Madrid, 1962), p. 160.

latter three characters have absolutely no relation to the plot, however, and this defect is frequently cited by the critics.

Contrary to that of most of Zunzunegui's protagonists, José Martínez (Joselín) is accorded a description of his physical characteristics: "Menudito, con un diente diagonalmente partido, echándole travesura a la expresión, y unas pestañas largas. . .; piececillos cortos alante y atrás, alante y atrás, y una nariz arregazada."¹⁰ He grows up loving the sea, and works with his father on a tugboat. He has no great ambitions, as long as he can work by the ocean. Character, in his opinion, is measured by the amount of money a man possesses. He works for a while as a ship-chandler (hence the Anglicism chiplichandle), for an English concern. He supplements his income by falsifying invoices until he is caught and discharged. After this incident he works intermittently, tugging ships and fishing for squid. He feels an urge to travel and goes to Rotterdam, but he does not make enough money working there and returns to the Basque Provinces. He begins piling up debts and employs a ruse to swindle a sailor out of some money. He tells the man he owns a piece from the boom of the Niña, one of Columbus' ships. The sailor scrutinizes the object, which has a worm-eaten plaque nailed to it reading: "Restos de la Niña."

¹⁰Zunzunegui, El chiplichandle, p. 11.

Convinced that the article is a genuine museum piece, he pays Joselín two thousand pesetas for it. The so-called relic is completely spurious, and by the time the sailor finds out that he has been swindled, Joselín has packed all his belongings in a truck and left town.

During World War I, in which Spain remains neutral, Joselín profits by buying contraband items from German ships in the Bay of Biscay. When the monarchy in Spain begins to crumble, he discusses political ideas with other war speculators and gradually becomes interested in politics. In 1930, the Revolution begins to ripen, and on the eve of the elections the people begin dividing into factions, mainly Republican, Monarchist and Nationalist. Joselín begins to study the election lists of the candidates from his district and becomes aware of the political corruption among the men. Feeling that he could be equally successful as a candidate, he inaugurates the Radical-Reformist Party, a Republican faction. The masses of Bilbao gradually become enthusiastic over the party and Joselín gains support.

Joselín learns to conduct himself with sobriety and aloofness and begins to associate with the political leaders of the Resistance Movement. He also assumes a close friendship with "Edu," the dissipated son of the richest man in Bilbao, by supplying him with contraband whiskey and cigarettes. In this way Joselín gains influence among the moneyed classes and is voted national representative of the

Radical-Reformist Party to the congreso in Madrid. His mother dies while he is in Madrid. Returning to his village, he asks his sister if their mother had any last words for him, and the conversation on this occasion reveals the complete lack of integrity or principles in the ambitious politician:

--Cuando murió, ¿no te encargó nada la madre para mí?

--Sí. Que fueras honrado, que fueras honrado.

--¿Y qué es ser honrado? Me quieres decir qué es ser honrado?¹¹

As the populace begins to adopt socialism, Joselín reflects upon the possible collapse of his own party. In order to keep his name before the public he considers joining forces with Flojo, the chief of the Socialist movement in the Provinces:

Joselín escudriña mentalmente estos perfiles de su pueblo, y, ahondando más, ve del lado obrero la labor funesta de Flojo. . . Flojo lo ha matado [el sentido heroico de clase]. encharcando a la grey obrera en una democracia de palillo en la boca y café cantante.¹²

Joselín's anxieties over possible political obscurity are suddenly allayed when he is elected to the governorship of the Republic. His father is dumbfounded upon learning that his son has been elected to such a high political office and wonders if Joselín's personal characteristics are typical of those of most politicians. As the future

¹¹Zunzunegui, El chiplichandle, p. 231.

¹²Ibid., p. 268.

governor rides off to Madrid amid shouts of ¡Viva la democracia!, the author permits himself a brief personal comment by observing, "Señor, perdónalos, porque no saben lo que gritan."¹³

Joselín is a study in opposites, a classic pícaro composed of both the good and the bad. However, his goodness is relative, for he is sympathetic toward his fellow human beings only provided they are worse off than he. Nevertheless, in his money-making schemes such as the ruse of the "restos de la Niña" he is, like the sixteenth century pícaro, humorous, and, in a sense, admirable for his inventiveness.

Some of Joselín's extremely human characteristics are, however, definitely antiheroic. The protagonist's triviality is displayed by his emotional reactions to certain events. When his mother dies, he becomes aware of the fleeting aspect of time and suddenly fears his own death. His affection for his mother is mainly inspired by nostalgic reminiscences of his childhood, and throughout his life his homesickness motivates him to return often to his native village. Because of his tremendous ego, he adopts any political scheme in order to remain in a position of prominence. Joaquín de Entrambasaguas comments on the protagonist:

. . . preside en el espíritu de Joselín la ley del menor esfuerzo; es antiheroico, conformista, de

¹³Ibid., p. 275.

nervadura blanda; pero este pícaro de nuestros días va certero a sus conveniencias, con una organización mental enteramente burguesa. . .¹⁴

The rise of José Martínez represents a mass movement in vice, hypocrisy, and ignorance. Without the support of his misled followers, José would have finished his lifetime working on a tug or fishing for squid, which were the only things he was thoroughly qualified to do. Pedro Caba comments on the universality of Zunzunegui's main characters: "El protagonista. . . es ante todo el mundo social, la colectividad en que los personajes se mueven. Son personajes vivos, pero nada héroes ni protagonistas. . ."15

¡Ay!...¡Estos hijos!

¡Ay!...¡Estos hijos! was written in 1941, and received the Premio Fastenrath of the Royal Spanish Academy for the years 1941 through 1943. This prize is the Spanish equivalent of the Prix Goncourt of France. Zunzunegui has said of the book: "Es mi novela más autobiográfica. Tiene mucho de mi infancia y juventud. . . Es de mis libros más entrañables."¹⁶ There are several autobiographical elements

¹⁴Joaquín de Entrambasaguas, El hombre que iba para estatua by Juan Antonio de Zunzunegui (Madrid, 1942), p. 19.

¹⁵Pedro Caba, "La novela en Baroja y en Zunzunegui," Indice, XVI (March, 1962), 7.

¹⁶Juan Antonio de Zunzunegui, Mis páginas preferidas (Madrid, 1958), p. 29.

in the novel. When Luis takes a trip to France and England, the novelist uses as a background information gleaned from his own travels in these two countries. He also gives details about the Jesuit University of Deusto, which he himself attended. Luis is compelled to work at his father's mining business, as was the author. These are some of the obvious comparisons between the fictional character and the author, however it would be difficult to draw conclusions about similarities of philosophy or belief, since Zunzunegui seldom expresses himself in this regard. It might be assumed, however, that as in the case of most novelists, he expresses his beliefs, whether intentionally or not, in his novels.

The critics seem to be strongly divided in evaluating this work. Angel Valbuena Prat thinks that ¡Ay!...¡Estos hijos! is Zunzunegui's culminating work, "...por su horizonte, por su unidad íntima, entre los episodios diversos, por lo complejo psicológico, por el gran desfile coordinado de tierras y figuras humanas, en esta época."¹⁷ In contrast Gonzalo Torrente Ballester believes that the novel was Zunzunegui's greatest mistake because of its lengthiness, its digressions, and the forced humor. Eugenio de Nora reiterates Torrente Ballester's complaint about the humor and also criticizes the structure of the narrative, calling

¹⁷Angel Valbuena Prat, Historia de la literatura española, Vol. II (Barcelona, 1957), p. 768.

it crude and lineal. In spite of its unfavorable criticism by some, the novel seems to be the most discussed of all the author's works.

The first part of the book deals with the childhood of Luis Larrinaga and his upbringing by his mother and grandmother. His mother, doña Carmen, is an overly religious woman who constantly fears that her son will have the same fate as his father, who died an alcoholic. Her main concern is to lead Luisito along the path to salvation. Working with her is don José, a Jesuit chaplain, who counsels with Luis at each of the numerous requests of doña Carmen. After completing his studies at the colegio, Luis is sent to the University of Deusto, a Jesuit school in Bilbao. During his absence his mother is obsessed with misgivings about the state of her son's soul: "Todas las mañanas se lo encomiendo al Señor en la misa: Antes de que se condene, llévamelo; si no ha de ser para la salvación de su alma, prefiero verle muerto."¹⁸

While at Deusto, Luis becomes interested in literature and considers pursuing an academic career. However, since he is so secure financially, he is not concerned about his future. His mother expresses to him her desire for him to engage himself in some occupation. Her son answers that since God placed him in a position of wealth there is no need

¹⁸Juan Antonio de Zunzunegui, ¡Ay! . . . ¡Estos hijos! (Madrid, 1958), p. 44.

for him to earn his living by the sweat of his brow. In matters of religion, Luis begins to rebel against his mother's authority. When he refuses to partake of communion, for instance, she warns him, "Mira, hijo, que no hay más negocio que el de la salvación, y si pierdes el alma has perdido todo."¹⁹ A scandal among the students at the University compels Luis' mother to remove him from school and place him under a private tutor. She also demands that he begin learning how to manage his father's mining concern in order that he take over the business. Luis is completely unenthusiastic about the business, as the prospect of becoming a captain of industry does not appeal to him. His mother is appalled at his lack of ambition; not for financial reasons, but because she believes it is immoral not to work. One day she asks him if he thinks that the rich man does not have any obligation. He replies that a rich man's only obligation is to occupy his life nobly, thus making his wealth pardonable.

Luis nevertheless attempts to make himself productive by personally managing the mining concern. He soon feels, however, that he is being oppressed, and becomes so restless that he goes to France. In Paris he thinks he has found love with Adèle, a lovely Frenchwoman, but she is too ambitious to be happy with a man who lacks will-power, and

¹⁹Ibid., p. 160.

finally she deserts him. Luis decides that he may be interested in studying Political Economy, and he goes to London to attend school. He finds the English cold and uninspiring, but takes as his mistress a delightful mulata from Cuba, Felmina, who makes his stay happier. This time, however, it is he who is not brave enough to establish a lasting relationship, and he ceases to have anything to do with her.

He tries while in England to forget his emotional ties with his childhood, his country, and his mother. But his mother's influence consistently maintains a hold on him and is so overpowering that he returns home. However, his return to Bilbao only intensifies the struggle between the ideologies of mother and son. During his absence his mother has become ill, and her infirmity has caused her to become more religious and sentimental. Luis observes her:

Contempla a su madre con una gran ternura. La siente en puro deshacimiento; los años van corroyéndola y ablandándole el ánimo. Cualquier menuda dificultad la pone en trance de lágrimas. Con el debilitamiento de sus energías, su preocupación religiosa desagua en manía. La ve como una flor vencida.²⁰

Luis' mother is eager for him to marry and "become respectable" before she dies, and she has chosen a fiancée for him. He feels no affection for the girl, however, and expresses his sentiments in the words of Amiel: "Amar, soñar, sentir, aprender, comprender, lo puedo todo con tal

²⁰Ibid., p. 375.

de que me dispensen de querer."²¹ Political unrest prevails on the eve of the Civil War, and Luis at times compares his life with that of the state of Spain, philosophizing that his life and that of the country are following the same process of decomposition. He commences to evade life and responsibility by drinking to excess, and his mother begins to see that her previous apprehensions about the possible alcoholism of her son are being realized. Luis drinks mainly because he has begun to feel remorse for his unproductive life and to fear the possible consequences in eternity of his lack of concern with spiritual matters.

In the desenlace or outcome, the Spanish Civil War is in full swing, Luis' mother has died, and he has become imbued with a sudden religious fervor which Juan Antonio Tamayo terms as "un puro y moral y religioso florecer de la vieja semilla moral y religiosa que el amor de su madre pusiera en su alma de niño."²²

¡Ay! . . . ¡Estos hijos! is a criticism of an enfant terrible who, due to his wealth, completely lacks volition. Luis is perhaps an autobiographical symbol of what Zunzunegui believes he himself might have been had he taken over his

²¹Ibid., p. 421.

²²Juan Antonio Tamayo, Preliminary study in Dos hombres y dos mujeres en medio by Juan Antonio de Zunzunegui, (Madrid, 1944), p. 421.

father's mining concern. Luis Larrinaga is afflicted with the abulia which was denounced as a national weakness by the Generation of 1898. Because of this abulia, Luis squanders both his wealth and his intellect in a stultifying existence of escape and noninvolvement. Luis has occasional challenging thoughts about religion and the evils of wealth; however, the life he leads is a hypocritical denial of his ideas. His restless wanderings through France and England and his intellectual curiosity are only a temporary digression from his final hypocritical conformity. In addition to being an idler and a thorough conformist, Luis is an egotist. In his relations with other individuals, especially women, he is deliberately cautious in avoiding involvements which damage his ego or endanger his independence. Luis is perhaps the most extreme example in Zunzunegui's criticism of the rich young Basque whose weaknesses are so prevalent in the author's mind. Luis is the novelistic counterpart of Ramón of La quiebra, for both men allow their wealth to rule their whole lives, to the point that their intellects and their abilities stagnate in a morass of inactivity.

Luis' final hypocritical reconversion to the religion which his mother so fervently espoused is a manifestation that he is a product of his environment. When confronted with his mother's death, the imminence of civil war, and his own inadequacies, Luis forgets his previous religious skepticism and grasps the comfort of his childhood religion.

El barco de la muerte

El barco de la muerte was primarily a short story but was later expanded into a novel and first published in 1945. Not only does the novel trace the life of Alfredo Martínez from beginning to end, but it is replete with anecdotes, secondary characters, and stories-within-a-story. The work also contains detailed information about such professions as carpentry, sailing, and the mortuary business. Like many of the author's novels, it contains documentation of the history of Spain in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The novel begins with the birth of Alfredo Martínez, the sixth child of an indigent bricklayer who lives on the outskirts of Bilbao. When Alfredo's father falls from a scaffold and is killed, the family is forced to depend on charity for its livelihood. Alfredo attends school for a few years but eventually has to quit and go to work as a carpenter's apprentice to help his mother. When the Carlist War breaks out, the village becomes an important stronghold in the defense of Bilbao, as it commands the approach by sea to the city. The liberals occupy the village and attempt to defend it from the Carlists, but are defeated. Political ideologies occasion a division of loyalty among the villagers during this struggle.

After the war, Alfredo and an older sister both work to help the family emerge from its financial crisis, and for a

time they succeed in overcoming their poverty. However, Alfredo contracts tuberculosis and is confined to the hospital for several months, during which time the family suffers a financial setback. After the boy's convalescence an elderly friend, Boni, suggests that he go to sea: "Navega, Alfredo, navega. Vivir es navegar. Si no navegas no serás nunca de verdad hombre. El mar únicamente hace a los hombres; la tierra los embrutece."²³ Boni emphasizes to Alfredo the financial benefits of working as a seaman, stressing the fact that a man may save a substantial sum of money while at sea. Alfredo reflects upon his lowly status and meager income as a carpenter and realizes that by remaining in the village, which has definite limitations, he will never be able to advance himself substantially. His mother tries to discourage him from leaving, but he instead follows Boni's advice and becomes a seaman at the age of twenty-two.

The succeeding twenty-one years that Alfredo spends away from Spain are influential in forming the misanthropic philosophy that he gradually adopts. Almost all the misfortunes that he encounters are caused by the avarice and hypocrisy of others. During the voyage from Spain to America, Alfredo works as a ship crewman, suffering the typical hardships of the occupation but managing to save a large

²³Juan Antonio de Zunzunegui, El barco de la muerte (Madrid, 1958), p. 148.

amount of money. During a brief stopover on an island, however, he is robbed by two Mexican sailors. This necessitates another long voyage as a crewman and continued saving. After he decides that he is financially secure, Alfredo lands at Brazil and becomes aware of its excellent economic opportunities. In Río de Janeiro he opens a cosmetics shop, which gradually yields him a steady income. He becomes acquainted with an Italian girl, Francesca, who at various times entices him into lending her considerable amounts of money. Alfredo's love affair proves so costly that his business becomes financially unstable. Francesca refers Alfredo to a loan shark, a Frenchman who is in reality her business partner. The latter, nicknamed "monsieur le Comte" for his dandyism, is able to get possession of the shop which Alfredo used as collateral. Alfredo is told that it would be useless to file a lawsuit since Francesca and "monsieur le Comte" enjoy favorable relations with Brazilian government heads.

Alfredo goes to Argentina and meets two men who persuade him to go into the oil business with them in Venezuela. Once in Venezuela, however, the Spaniard finds that he cannot tolerate the extreme jungle heat. He goes to Mexico City, where he employs his knowledge of carpentry to establish a toy-making business. His business proves profitable and he is eventually able to build a factory. When the factory burns to the ground, the insurance company will pay for

only half his losses because he is a foreigner. At this point Alfredo decides that he will never enjoy financial success unless he returns to Spain. He arrives at his native village with only the proceeds from the insurance payment and with a hatred and distrust of all mankind.

He discovers that his mother has died during his absence, and he moves in with his spinster sister Andrea. To re-establish contact he begins attending a tertulia at a local tavern. One of the members is don Roberto, a wealthy man who curses the mechanization of industry but continues to get richer by selling his land to industrial concerns. Other tertulianos are Algeciras, an Andalusian who earns a livelihood playing cards and shooting pool at the tavern, and Manolo, a blind man who refuses to accept the fact of his blindness, and demonstrates his rebellion by such acts as going to "see" art exhibits.

When the local funeral director dies, Alfredo sees a possibly way to invest his insurance proceeds. He visits the director's widow, and as she shows him through the mortuary he experiences a strange satisfaction with the atmosphere. He interprets this feeling of pleasure as an indication that he might enjoy the profession of funeral director. He buys the mortuary and eagerly commences to learn the profession. He reflects to himself that he has chosen the profession that suits his character best: "Esta fría aversión que me produce el género humano, no creo pueda

ser encauzada de mejor manera."²⁴ The mortuary is the only one in town, and Alfredo takes advantage of this situation to charge excessive fees. He also flatters the rich into choosing elaborate caskets and paying for expensive and ostentatious funerals.

Martínez begins to adopt an attitude which he believes is befitting to his occupation. He attends mass regularly, adopts a ceremonious and ascetic manner of living, and cultivates the acquaintances of the wealthy members of the village in the anticipation that they will sooner or later become his clients. After he has become firmly established in his profession, Alfredo has a dream which symbolically manifests his obsessive yearnings for wealth and position:

Se alzaba sobre un altozano, en actitud casi retadora; a sus pies, una fila ininterrumpida de entierros, y él con la mano y el brazo derecho estirados, como un guardia de la circulación mortuoria, señalándoles con el índice el cementerio.²⁵

Alfredo's dream expresses his feeling that he himself is almost immune to death. He seldom considers the possibility of his own death, even though he deals with the remains of the dead almost daily. The members of the tertulia sometimes philosophize about death, and Martínez describes to them some of the dreadful ways that people react to it. One member of the group, nicknamed "El Obispo" because of

²⁴Zunzunegui, El barco de la muerte, p. 179.

²⁵Ibid., p. 247.

his education in a monastery and his saintly life, expresses his philosophy in these words: ". . .la muerte es una cosa que no se refiere en absoluto a mí, ni a usted, Martínez; ni a usted, don Roberto; a nadie de nosotros; todo lo más, tendrá que ver con la Naturaleza y el mundo; por eso todos la debemos contemplar con una gran tranquilidad e indiferencia."²⁶ Expanding on his philosophy, El Obispo expresses the belief that everything previous to the moment of death should be considered as life, not as a part of death, and should therefore not be feared. Martínez is greatly impressed by the words of El Obispo and admires him for such a courageous belief.

Alfredo becomes so successful with his undertaking business that he is able to buy the house which he and his sister lease. The people become resentful of the good fortune of the mortician, especially since he is so cold and unemotional in his dealings with them. They consider the money he has made as unclean profit from the deaths of his fellow villagers. Alfredo's ownership of the house symbolizes to others his shameless exploitation of the survivors of the dead.

One day Alfredo is summoned to the house of El Obispo, who is on his deathbed and is being given extreme unction. The dying man at first appears calm and resigned and prays

²⁶Ibid., p. 271.

with the priest. However, he soon becomes hysterical and begins raving that he does not want to die. After El Obispo's death, Alfredo recalls his friend's previously proclaimed philosophy and contrasts it with his final reaction, so contradictory to his stoic ideas about death. Alfredo begins reflecting upon his own inevitable death and for the first time becomes fearful. He cannot be consoled by faith since he is not a true believer and has only practiced religion in a hypocritical way.

When many of the villagers begin to die in an epidemic of typhus, Alfredo's mortuary is rapidly filled with the victims. The mortician is not overjoyed at his increase in business, however, since he is obsessed with the fear of the possibility of his own death. A respected doctor publicly declares that the epidemic was caused by contaminated drinking water, but the people do not understand the scientific basis for this fact. When a drunk rages that Alfredo Martínez has poisoned the water supply, the villagers go to the mortician's home and set it afire. Alfredo's sister Andrea dies in the flames and he jumps from the balcony, only to find himself in the hands of the angry mob. In a typically tremendista ending, he is torn limb from limb by the vengeful crowd: ". . . conforme pasaba de unas garras a otras, iba perdiendo volumen su rota y desgarrada figura."²⁷

²⁷Ibid., p. 335.

Alfredo's remains are thrown in the river, and a tramp rescues the dead man's hat from the water with a stick.

Alfredo's evil character is more justified in this novel than that of Zunzunegui's other antiheroes. The protagonist's misanthropic philosophy is caused by his bitter resentment of the occurrences of his earlier life. Zunzunegui carefully plots the events which formed the basis for Martínez' pessimistic attitude toward life. The author inserts a personal observation: "Tengan ustedes a un hombre muriéndose de hambre en una chabola hasta los dieciocho años..., ¡y a ver qué pasa!"²⁸ In his childhood, Alfredo is an innocent victim of fate when the ravages of the Carlist War plunge his family into further poverty and misery. His illness serves to increase his pessimism, and the townspeople's casual attitude toward his family's hardships deepens his resentment. After his novela de aventuras in South and Central America, during which almost everyone with whom he associates commits an injustice toward him, Martínez returns to Bilbao to vent his hatred of mankind as a funeral director. After a past characterized by degradation, poverty, and misfortune, he concentrates his efforts upon the accumulation of wealth. As the owner of the mortuary, Alfredo enjoys the satisfaction of being able to bury his fellow beings, and he attains further pleasure from the fact

²⁸Zunzunegui, El barco de la muerte, p. 233.

that he is paid to dispose of them. Alfredo eventually develops a megalomaniacal regard for his position as funeral director, for he considers himself as an arbiter who signals people to the grave. Zunzunegui rationalizes Martínez' behavior somewhat by portraying past misfortunes as a justification for the mortician's failings, however he does not absolve his protagonist. Martínez, when he is trapped in the burning house with his sister, prevents her from escaping so that she will suffer the same punishment as he, thus manifesting his malevolence. Martínez' sanguinary death is the author's moralistic punishment for the greed, hypocrisy, and misanthropy of his protagonist.

La quiebra

La quiebra was begun in July of 1945, and finished in March of 1946. The first edition was divided into two volumes, entitled Ramón, o la vida baldía and Bea o la vida apasionada. The Minotauro edition printed in Madrid in 1958 was not subdivided into these two titles, and the work will be considered here as one single novel.

The setting for the novel is the period beginning with World War I, during which Spain enjoyed financial prosperity, and ending with the start of the Spanish Civil War. Juan Luis Alborg comments on the novel's tremendous scope: "La quiebra constituye, por sus dimensiones, un auténtico 'comedia humana' de toda una sociedad y de unos años muy

significativos, no sólo para la región bilbaína, sino para el ruedo nacional."²⁹ Alborg, like Eugenio de Nora, finds the six hundred page novel tedious at times, but states that it is necessary to accept Zunzunegui as he is since he occupies an important position in contemporary literature: ". . . representa una fuerza creadora--de ímpetu muy español---que, aun a pesar de sus defectos, es una importante realidad."³⁰

The characters in the novel are representative of many Spaniards whose lives and actions were reactions to and characteristic of the times. Ramón Aguirre, the central figure, is the son of a wealthy banker of Bilbao and is a "señorito rico," which is the disparaging Basque term for a rich, indolent young man. He is intelligent, reserved, and well-read, but his wealth has caused in him such a complacency that he lacks inspiration for any positive goals in life. He becomes involved in a love affair with Beatriz Fernández, an extremely attractive girl from a poor family. Ramón has never introduced Beatriz, or Bea, to the Aguirre family since she is not in their social class and would not be accepted. Bea lives in an apartment in San Sebastián which is paid for by Ramón so that he can have her at his disposal. Bea is remorseful over this arrangement but

²⁹Juan Luis Alborg, op. cit., p. 164.

³⁰Ibid., p. 185.

cannot resist the material comforts which accompany it. She is an extremely passionate woman and resents her lover's casual treatment of her. She is aware that her low social status is a significant factor in Ramón's lack of affection for her. She ponders bitterly: ". . . a veces, no sabe disimular su aburrimiento. . . , y no me atiende y se distrae, . . . yo ya comprendo que no soy una mujer distinguida."³¹

Bea's maternal instinct impels her to want a child, especially since Ramón is absent for long periods of time and she longs for companionship. She befriends a child who lives in the same apartment building, but the child's mother breaks up the friendship when she finds out about Bea's relationship with Ramón. Because of this occurrence Bea begins to reflect upon her love affair with Ramón and to feel that she is out of God's favor and thus beyond redemption. She spends many hours at church praying and confessing, and on one occasion she has such an intense religious experience that she loses consciousness and has to be carried out of the church. Ramón tires of Bea's emotional excesses and, knowing of no other way to rid himself of her, through a friend, Romualdo Anabitarte, he offers her money to end the relationship. Bea receives this rejection bitterly and at first refuses the money, but

³¹Juan Antonio de Zunzunegui, Ramón, o la vida baldía (Madrid, 1947), p. 96.

Anabitarte convinces her she should accept it. The girl gradually readjusts her life, invests the money, and realizes a substantial profit from the investment. She replaces her obsession for Ramón with another equally absorbing one, that of wealth. Having had to sacrifice her virtue to enjoy a few material comforts, she becomes determined to obtain the luxuries of life without making any concessions. Her investments continue to be profitable, and she is able to enjoy numerous luxuries and to help her family out of financial difficulties.

Several years later Ramón returns from an extended period of travel. When Bea learns of his return she becomes aware that she still feels an emotional attachment for him. Ramón and Bea are reunited through the efforts of some mutual friends, and the two establish residence in the same apartment in San Sebastián. During this time Ramón's brother Andrés engages in financial practices which prove ruinous to the bank's business and result in Ramón's bankruptcy. Ramón is now faced with the necessity of attempting to earn a living. He reflects regretfully on his previous existence as an idler and a libertine: "Su verdadera quiebra fue el no haberle dejado adivinar su egoísmo cuáles eran las verdaderas obligaciones de su riqueza."³² He begins working at odd jobs but is nevertheless dependent on Bea's

³²Ibid., p. 95.

financial assistance for his livelihood. He tries to ingratiate himself with Bea by showing her more affection, but she is aware of his motives and becomes disgusted with his fawning behavior. Ramón gradually acquires a moralistic view of their concubinage and suggests to Bea that they marry. His real motive for marriage, almost subconscious on his part, is to be able to live at Bea's expense. Bea suspects that Ramón's motives are ulterior, but her own religious convictions influence her to consent to the marriage.

Soon after the marriage, it becomes obvious that the arrangement is not a solution for Ramón's problems. His financial ruin has caused him gradually to lose his sense of reality, and he begins to be engrossed with memories of banks and finance, of which he imagines he is still a part. Bea reflects upon the disastrous effects which money has had upon her husband's existence: "Cómo cambia al hombre la adquisición o pérdida de la riqueza cuando no tiene el alma bien templada."³³

Ramón's emotional disturbance makes life so difficult for Bea that she leaves home frequently in order to maintain her own stability. During one of her flights from home she meets and is attracted to a jai-alai player, Javier Anchorena, whose youth and vitality offer a striking contrast

³³Ibid., p. 101.

to her husband's weakness and instability. Javier is introduced to Bea and feels a mutual attraction to her even though she is ten years older than he. Their relationship progresses to that of lovers. Even though Bea has misgivings about whether Javier will remain true, her association with him offers a release from her difficult life with Ramón.

Bea becomes pregnant with Javier's child and knows she must make a decision about her future. She is determined to have the child for which she has yearned so many years, but she knows Ramón will never tolerate another man's son. Bea goes through a period of uncertainty, but Javier is finally able to persuade her to leave the country with him on a steamer bound for China. The reader never learns how Ramón reacts to this desertion.

Ramón is characterized in the novel as ". . . un pobre señorito baldía, sin coraje y sin nervio."³⁴ As with Luis Larrinaga, the protagonist of ¡Ay! . . . ¡Estos hijos!, Ramón's wealth serves as a deterrent to his developing any positive traits or actions. Ramón relies on his wealth to such an extent that when he loses it he has no other values to replace it. By the time he realizes how completely he has wasted his life he feels that it is already too late to do anything about it. Bea is a woman ruled by another kind

³⁴Zunzunegui, Ramón, o la vida baldía, p. 155.

of weakness. Paul Ilie, in an article entitled "Zunzunegui y la nueva moral española," characterizes Bea as an individual ruled entirely by her passions: "Su historia es la de una conducta continuamente apasionada: en su amor por Ramón, en su violento refugio en la Iglesia, en la acumulación de riqueza, y en su amor final con el pelotari."³⁵ Bea allows her affection for Ramón to rule her to the extent that she tolerates for many years his egotistic and whimsical excesses. Her pasión finally causes her to sacrifice marriage and country for an uncertain future with Javier.

Ramón's brother Andrés is a minor character but serves to typify the opportunistic speculator who was frequently seen in Spain during World War I. Andrés, whose personality is compounded of stupidity, pride, and recklessness, allows himself to be influenced by his brother-in-law, the Count of Arrieta. The Count talks Andrés into expanding the bank into a corporation and opening another bank in Madrid. Andrés fraudulently sells bank stock in order to increase its market value and, without consulting the Board, makes loans to whoever requests them. Andrés is elected to office in the Ministry of the Treasury and is able to wield power in financial circles. He personifies the businessman who, before the Civil War, gave Spaniards a false sense of

³⁵ Paul Ilie, "Zunzunegui y la nueva moral española," Cuadernos americanos, XCI (1957), 226.

national prosperity. Andrés is later thrown in prison when the bank fails, but he is released soon afterward because of his influence.

In the final pages of the novel, Ramón has not yet received the news of Bea's departure. He is in a café with several of his friends, who are discussing the impending Civil War. The author employs the conversation of the men as a means of expressing his feelings about "el mal de España." Ramón's friend Romulado Anabitarte makes a statement, the significance of which is emphasized by its capitalization in the novel: ESTÁN EN QUIEBRA LOS VALORES MORALES Y RELIGIOSOS, y no se ha inventado nada mejor que los sustituya. . . .³⁶ Thus the title La quiebra signifies not only Ramón's financial bankruptcy but his moral bankruptcy as well. Anabitarte's statement, however, is a generalization implying that there was a lack of morality prevalent throughout pre-Civil War Spain. One may conclude that Ramón, Bea, and Andrés are Galdosian figures who exemplify and represent many people. These people's lives and actions contributed greatly to the decadence and instability of a powerful nation, a decadence which began with the defeat of the Armada and which was ultimately realized in the Spanish Civil War. Zunzunegui believes that it was an overall support of corruption that spelled Spain's disaster.

³⁶Juan Antonio de Zunzunegui, Bea, o la vida apasionada, Novelas de Bilbao (Madrid, 1958), p. 1511.

La úlcera

La úlcera was written in 1948, and was awarded the National Prize for Literature in the same year. The main virtue of the novel is its refreshing brevity. The usual lengthy Zunzuneguan conversations are replaced with lively narrative. The humor, although it serves a didactic purpose, is delightful.

The setting is the village of Aldeaalta, situated on the Cantabrian Sea. The villagers have just welcomed home don Lucas, their newly designated indiano. The Spanish indiano is an individual who has earned a fortune in America; however, in Aldeaalta only one citizen can be designated by this term, and that is the individual who contributes the most money to the general well-being of the villagers.

Don Lucas, of humble parentage, leaves Aldeaalta early in life to seek his fortune in Mexico. He works in an almacén and, through his ingenuity and determination to succeed, is eventually able to take over the business and expand it. During his sojourn in Central America, don Lucas sends thousands of pesetas to various charitable institutions in Aldeaalta. Now, upon his return to the village, he is acclaimed by the populace and believes he is secure in the position of indiano.

Lucas discovers, however, that his title is in danger of being usurped by another villager. The latter cannot yet call himself an indiano because he has not contributed to

charity, so for the time being he calls himself "el americano." An old friend of don Lucas' tells him: ". . . él ha vuelto de allí sin dinero, y sin dinero no se puede ser en el último caso más que un falso indiano..., un indiano de mentirijuelas..., un indiano de pega."³⁷ El americano, whose name is Ricardo, had migrated to America at the age of twenty. After leading a dissolute existence for a period of time, he yearned to return to his native Basque village. He was aware of the prestige involved in returning from America with riches, but since he had squandered his money he realized that he would have to make a name for himself by cunning instead. At present, back in Aldeaalta, he manages to capture the villagers' admiration through his appealing personality and his handsome appearance. To increase his funds as well as his prestige, he initiates a lending library and stimulates the villagers' interest in reading. However, when he places Darwin's Origin of Species and Marx's Das Kapital in his library, the townspeople interpret these books as indications of his heretical beliefs, and el americano suffers a popularity setback.

Ricardo later regains prestige with the invention of an electric harpoon. Studying the history of the ancient Basques, he learns that they were the first Europeans to catch whales and once had a thriving whaling industry.

³⁷Juan Antonio de Zunzunegui, La úlcera (Madrid, 1949), p. 30.

Subsequently, the Norwegians have come to monopolize on whaling in the colder waters. The Basques are now of the opinion that, even if there were whales in the Cantabrian Sea, it would neither be safe nor economical to hunt them. Ricardo believes, however, that his harpoon could shock a whale to death, thus eliminating any danger. When whales are suddenly discovered in the warmer waters of the Atlantic Ocean, the inventor sets out with his invention and a crew. The men spot a whale, but in preparing to use the electric harpoon they receive a tremendous shock from it. Dazed and frightened, they throw el americano overboard and he drowns. The crew returns to shore without the whale, and the harpoon is left to rust. However, a Norweigan makes use of the invention, and the whaling industry in Norway realizes great profit from it.

Don Lucas, now secure in the position of indiano, continues to contribute large amounts of money to charity. He begins to feel pain and discomfort in his stomach and learns from a physician that he has a duodenal ulcer. Lucas feels that the ulcer adds to his importance and prestige among the villagers, since rich prominent men are more prone to ulcers. In the words of one of the villagers: ". . . un indiano sin úlcera no acaba de ser un indiano...y una úlcera sin indiano no es propiamente una úlcera...y es que la úlcera ha nacido para premio del indiano y el indiano para terminar la vejez

gozando una úlcera."³⁸ The public becomes so preoccupied with the indiano's ulcer that they even suffer with him vicariously.

Don Lucas becomes increasingly proud of his ulcer and treats it almost like a daughter, constantly attending to it. He gives it a little milk at the accustomed hours, along with bicarbonate of soda. He takes it to see the best doctors in Madrid, and while there he and the ulcer do some sightseeing. Viewing an X-ray of his beloved ulcer, he exclaims, "¡Qué bonita es, qué bonita es!...Luego, es tan modosa, tan suave, tan joven; porque esta úlcera es una úlcera que aun no ha hecho la primera comunión...! It even becomes customary for the townspeople to hang an X-ray of the ulcer in their living rooms.

Don Lucas and his ulcer visit the doctors frequently and avidly take the prescribed medicines. They spend every year from April to October visiting specialists and going to the theatre. Occasionally the ulcer craves exotic and spicy foods, from which they both suffer greatly. When the ulcer worsens, don Lucas summons Pablito, a conscientious young doctor of Aldeaalta. Pablito, who has studied psychosomatic medicine, proceeds to gather up the numerous bottles of medicine and toss them out the window. He tells Lucas: "Casi todas las úlceras son un estado de ánimo, o más

³⁸Zunzunegui, La úlcera, p. 197.

³⁹Ibid., p. 205.

claramente, casi toda gran úlcera es un gran disgusto... una gran quiebra moral; como se dice ahora, una enfermedad psicosomática."⁴⁰ He explains to Lucas that the ulcer no longer has any reason to exist and can now be cured by the power of suggestion.

The indiano accepts this diagnosis and becomes better each day. One day he becomes apprehensive, however, when he can no longer communicate with his ulcer. He realizes that he has made a terrible mistake. Now that he has lost his companion, how will he entertain himself? How will he justify the trips to Madrid in the spring and autumn? And, the most horrible of all, how will he answer the people in the harbor when they ask about it?

When the people find out that the ulcer has disappeared from Lucas' life, they take down the X-rays from their living-room walls. Soon the indiano dies, having ceased to care about existence without his companion. The townspeople become incensed about the loss of their myth, and they vengefully rush to kill Pablito, who has indirectly brought about the death of Lucas. Pablito saves himself by escaping in his boat. However, he apparently does not succeed in his attempt to escape, as in the chapter immediately following, the author states: "Todo aquel torrente de envidia y de rencor que no pudo caer sobre el cuerpo despedazado de

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 199.

Pablito, al anochecer cercaba el Gran Hotel con sollozante deseo de ver a su indiano de cuerpo presente."⁴¹

Zunzunegui entered La úlcera in the competition for the National Prize for Literature as a "novela de humor." It won the first prize; however, the judges did not award the author all of the prize money, stating that La úlcera could not be considered a humorous novel in the strict sense. La úlcera is replete with humor, but it cannot be denied that the humor serves as a vehicle for the author's satire, which is often bitter. The serious nature of the novel is demonstrated by the violent outcome, in which Pablito is torn limb from limb much in the same way as Alfredo Martínez was in the novel El barco de la muerte.

Don Lucas' petty faults are all disclosed behind the thin veil of humor. When viewed in a serious manner, he proves to be a nouveau riche whose philanthropic gestures are the only means by which he can attain popularity. His only positive asset is his ability to make money, for he is otherwise characterized as an individual who completely lacks imagination, charm, wit, or compatibility. Thus he becomes the indiano of Aldeaalta not because of his generosity but due to his desire for recognition. He soon learns, however, that money cannot purchase companionship. On one occasion, he buys a mansion from a once-wealthy widow whose

⁴¹Ibid., p. 245.

fortune has dwindled away. Wishing a companion to share the house with him, he proposes to the widow. However, she bitterly refuses, accusing him of attempting to include her as a bargain with the mansion. Don Lucas never resides in the house, and later burns it down when he discovers that it is being utilized by vagrants as a shelter.

When don Lucas' loneliness becomes overwhelming, he directs his attention to his ulcer. The ulcer becomes a manifestation of Lucas' ego, and the villagers, aware of its importance, eulogize it as an integral part of their indiano. They realize the necessity of feeding Lucas' vanity in exchange for his charitable contributions. Don Lucas' ulcer is an anomaly created in part by the townspeople themselves. Thus the novel is a condemnation of the whole community which enabled Lucas to arrive at such a position of prominence. Zunzunegui denounces the self-deception of the Basque pueblo: "El pueblo había hecho ya de su indiano un mito, y los mitos hay que defenderlos contra todo y contra todos, porque los mitos son la salud de los pueblos."⁴²

El americano has a significant role in the novel since he is the antithesis of el indiano. He is intelligent, charming, handsome, and inventive, yet the people reject him because he does not possess wealth. He establishes a library to nourish the townspeople's intellect; however, the

⁴²Zunzunegui, La úlcera, p. 244.

people are too ignorant to accept some of the challenging and knowledgeable works which he makes available to them. With his invention of the electric harpoon, Ricardo offers the people an opportunity to advance their industry, but their fear and their hesitation to experiment overcome their curiosity. The occupants of Aldeaalta prefer instead to continually flatter don Lucas in order that he bestow his contributions on them. The extent of their ignorance becomes evident when they kill the village doctor, the only person brave enough to admit the truth and to destroy a myth.

Las ratas del barco

Zunzunegui wrote Las ratas del barco in 1951, employing a theme similar to that of La quiebra, in which a lower-class girl falls in love with a señorito rico, or rich young man-about-town. In the present novel, however, the female protagonist, Carmen, allows her infatuation to ruin her whole life, whereas in La quiebra Bea maintains a degree of control over her future.

Carmen and her family live in Bilbao, supported by the meagre income of her father Bruno, a grocer, who knows how to pick a good bacalao but little else. His wife Anita is a quiet, reflective woman who uses the same phrase in response to every happening: "¿Y qué le vas a hacer?" Carmen is the youngest of the couple's four daughters. She is

beautiful, congenial, and always cheerful. Her sisters are: Irene, bad-natured and a glutton; Eulalia, ". . . que vivió toda su vida con el amargor de su fealdad."⁴³; and Pepa, crippled and introverted. Carmen has been endowed with most of the charms, and her sisters are so envious as to be openly aggressive toward her.

Carmen experiences love at first sight when she meets Ismael, a wealthy, handsome, and irresponsible young man. Carmen's father, Bruno, expresses his disapproval of the relationship; her mother Anita merely exclaims, "¿Y qué le vas a hacer?" "Isma" introduces Carmen to his mother, an Austrian aristocrat known to many as only "la vienesa." "La vienesa," once beautiful herself but now only slightly attractive, is extremely jealous of Carmen's beauty. She tells her son to forget about Carmen since the girl is completely out of his class. Ismael instead buys a house for Carmen so that he can associate with her away from the critical observation of her parents. Although Carmen is now Ismael's "amiga" or concubine, she does not consider herself as such. She is confident that someday he will marry her, perhaps after the death of his tyrannical mother. "La vienesa," subject to violent emotional disorders, must be confined to an asylum. Ismael, who worships his mother, leaves Carmen in order to be near her at the asylum.

⁴³Juan Antonio de Zunzunegui, Las ratas del barco (Madrid, 1951), p. 23.

While Ismael is away, Carmen's father, hoping to stimulate her interest in another man, introduces her to a friend, Jacinto Fernández. Jacinto is a prosperous businessman who worked his way up from poverty. Carmen finds Jacinto is pleasant company and a good conversationalist but has no romantic interest in him. "La vienesa" dies shortly afterward in a fit of madness, and Carmen anxiously awaits Ismael's proposal of marriage, but it never materializes. Ismael, faithful to his mother's last wishes, has promised her that he will never marry Carmen. Instead, he rents an apartment for her in Madrid and persuades her to move there.

In a few years Ismael disappears from Madrid. During this time Carmen's parents have died, and her sisters Irene and Eulalia have married. Carmen is so lonely that she invites the sisters and their husbands to come to Madrid to live with her, even though she anticipates the results: "Se me meterán en casa y Dios sabe lo que me costará echarlos. Pero hacen número, meten ruido, hablan, gesticulan, chismorrean."⁴⁴ Eulalia's husband Fernando is the cymbalist for the Municipal Band. Irene has married a man named Andrés, nicknamed Andresón, who is as much of a glutton and an idler as she. Several years after the family has settled in Madrid, the Civil War breaks out. Fernando sends his

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 204.

daughter Anita to serve as a nurse among the troops who are fighting the revolutionaries. She is assaulted by several soldiers and becomes pregnant. The 1933 electoral victory of the rightists fails to stop the advance of the Revolution. Murder, pillage, and arson become an everyday occurrence in Madrid as the "rojos" or Republicans gain the upper hand.

Fernando and Andresón fluctuate in their political alliances according to what they can gain, both in funds and in prestige, from each faction. Eulalia tries to get Carmen to align herself with the people of Madrid against Franco's Nationalists, however Carmen has no interest in taking part in the political strife. Since Ismael has not appeared for many years, Carmen becomes engaged to Jacinto, but the marriage must be delayed because of her fiancé's obligations in the Basque Provinces during the war. News arrives in Madrid that the Nationalist troops of Generalísimo Franco are expected to arrive soon, and the city is barricaded against the departure of its citizens.

Anita, soon to give birth to her child, is subject to hysterical outbursts that add to the general confusion of the household. One day Eulalia, the most jealous and vengeful of the sisters, informs Carmen that Ismael has been tried by the revolutionaries and shot. Carmen prefers to believe that her sister is lying. The family is continually set in turmoil by the events of the war. Carmen's sister Pepa is killed by a soldier when she tries to prevent him from

searching the apartment. Anita bears a son who contracts dysentery and dies because a doctor cannot be located. Carmen defensively adopts a resigned acceptance to tragedy. She decides that Eulalia's news about Ismael's death is possibly true and feels that there is no longer any reason to live. She ceases to consider herself as a participant in life and behaves as an unemotional observer of tragedy. Eulalia and Irene depart for Bilbao with their husbands when they learn that the Fourth Division of Navarre has defeated Nationalist troops. Anita decides to remain in Madrid with Carmen, who does not even have the desire to return to the Provinces.

Jacinto returns to Madrid after the victory of Navarre. When he enters Carmen's apartment, she hardly notices that he has arrived. Carmen has become emaciated and haggard, but Jacinto, looking at his fiancée through the eyes of love, regards her as she was before, beautiful, healthy, and spirited. Jacinto has struggled through the difficult times with the sole consolation of his engagement to Carmen. When he mentions to her the prospective marriage, Carmen cannot long deceive Jacinto. She tells him that she has never been able to forget Ismael and loves him still, even though he may be dead. Then she asks her fiance to look at her impartially: "¡Ay Jacinto, Jacinto!, ¿qué tengo que ver yo, esta de ahora, con la de aquellos días de julio? Si me observas bien, notarás que en lo físico ni casi me parezco a

lo que era antes."⁴⁵ She tells Jacinto that she believes she is going to die and implores him to leave her in peace.

The next morning Carmen is summoned to Jacinto's hotel room to identify his body. Jacinto has shot himself in the head. When the sheet is pulled back from his body Carmen sees that one of his eyes has sprung from its socket from the impact of the bullet. The sight terrifies her: "Y fue aquel ojo, aquel ojo acuoso, turbio y desorbitado el que la miró con un asco y un desprecio inmensos."⁴⁶ Thereafter Carmen undergoes a rapid physical degeneration and her beauty completely fades. In a few weeks she dies from malnutrition, and the people present at her deathbed observe that in her death she seems to have regained her former composure and beauty. A neighbor asks the doctor how she died, and he replies: "De asco, señora, de asco..., que es de lo que mueren siempre bastantes españoles..."⁴⁷

The characters of Las ratas del barco are representative of Spaniards who observed or were participants in the Civil War. Each of them portray various segments of society: Fernando and Andresón are the political opportunists; Carmen is the non-participant, and Anita is the innocent victim. Pedro Caba believes that the characters are realistically portrayed but are not heroes or protagonists in the strict

⁴⁵Zunzunegui, Las ratas del barco, p. 351.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 354.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 355.

sense of the words. Most of the characters react adversely, anti-heroically, to their environments.⁴⁸ Carmen's brother-in-law Fernando, in a patriotic fervor, cowardly contributes his daughter Anita to the cause instead of volunteering his own services. Irene's husband Andresón, after learning that his landlord has been arrested and jailed, collects the rent from his fellow tenants and pockets it himself. Both Fernando and Andresón readily change their political alignments according to the profit they can gain for themselves.

Carmen's reaction is the most adverse of all. When the war begins she feels that she is the victim of fate and prefers to succumb rather than to persist. She is so obsessed with her own crisis that she is almost a non-entity in regard to outside occurrences. While others are concerned with the war, Carmen dissipates her will-power remembering Ismael. Her obstinate faithfulness, even when she is convinced that Ismael is most likely dead, prevents her from achieving possible happiness with Jacinto. At the point of death she herself admits that her obsession for Ismael has contributed to her defeat: "Ha tenido que despedazarse España de punta a punta para que me diera cuenta de que mi destino, mi verdadera destino, era sufrir por él y morirme. . ." ⁴⁹ Of all the characters, Carmen best personifies the non-hero.

⁴⁸ Pedro Caba, "La novela en Baroja y en Zunzunegui," Indice, XVI (March, 1962), 7.

⁴⁹ Zunzunegui, Las ratas del barco, p. 352.

El supremo bien

Zunzunegui wrote both Las ratas del barco and El supremo bien in 1951. El supremo bien was composed in the manner of Balzac's fiction; that is, several generations of a particular family are represented over an extended period of time. The time period covered is from about 1880 to the epoch of the Second Republic (1931-1939).

The theme is that of the evil influence of money upon a man who works his way up from poverty. Pedro, called Pedrito as a boy, begins working in a grocery store at the age of thirteen. As is common to many of Zunzunegui's protagonists, he is obsessed with the desire for wealth. Pedrito recognizes that he must work conscientiously in order to advance himself; however, he finds that he has an advantage since the store owner's daughter Resurrección is attracted to him. When Pedrito's lowly job as clerk becomes too monotonous for him, he confronts Resurrección: "¿No dices que parezco un hombre? Pues si soy un hombre, quiero un puesto de hombre, no de chico."⁵⁰ The girl persuades her mother doña Marta to promote Pedrito to the status of store manager.

As the boy grows older and experiences the normal yearnings for diversion and female companionship, he endeavors to replace them with hard work. Years later he marries Resurrección and they have four children. Doña

⁵⁰Juan Antonio de Zunzunegui, El supremo bien (Madrid, 1951), p. 83.

Marta had been a usurer as well as a grocer and left a considerable bank account, which Pedro uses to expand the grocery business. Although he is now wealthy he continues to be dissatisfied: "La codicia que se le despertó a poco de entrar en casa de doña Marta le fue trepando, trepando como una liana venenosa."⁵¹

Pedro's only daughter, named Resurrección after her mother, is his favorite child. As a child she is affectionate and fun-loving, but as she enters adolescence she becomes more and more somber and religious. She expresses to her father her wish to become a nun, and he vehemently opposes her decision. A few years later she enters a convent, but since she is no longer a minor Pedro cannot have her removed. Lorenzo, the oldest son, studies law and business, planning to enter into partnership with his father. However, Lorenzo's ambition disturbs his father, who intensely fears being unseated from the position that he has attained with such difficulty. He tells his son, "Mi dinero es mío, y no me estorbéis el goce de manejarlo y de sentirlo crecer, que bastante he tenido que trabajar de joven y de niño para no verlo por ninguna parte."⁵²

Another son, Julián, studies pharmacy, and his father purchases a drugstore for him. However, the boy cares more about the pursuit of women than the management of the

⁵¹Ibid., p. 125.

⁵²Ibid., p. 159.

pharmacy. His brother Lorenzo rescues the business from financial ruin and expands it into a prospering drug-manufacturing concern. Lorenzo marries and has children, but Pedro considers Lorenzo's wife too common and will have little to do with their family.

Pedrito, Pedro's youngest son, is studious and intellectual. He becomes engaged to the daughter of an English lord, much to his father's delight. Before his marriage, however, Pedrito develops a lung ailment and has to be hospitalized. His mother believes the illness to be a punishment inflicted on her husband for his partiality toward Pedrito and Resurrección. When she expresses her belief to him, Pedro reflects upon it: "Tendrá razón ésa, y será un castigo de Dios llevarme la hija y ponérmela en un convento, y postrarme al hijo en la cama en lo alto de un monte cuando iba a realizar mi sueño."⁵³

Several years later Pedro's wife dies, and he becomes more subdued and reflective. He develops an increasing awareness of the brevity of life now that he is entering upon the threshold of old age. He profoundly regrets not having enjoyed life more in his youth. He reflects upon the barrenness of his life up to now and decides that by doing a charitable deed he can make life more meaningful. He chooses to help his friend don Alfonso, whose salary as

⁵³Ibid., p. 187.

a professor does not adequately provide for his ten children, by offering him the position of secretary of his firm. Don Alfonso is extremely grateful to his friend and eagerly accepts. Pedro, observing Alfonso's joy, regrets not having previously experienced the pleasure that generosity brings. He invites Alfonso to travel to Italy with him, and the two take an extended vacation.

When Pedro returns, he learns that his son Pedrito has become worse during his absence. Resurrección, who had been removed from the convent by her father because of her heart condition, has been preparing her brother spiritually for the death that seems imminent. The doctor suggests that the boy's diseased lung be removed but warns that the operation is not always successful. Pedrito is resigned to his fate and resists the idea of the operation, believing that it will only precipitate his death. Pedro persuades his son to undergo the operation, and Pedrito dies two days later of an infection.

Resurrección, whose excessive preoccupation with religion has made her irrational, accuses her father of killing his son like a criminal. Pedro derives no comfort from his remaining two sons. Lorenzo, who is now a captain of industry, is ruled by greed and vanity. Julián continues to live a debauched existence and maintains no contact with his family. Pedro becomes extremely depressed over his son's death, and don Alfonso suggests that he stay for a

while with his brother in Segovia. He consents, and in Segovia he observes the contrast between his own family and that of his brother, whose family is fun-loving, close-knit, and hard-working.

Upon returning to Madrid, Pedro is met with the same disdain and resentment on the part of his daughter Resurrección. During his absence she has been occupied with helping her nephew Lorencito, Lorenzo's son. Lorencito has developed into an alcoholic, and Resurrección believes that his salvation is her supreme mission in life. She is of the opinion that Lorencito is good but weak, and that his soul has been plunged into an abyss. Resurrección, in her religious fervor, is unaware that she actually takes a vicarious pleasure in the evil of her nephew. In the words of the author: "Su corrompida golferancia era para ella como la agusanada podredumbre de ciertos quesos que, en vez de despreciarlos, los avalora gustosamente."⁵⁴ Resurrección is also oblivious to the fact that Lorencito associates with her only to obtain money from her for his alcoholic excesses.

Pedro, disgusted with the antics of his children, gives fifty percent of his business interests to his employees. At the age of seventy-five he feels a new zest for life. He begins associating with a rather dishonest but affectionate

⁵⁴Zunzunegui, El supremo bien, p. 411.

woman who manages to extract a considerable amount of money from him during their relationship.

When Lorencito exhausts Resurrección's funds he resorts to thievery and is caught by the police. He escapes and embarks for South America, and when Resurrección hears of his departure she dies of a heart attack. Learning of his daughter's death, Pedro reflects upon life: ". . . es que nunca como en aquel momento se dio cuenta de que, a pesar de muertes y deshonras, de crímenes y catástrofes, de guerras y depredaciones, la Vida es el don más excelso que Dios ha dado a los mortales, el más rico, el más humano, el más hermoso... El supremo bien."⁵⁵

In El supremo bien the sins of the father are visited on the sons. The avarice and egotism of don Pedro contribute to the subsequent decadence and dissolution of his family. Pedro's son Lorenzo becomes, like his father, power-hungry and obsessed with the quest for wealth. Pedro's other son, Julián, who is killed in a traffic accident, is an ambitionless libertine. Lorenzo's son Lorencito is an alcoholic, a homosexual, and a shameless cheat. Lorencito's extremes serve to illustrate the disastrous effects that wealth can have upon a morally weak person. Lorencito, for whom life was a continuous quest for pleasure, was never concerned with channeling his money into a productive occupation.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 452.

His philosophy of life: "Mi programa es sacarle a la vida el mayor jugo posible en cuanto a goces, diversiones y placeres. . ."56 As for Resurrección, Paul Ilie states: "No hay duda ninguna en cuanto a los sentimientos anticlericales que concurren en la caracterización de este personaje, porque el análisis va dirigido hacia el claustro y recusa su efecto sobre las mujeres."57 Pedro's egotism and greed cause Resurreccion to seek a life away from the family. Religion is not a comfort to her, however, for it causes her to become narrow-minded and unrealistic. Her normal emotions of love and motherhood become perverted into a strange attraction for her nephew Lorencito.

Pedro's later conversion to the more meaningful values of life could hardly be called noble or heroic. It may be termed expeditious, since Pedro did not decide to reform until he saw old age approaching. The fear of death caused him to cling more to life and to become more charitable in atonement for his greedy and egotistic past. The following passage comments on his fear and desperation upon growing old:

Ahora más que nunca, rodando la setentena, esa comeción del tiempo perdido, con su inevitable precipitación en la nada, le echa sus invisibles manos al cuello.⁵⁸

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 383.

⁵⁷Paul Ilie, "Zunzunegui y la nueva moral española," Cuadernos americanos, XCI, (1957), 222.

⁵⁸Zunzunegui, El supremo bien, p. 426.

Esta oscura desbandada

Esta oscura desbandada, written in 1952, is a chronicle of life in Republican Spain. Eugenio de Nora writes: "No llega a ser una gran novela aunque pase de crónica y documental excelente."⁵⁹ Zunzunegui's technique in this novel is more naturalistic than realistic. The characters are modeled with typical rather than personal characteristics. Their opinions and actions are determined by the environmental influence of the chaotic Republic. The inflationary economy, more than any other factor, is an influence on the destinies of the main characters. The protagonists' struggle to subsist in a time of ever-increasing prices, is the basis for most of their problems. Zunzunegui therefore reiterates his philosophy that money, or the lack of it, is the main motivating influence in people's lives.

Saturnino Atienza, a prominent doctor of sixty-two, is informed one day by his wife Emilia that they are going to have a baby. Saturnino is thrilled with the news but is rather apprehensive at the prospect of raising a child at his age. Emilia, who is fifty-one, had almost given up hopes of having a baby and is overjoyed. The couple subsequently have a son, Roberto, who is small and sickly. His parents, fearful of losing him, pamper him throughout his youth. Roberto is extremely intelligent and prefers to read

⁵⁹Eugenio de Nora, La novela española contemporánea, Vol.II, Part I, (Madrid, 1962), p. 345.

rather than to associate with children his own age. Early in his university career he develops a diseased kidney which must be removed, and after the operation he is confined to bed for months.

Roberto begins to feel abnormal because he has only one kidney. He completely shuns social contact and retires to his books, using his delicate health as an excuse for remaining at home: "Su misma falta de un riñón le sirvió de bur-ladero para la vida. Esa su misma desgana de hijo de viejos . . . le predisponía con la enfermedad a una existencia recoleta y sin luchas."⁶⁰ Saturnino, fearing that his son will never be able to live a normal existence, reserves a part of his income as an inheritance for the boy.

Several years after the death of his parents, Roberto marries a lively and attractive girl named Dolores who used to visit him during his confinement. Roberto and Dolores live on the inheritance money from his parents until it is depleted. The couple have a child, and for the first time in his life Roberto is forced to seek employment. Since his knowledge gained from reading is equivalent to many years of education, he decides to enter the oposiciones, which are competitions for professorships. He must, however, study and review for the examinations, and to keep his family from starving he sells many valuable books his father gave him.

⁶⁰Juan Antonio de Zunzunegui, Esta oscura desbandada (Madrid, 1952), p. 39.

In the oposiciones Roberto excels on the examination but does not receive a professorship. He is later informed by a friend that the positions are secured by political influence as well as by scholarship and that he did not have contacts with the right people. Roberto begins to regret his lack of social contact: "Soy un hombre solo, sin relaciones, sin amigos, y el vivir como he vivido, aislado y metido en mi concha, me ha perjudicado. . . ."61 Dolores' frustration over Roberto's failure to secure employment is augmented by her baby's death from acute appendicitis.

Dolores decides to sublease part of their apartment to obtain money for the couple's bare subsistence. She chooses as tenants a middle-aged couple. The husband, don León, is a retired travel agent, devoutly religious, and meek and submissive toward his wife. The latter, Ramonita, is a baroness who was rescued from poverty by don León, who was at one time employed by her family. Ramonita and the other members of her aristocratic but eccentric family had squandered their fortune long ago by drinking and gambling. At present Ramonita associates with her husband only when necessary, spends her evenings carousing with friends, and sleeps all morning. Dolores realizes after a few days that her choice of the couple as tenants was very unwise: "Se dio cuenta, ya sin ninguna duda, con qué clase de mujer tenía que lidiar: vaga,

⁶¹Ibid., p. 60.

cínica, egoísta, difamadora, viciosa, encizañadora, entremetida. . ."⁶² The baroness' husband, don León, leads a monotonous existence in the apartment, cooks most of the meals, and is seemingly mindless of his wife's excesses. He tells Roberto that he is still very much in love with his wife, adding that as long as she remains with him, he will abide her behavior: "Me insulte, me afrente, me golpee, es lo mismo."⁶³

As a means of making extra money, the baroness begins selling morphine. She stays home during the daytime in order to maintain her telephone contacts. She and Dolores, who have become antagonistic toward each other, have violent arguments over trivial matters. Dolores, who is burdened as well with worries over her husband's unemployment, contemplates returning to her hometown of Valladolid to live with relatives. However, since inflation has affected her relatives as well, she decides that she would be worse off with them. She expresses to Roberto her exasperation: "Es que, no sé, hay momentos en que me parece estar ya al fin de todo, en que desearía morirme; sí, sí, morirme."⁶⁴ Roberto tells his wife that the baroness is trying to irritate both of them to the point of leaving so that she can have the apartment

⁶²Ibid., p. 126.

⁶³Ibid., p. 142.

⁶⁴Ibid., pp. 185-186.

to herself. He advises his wife to try to tolerate the baroness, since apartments are extremely difficult to obtain at this time.

Dolores learns that she is expecting another child, and she becomes depressed and unhappy. Roberto, through Ramonita's influence, is able to obtain a position as a newspaper reporter. Even though Roberto is now making a steady income, Dolores is displeased with having to become obligated to the baroness. After she has her child, Dolores feels the desire to escape the dreary atmosphere of the apartment. She gradually begins to admire and envy the baroness' frivolous and carefree life. The two women become more and more friendly, and Dolores borrows money from Ramonita to buy a few new clothes. Dolores then hires a woman to care for her child, and she accompanies the baroness occasionally on her excursions to various cafés, bars, and restaurants. On one of these escapades, Dolores meets a friend of Ramonita's, Julián Hernández, ". . . personaje importante, enérgico y decidido."⁶⁵ He is the first to admit, however, that he is an extraperlista, a person who has made a fortune by swindling others. Nevertheless, he is unashamed of his career, and explains to Dolores: "Es el momento de los tunantes, y hay que aprovecharlo, por si acaso viene luego una época de austeridad y de decencia. Ahora es la época dorada del

⁶⁵Juan Antonio de Zunzunegui, Esta oscura desbandada, p. 253.

sinvergüenza, del granuja, del estafador."⁶⁶ Dolores is attracted to Julián, whose determination and self-sufficiency contrast so vividly with the weakness and indecision of her husband.

When Roberto is dismissed from his job with the newspaper, Dolores, who has been occupying herself with the companionship of Julián, hardly seems to notice that her husband is again unemployed. Roberto gradually retires to his books, oblivious of the fact that his wife's lover is paying the household expenses. The baroness becomes involved in a homosexual affair with an attractive woman named Encarna. When Encarna's husband dies, Ramonita moves in with her, arousing the suspicions of the neighbors. When don León does not hear from his wife for a week, he inquires among her friends as to her whereabouts. He learns that Encarna, the woman with whom Ramonita has been living, has been forced to vacate her apartment because of Lesbian behavior, and the two have gone to Barcelona. This is the final blow for don León:

Volvió a casa el pobre y se metió en la cama. No se levantaría más. Se pasaba la jornada rezando, ofreciendo al Señor su vida por la salvación de su pecadora mujer.⁶⁷

At this same time, Dolores is suddenly absent from the apartment. When she does not appear for several days, Roberto becomes resigned to the inevitable and does not search

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 255.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 329.

for her. Later it is learned that Dolores has run away with Julián.

The doctor has warned Roberto that León does not have long to live. The dying man asks Roberto to read to him the words from Eça de Queiroz which have obsessed him for some time. The words are to the effect that Life is only a blind flight toward Nothingness. León is convinced that both life and death are meaningless and that our only hope is faith. Roberto protests that the world has science, which searches for the truth. León, moments before his death, insists that faith is the only way and that our lives should be a long preparation for death.

In comparison with some of Zunzunegui's other novels, Esta oscura desbandada is mediocre. There is too much moralizing and commentary, and the characters are not realistic. The indolence and futility of Roberto are excessive, as is the evil of the baroness. Dolores' sudden transformation and her love affair with Julián are likewise unconvincing. The novel is an attempt to portray the ample panorama of life in Madrid, and its moralistic purpose is described by the author himself: "Trata de reflejar el estado de corrupción e inmoralidad que es la vida presente."⁶⁸ Zunzunegui believes that, with the passage of time, life becomes more and more corrupt, harsh, and brutal. To demonstrate this

⁶⁸Juan Antonio de Zunzunegui, Mis páginas preferidas (Madrid, 1958), p. 219.

conviction he portrays a whole gallery of scoundrels, swindlers, idlers, gamblers, prostitutes, cowards, and perverts within the three hundred pages of this novel. The people with whom the baroness associates are amoral and ambitionless, with an inexhaustible capacity for liquor and card games. One member of the group, Martín Camarines, is cynical but affable, and one of the best poker players in Madrid. He is an honor graduate of a school of engineering but has never used his education, preferring instead to be an idler and a gambler. He is one of the many pamperdidos, or individuals with wasted talent, portrayed in the novel.

Esta oscura desbandada is purposely devoid of any admirable characters. Zunzunegui believes that, with the prevalence of immorality, human beings continue to become both psychologically and physically disbanded from each other. His solution to this evil is that of brotherhood. He contends that, especially in his own country, in which so many forces have bitterly opposed one another, there is the need for spirituality, impartiality, and sympathy for one's neighbor.

La vida como es

La vida como es, subtitled Una novela picaresca en muy paladina lengua española, was written in 1954, and in the same year received the Premio Larragoiti for Best Novel of the Year. Most critics believe that this work is the

author's masterpiece. Angel Valbuena Prat has called it neo-picaresque, but scholars have debated as to whether it can be classed as a true picaresque novel. Nevertheless, many have stated that the book deserves a place of merit in Spanish contemporary literature. Pedro Caba, the literary reviewer for Indice, classes Zunzunegui with Galdós, Baroja, Balzac and Dickens in literary importance.

Zunzunegui's first novel written in the picaresque style, El chiplichandle, was concerned with the single pícaro Joselín. La vida como es deals with the collective picardía of the Lavapiés district of Madrid. This district is a skid row inhabited by thieves, pickpockets, prostitutes, gamblers, and swindlers. The "muy paladina lengua española" referred to in the title is the germanía, or jargon, of the thieves. The novelist has stated that this novel was the easiest he has ever written. He claims that for its documentation he made use of a couple of libros de policías of the epoch and took a few strolls through the barriobajo of Lavapiés to observe the general atmosphere. The rest, he says, was intuition: "Antes de escribir la novela jamás hablé, ni consulté sobre ella a ningún policía, ni jamás he hablado con ningún ladrón. . ." ⁶⁹ It is indeed astonishing that the novelist has portrayed with such realism the over two hundred characters which inhabit this

⁶⁹Juan Antonio de Zunzunegui, Mis páginas preferidas (Madrid, 1958), p. 25.

hampa madrileña or Madrid underworld. Each character, however briefly he or she may appear, becomes an unforgettable living being. Zunzunegui has stated that he became so involved with the characters that he himself felt that they were real. In the case of Conchita, one of the main characters, he actually wept after describing her suicide.

Most of the novel is conversation rather than narrative, but the dialogue is fluid, agile, and portrays the characters far better than mere description would. Zunzunegui also makes use of dialogue in order to present his views about contemporary Spain. In one passage, through the character Nicanor he discusses the status of thieves and beggars in Spain:

-- ¡Aaaah!...quita esos malos pensamientos y no te olvides que esta destartalada España nuestra, es el único país civilizado donde aun se permite campar a los ladrones y se les considera...; y gracias a que como es país pobre, la justicia tiene que ser suave y benévola y así podemos ir tirandillo los que no tenemos donde caernos muertos, que somos ⁷⁰el setenta y cinco por ciento de sus pobladores. . .

The unique vocabulary of the thieves is picturesque and fascinating, and Zunzunegui is careful to define for the reader, either in parentheses or in a footnote, the special terms. The following is an example of the novelist's liberal use of the jargon: "'El Serenín' estaba conceptuado entonces como el mejor sañero o carterista madrileño.

⁷⁰Juan Antonio de Zunzunegui, La vida como es (Madrid, 1952), p. 459.

Trabajaba en los burros (tranvías) y en el Metro, por el sistema del encontronazo. Actuaba con ayuda de un consorte 'el Cara de Piedra'. . . ."71 The thieves seldom employ their baptismal names, and their pseudonyms, such as that of "el Cara de Piedra," are highly descriptive and amusing. There are such characters as "el Patitas de Rana," "el Pintao," "la Bruja," "el Nene del Pisuegra," and "doña Rosita" (a male homosexual).

The central characters are don Benito, a tavern owner, and his wife Encarna, a beautiful, impetuous, and obstinate woman. Benito maintains a passive, monotonous life typical of that of many tavern owners. He waters down his wine and puts false labels on his homemade liquor, but he is always friendly and sympathetic toward his customers. His tavern is a meeting-place for many of the thieves and thus serves as a mise en scène in which Zunzunegui introduces most of the characters. Encarna, after about a year of marriage, becomes bored with the monotonous day-by-day routine with don Benito. When her husband organizes a peña or fan club for a handsome torero named Lucerito, Encarna proceeds to have an affair with the bullfighter. Don Benito's wife is not a seeker after the pleasures of the flesh; she is only in search of diversion from a life of predictability and monotony. Don Benito is aware of his wife's affair with Lucerito

⁷¹Ibid., p. 479.

but meekly accepts the humiliation because he is too proud to mention it to Encarna.

A procuress, señá Paca, tries to profit from Encarna's beauty by tricking her into becoming the mistress of an aged but wealthy gentleman named don Mauricio. Encarna is astute enough to discover the ruse and ends up profiting from señá Paca as well as from don Mauricio. She tells don Mauricio that she will "associate" with him only if he buys for her señá Paca's antique shop. She then threatens señá Paca, saying that she will report her pandering to the police unless she sells her the antique shop. Encarna thereby becomes a successful business woman, both in the antique business and in her relations with don Mauricio. Encarna has been characterized as the ". . . prototipo de la hembra madrileña de su clase, mezcla de sensualidad y de ternura, de vicio y de cálculo, de avaricia y derroche. . . ."72

The underworld of crime is chiefly represented in the figure of Luis, "el Cotufas," a kind of "prince of thieves." Luis forms business alliances with servant girls, who reveal to him the whereabouts of the safe-deposit boxes in the homes in which they are employed. They also inform him as to when the family will be on vacation so that he can plan his robberies accordingly. Luis is the most renowned espadista in the Lavapies district. An espadista is a thief who uses an

⁷²Joaquín Entrambasaguas, "Zunzunegui, novelista de Madrid," Revista de literatura, V (January-June, 1954), 349.

espada, the thieves' term for a skeleton key. The espadista is the artist of the thieving profession:

El verdadero espadista es el que deja cerradas las puertas; butacas, mesas y sillas en su sitio; las alfombras extendidas; armarios y cómodas cerrados sin violencias; fregados los platos y cubiertos si ha comido en la casa, y la cama hecha si ha echado la siesta. ⁷³

Luis strikes up an acquaintance with Conchita, a maid who works in a mansion he is interested in robbing. They fall in love with each other before he reveals his profession and intentions to the girl. Luis and Conchita are married, and the ex-espadista takes a job as a salesman in his first attempt to make an honest living. However, both the ridicule of his old friends and his nostalgia for his previous profession impel him to revert to his occupation of espadista. When Luis and Conchita have a son, he tells his wife that he is going to train the child to become the best carterista or pickpocket in Madrid. He also confesses to her that he has been a thief for many years. He tries to lessen her shocked reaction by saying: "Todos roban a su manera: Unos de una forma y otros de otra, unos fuera de la ley, y otros teniéndola a su favor."⁷⁴ However, Conchita cannot reconcile herself to living with a thief, and when Luis tries to coerce her into becoming his accomplice she commits suicide.

⁷³Zunzunegui, La vida como es, p. 122.

⁷⁴Ibid., pp. 373-374.

"El Cotufas" consoles himself with "la bella Adelita," a nightclub singer with whom he has been having an affair. "La bella Adelita" arranges for him to burglarize the home of an ambassador, but he is caught for the first time and jailed. During his imprisonment a friend, Nicanor, cares for his son, nicknamed "Yemitas" because of his long, tapering fingers. "Yemitas" has, according to Luis, "deditos de arcángel,"⁷⁵ fingers ideally shaped for the career of carterista. Nicanor places the boy in the academy of "el Serenín," who teaches the art of the pickpocket only to the gifted children who can pass the rigid entrance examination. "Yemitas," true to his father's predictions, becomes an extremely skillful pickpocket, even outperforming a gang from Valladolid who are considered to be the masters of the profession.

One of the pícaros, Agapito, begs because he is too lazy to steal. For a while he wears dark glasses and carries a sign reading: ciego de nacimiento. When he tires of this he has his son of eleven, "Cielín," trained by a thief named "el Sabueso." "Cielín" and "el Sabueso" do their work from the top of a moving train. "El Sabueso" lowers "Cielín" by his heels to the window of a sleeping compartment, and the boy grabs with a hook the wallets of the sleeping passengers. But soon Agapito becomes too heavy for "el Sabueso's" grasp.

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 480.

Nicanor el cerrajero is a skilled artisan who makes espadas, but his services are reserved only for the thieves whom he admires and considers great. When a thief tries to bribe Nicanor to make the thief an espada, Nicanor replies: "Yo, a los grandes espadistas les regalo mis espadas porque las honran; mis espadas no se venden, joven; se ganan como las laureadas; por méritos de guerra."⁷⁶

Epaminondas, a spokesman for the thieves and a philosopher, is a typical creation of the Generation of '98. He spends most of his time pontificating on various subjects in Benito's tavern. "Epa" believes that thievery in Madrid is a logical consequence of the city's geographical location:

La verdad es que este pueblo nuestro se levantó donde menos se debía levantar. Ni está junto al mar como Lisboa. . . Ni tiene una gran industria para que pudieran vivir sus gentes menesterosas con decoro. Ni la atraviesa un gran río que le dé una huerta que le permita comer. . . En fin, que no tiene naa; por eso sigo sosteniendo mi tesis de que este es un pueblo de pícaros y de mendigos. Aquí, el que no manga, por-diosesea. . . ."⁷⁷

Zunzunegui frequently portrays the female sex as being more villainous than their male counterparts, and the women in La vida como es are no exception. Conchita, however, is the rare exception, being a woman of virtue. Margot, Encarna's friend, is a seeker after pleasure and diversion, whether it be moral or not. She is later cast out by her

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 166.

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 208.

husband and son and dies alone of alcoholism. Señá Paca traffics in vice and prostitution. She sells her body, and when it is no longer appealing, sells the bodies of the generation of girls who succeed her. It was said of the women in the novel: "Son seres estrictamente materialistas, para los que la vida no es más que un gran mercado."⁷⁸

The action of La vida como es takes place during the Monarchy and ends with the installation of the Republic. The pícaros who inhabit Madrid are portrayed as a by-product of the Spanish Monarchy, itself characterized by vice and corruption. The real villain is "esta destartalada España. . . el único país civilizado donde aun se permite campar a los ladrones. . . ." ⁷⁹

El camión justiciero

El camión justiciero, written in 1956, is an account of the political scene during the six years preceding the Spanish Civil War. The protagonist, Felipe, is a political opportunist who takes advantage of the governmental chaos to gain prestige and wealth.

Felipe is the illegitimate son of a Norwegian sailor who died of alcoholism shortly after fathering him. Felipe's mother Irene sells magazines and does ironing for a

⁷⁸Betty Rita Gómez Lance, "Pícarismo en las novelas de Zunzunegui," Asonante, XXI (1965), 56.

⁷⁹Zunzunegui, La vida como es, p. 459.

livelihood. Her chief diversion is reading second-rate novels while she presides over her magazine stand. However, she is perceptive enough to realize that her son is exceptionally intelligent, and sends him to school rather than forcing him to help her earn a living. Felipe studies constantly and wins the Premio del Ayuntamiento de Bilbao, a prize given annually to the most gifted student. The boy's classmates, jealous of the honor, tease him about his mother's magazine stand. Felipe cannot tolerate the teasing of his peers and develops an intense hatred for them. He defensively adopts a Neitzschean philosophy of disdain for human emotions and weaknesses.

Irene does ironing for a pawnbroker, don Casto, whose daughter Consuelito is attracted to Felipe. When don Casto dies, Consuelo asks Irene to move in and take care of her since she is orphaned. Consuelo's affection for Felipe grows, and the boy sees an opportunity to profit from the girl's attitude toward him. He takes over the management of don Casto's loan accounts and is able to collect from customers who had been delinquent in their payments for years. Rather than to take a percentage of the collections, he conceals his avarice by telling Consuelo that all he wants in return are a few clothes to replace his threadbare wardrobe.

After Felipe receives his bachelor's degree, a friend, Jose Saloña, encourages him to go into politics and to align

himself with the Juventudes Socialistas. Felipe tells José that he is not interested in Socialism but has considered going into politics. He secretly feels that a political career would be the best method of attaining the power and wealth for which he yearns: "El afán de mando, de fuerza, y de riqueza le hormigueaba toda la sangre."⁸⁰

When Felipe's mother dies he continues to reside with Consuelo and to enjoy the benefits of her wealth. A friend of Consuelo's, doña Carmen, a shrewd widow, recognizes that Felipe is a scheming opportunist. She warns Consuelo that the young man has no intentions of marrying: ". . . porque ese granuja es de los que pican alto y tú no serás para él más que el primer escalón. . ." ⁸¹ Consuelo temporarily reflects upon Carmen's advice, but soon dismisses it because of her blind infatuation for Felipe.

Felipe studies for a law degree and becomes engrossed in the political fervor which accompanies the fall of the Monarchy. In Madrid he meets a wealthy count who introduces him to Alejandro Lerroux, the conservative political leader. Felipe becomes a follower of Lerroux and is elected to membership in the Cortes Constituyentes, the legislative body charged with writing a new constitution. He cultivates a love affair with the count's daughter Ernestina, unattractive

⁸⁰Juan Antonio de Zunzunegui, El camión justiciero (Barcelona, 1956), p. 86.

⁸¹Ibid., p. 109.

but wealthy. However, he is hesitant to marry her at this time, for the count's wealth is in farm land, which is in danger of being confiscated by revolutionary bands.

Doña Carmen notifies Felipe from Bilbao that Consuelo is dying of tuberculosis and is asking for him. She threatens that she will reveal Felipe's treachery toward Consuelo to his fiancée if he does not return to comfort the dying girl. Felipe instead sends a large sum of money to try to placate the widow. Nevertheless, Carmen journeys to Madrid to talk with Felipe. Through his political influence he has her arrested and sent back to Bilbao without even an interview. The widow continues to tell Consuelo that Felipe will return soon, so that the girl will die believing that he loves her. Later Carmen sends Felipe a telegram notifying him of Consuelo's death, and ends it by saying: "Le emplazo para el día de esa justicia de Dios que no dudo será implacable."⁸² Felipe is relieved that he will no longer be bothered by Consuelo.

When the government is taken over by Lerroux, Felipe anticipates being included in his cabinet. He is, however, overlooked, but foresees that the Lerroux regime may be very temporary. An aunt of Felipe's fiancée offers him another opportunity in politics by introducing him to Gil Robles, a leader of the right-wing coalition. Felipe aligns himself

⁸²Ibid., p. 214.

with Robles. When the Cortes are dissolved in 1933 and general elections are held, Gil Robles appoints Felipe as representative of Fuenteovejuna. When the count's land in Extremeño seems no longer in danger of confiscation, Felipe decides that the time is ripe to marry Ernestina.

Felipe is confident that his lifetime goals are now being realized. He goes to a jewelry store and buys Ernestina an enormous diamond. Leaving the store, he strolls along the sidewalk meditating smugly upon his bright future. A garbage truck swerves to avoid hitting an elderly lady and crushes Felipe under its wheels. Thus doña Carmen's augury about God's justice proves to be accurate. The dead man is covered with a heap of garbage which falls from the truck: "Fue tan brutal el choque y el frenazo que toda la basura del camión se fue sobre él, tejiéndole adecuado sudario."⁸³

The truck, which serves as a Deus ex machina, and the shroud of garbage which covers Felipe, are perhaps an overly moralistic literary device, but Zunzunegui felt compelled to execute the punishment of Felipe in the dénouement. The author, unlike many of the younger novelists of the contemporary generation, witnessed the Civil War himself and is still obsessively preoccupied with it. He is concerned with events which preceded it and with the men who were influential in its beginnings. There were perhaps many who, like

⁸³Ibid., p. 243.

Felipe, took advantage of the revolutionary fervor to satisfy their own ambitions. When Felipe is elected to the Constituent Assembly, he has no concern for the common good, as is reflected by his thoughts: ". . . la revolución que yo propugno es una revolución pro domo mea o sea una revolución en mi exclusivo beneficio que me consienta alcanzar el pleno desarrollo de mis facultades y el goce máximo de los placeres de la vida."⁸⁴ Men like this were advantage-seekers who were willing to change their political ideologies whenever they saw that they could gain by doing so. They were aided by the governmental chaos of the pre-Civil War years, during which regimes rose and fell, sometimes monthly.

Felipe is one of the most despicable of Zunzunegui's characters, for he has no creed beyond that of personal gain. The pícaro of La vida como es at least has a nationalistic pride, and many of the scoundrels that Zunzunegui portrays eventually revert to religion, but Felipe himself admits that he does not believe in the concepts of country, honor, or God.

El hijo hecho a contrata

El hijo hecho a contrata, like El camión justiciero, was written in 1956, and also dealt with the Spanish Civil War. The protagonist Manolo Amilivia, born in Algorta and a

⁸⁴
Ibid., p. 169.

resident of Bilbao, is characterized as ". . . un fanfarrón, fachendoso, crestudo, y chillador."⁸⁵ Manolo is a born trader and always profits from his trades with other children. His father, a carpenter, teaches his profession to his son. Manolo works hard and obsessively saves his money.

Manolo has a childhood romance with Dolores, a girl who lives in his district. He expresses to Dolores his belief that someday he will become a millionaire. One evening he discovers a diamond necklace lying in the street. He shows it to Dolores, who makes him promise that he will seek out the owner and return it. However, he begins to reflect that by selling it he can purchase a boat that he has been wanting. He suppresses his momentary qualms of conscience by considering the advantages that the money from the necklace will bring him: "Lo más difícil es encontrar el primer dinero para empezar y ya lo tengo. . . luego todo será coser y cantar."⁸⁶ He sells the necklace and buys the boat for 7,000 pesetas. He hires a man to repair the boat, names it the "Virgen de Begoña," and begins hauling coal in it. With the money made from hauling coal, he has another boat built and soon prospers from the bustling trade in the harbor of Bilbao. When World War I begins, many of the Spanish ship-owners prefer to decrease their business activity, but

⁸⁵Juan Antonio de Zunzunegui, El hijo hecho a contrata (Barcelona, 1956), p. 11.

⁸⁶Ibid., p. 41.

Manolo continues to build ships. He has a palacete built in Algorta and moves his parents and his sister Aurelia into it. When the war gets into full swing he prudently sells his ships and buys a cement factory. Occasionally he has misgivings about having kept the necklace. He reveals to a priest, don José, how he has attained his wealth, and the priest suggests that he give the equivalent of the necklace's worth, which is 100,000 pesetas, to charity. Manuel stalls for time and don Jose later reminds him of his obligation, but the industrialist can only force himself to write a check for one-fourth the amount.

After her parents' death, Manuel's sister Aurelia tells him that she plans to be married. After meeting her fiancé Andrés, Manuel objects highly to the union. Andrés is from the lower class, occupies a lowly position as an employee of the state, and makes only a modest salary. In response to Manuel's objections about her fiancé, Aurelia leaves the palacete. Without Aurelia's excellent supervision of the mansion the servants become slipshod and dishonest. Manuel therefore asks Aurelia's forgiveness and invites her and her new husband to live with him. Andrés thereupon quits his job with the state, borrows money from Manuel in order to go into business for himself, and instead squanders the money gambling.

Manolo is not so shrewd in his love affairs as he is in business matters. After a fiasco with a lovely but rather

childlike girl named Rosario who skillfully relieves him of one million pesetas, he assuages his feelings with Elenita, the mistress of a multimillionaire, don Pedro. Manuel considers it a real accomplishment to be able to interfere in another man's territory, but Elenita collects for her services by occasionally sending him some of her enormous clothing bills. However, Manuel pays them ". . . como corresponde a un caballero."⁸⁷ Later he discovers that Elenita, rather than being only a mistress, is an astute businesswoman who has been obtaining valuable financial information from Manuel and relaying it to her partner don Pedro.

Manuel is additionally burdened by the antics of his brother-in-law Andrés, who has become a drunkard and a swindler. But Manuel continues to tolerate Andrés and Aurelia since their daughter Begoña is the only person who is affectionate toward him. When Andrés dies from his alcoholic excesses Manuel is immensely relieved.

When Manuel meets Lula, an authentic marquesa, he recognizes the opportunity for him to improve his social status by marrying her. Anticipating that she may refuse his offer of marriage since he is much older, he instead offers her a contract. He states that she will receive a million duros if she will become his wife. Since he longs

⁸⁷Zunzunegui, El hijo hecho a contrata, p. 193.

for an heir, he offers her an additional three million duros if she can bear him a daughter, or five million if it is a son. She is at first dumbfounded but quickly recovers and replies, "Eres un salvaje, pero me gusta tu franqueza. ¡Acepto!"⁸⁸

The newlyweds alternate their existence between France and their various estates in Spain. When Manuel is sixty-two, Lula gives birth to a son, but it is immediately evident that the child is not normal. Manuel is overcome by repugnance when he learns that the child is a Mongoloid idiot. He feels that this son is God's punishment for a sin committed long ago, that of keeping the jeweled necklace instead of returning it to its owner. He ponders too that he might have been punished for having a son "by contract." Lula reacts differently to the child: She adores him and frantically hopes that he will grow to be normal. She occupies her time visiting countless doctors in the hope that one of them will be able to help her son.

With the advent of the Civil War, Manuel sells his stock and puts his money into foreign banks. He and his family move from Madrid, which is in a state of agitation, to Biarritz. He sees that his son is not progressing physically or mentally and continues to harbor guilt feelings. He hopes to relieve his conscience by giving to

⁸⁸Ibid., p. 263.

charity, but finds that he cannot stand to part with his money. He occupies most of his time with his business dealings, avoiding contact with his wife and deformed child. Like many rich businessmen, he has heart trouble and is apprehensive about his health. He has an inordinate fear of death and the loss of his money, knowing that he cannot take it with him.

The devastation of the Civil War causes many businessmen to go bankrupt, but Manuel continues to prosper. Elisa, a friend of his who has given most of her money for the relief of war victims, solicits a contribution from Manuel. The old man declines: "Usted es una mujer excepcional, querida Elisa, pero yo soy un hombre pecador para quien el goce supremo de la vida ha sido la ganancia."⁸⁹ Manuel resides in France through most of the war and does not align himself politically with any faction. His wife Lula supports Franco's Nationalists and plans to return to her native San Sebastián when the Nationalists gain control. Her husband, on the other hand, is terrified by the ravages of the war and prefers to remain in France, away from the arena of battle.

After the war, Manuel goes to San Sebastián with Lula. He is extremely disheartened when he learns that his estates in Spain have been destroyed. Approaching seventy, he

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 408.

begins to fear for his life, believing himself to be close to death. Another death precedes his, however, for his son dies of a heart ailment. Lula becomes hysterical and accuses her husband of killing the boy. She attacks him and vindictively mauls him until she has to be pulled away from him by others. The novel ends with Manuel's exclaiming: "¡Los hijos, ah, los hijos! Hay que hacerlos cuando se es joven y con humildad, con ilusión y con amor."⁹⁰

Like don Pedro of El supremo bien, Manuel finds that wealth is not all-important when a father cannot find solace in his sons. Both of these men, who worked their way up from poverty, discover that wealth has its accompanying sorrows. However, Manuel is not even able to find joy in giving to charity, as don Pedro did. Manuel discovers also that a high position in life is not so impressive as it seems. Although he is married to a marquesa, Manuel is not even able to enjoy a normal, healthy son. In contrast, Manuel's first love, Dolores, marries a man of modest means but has five healthy children to enrich her life.

Although he recognizes many of his faults, Manuel never considers that wealth itself is the cause of many of his shortcomings. The fact that this man ruins his own life through the pursuit of riches is not the main thesis of Zunzunegui, however. The author is concerned with what

⁹⁰Ibid., p. 476.

wealthy men have done, or have not done, to the country as a whole. Zunzunegui's spokesman in the novel, an astute lawyer named don Ruperto, believes that Franco's victory is to little avail since the power will still essentially remain in the hands of the moneyed. He states: "Hay que ir contra la codicia repugnante de los que creen que la vida se ha hecho para concentrar el máximo de riquezas en sus manos. . ."91 But Manuel, upon hearing these words, does not even consider himself in this category.

Una mujer sobre la tierra

Una mujer sobre la tierra, censored in Spain, was published in Mexico in 1959. Censorship of the novel was possibly due to its mordant satire of Spanish Catholicism, and its critical attitude toward the Franco regime. Whereas in many of the author's novels the satire of the clergy is more subdued, it is open and violent in the present work. Una mujer sobre la tierra also criticizes almost every segment of Spanish society, particularly the rich and the aristocratic, and regards contemporary Spain as a tragic result of the Civil War. Zunzunegui's pessimism can be clearly observed in the character Nicomedes, a skeptical bookseller who is obsessively preoccupied with el mal de España and who eventually prefers death to his life of discontent in Spain. Nicomedes is a typical hero of the Generation of 1898.

⁹¹Ibid., p. 453.

Una mujer sobre la tierra is clearly Zunzunegui's best novel. Juan Luis Alborg enthusiastically ranks it among the best works of Spanish contemporary fiction. It should be classed in importance above La vida como es, a previous work which was hailed by many as Zunzunegui's masterpiece. La vida como es deals with only one segment of Spanish society, whereas Una mujer sobre la tierra displays a whole spectrum of modern-day Spaniards. Moreover, the latter work is free of the moralistic presence of the novelist himself. Zunzunegui employs only his mature experience, his capacity for observation, and his rich imagination in the composition of this novel.

The setting is an inmueble, or apartment house, in Madrid in the 1940's, and the vecinos are intended to represent a cross-section of la sociedad madrileña. The author describes the difficulty involved in obtaining residence in Madrid as a consequence of the Civil War. Thus there are of necessity various economic levels of society residing in this particular apartment building. The dwelling is classed as a "casa de la 'ley Salmón'," which provides that the tenants can sublease part of their quarters if necessary.

The most important character is Matilde, known as la Matildona, who is the wife of the apartment manager and, in Alborg's words, ". . . un ser humanísimo, perfectamente

dibujado, de los que entran pocos en libra."⁹² La Matildona becomes a living being with her first appearance in the novel, and upon her death at the conclusion she is indelibly stamped in the reader's memory. Her unique speech, liberally sprinkled with profanity and colloquialisms, is the most significant factor in her realistic portrayal. Her behavior, her emotions, and her relationships with others are perfectly in accord with her provincial background.

Zunzunegui described briefly Matilde's childhood in a village in the province of Murcia and her development into an attractive and voluptuous woman. Unable to control her passion for an extremely virile farmer named Gerardo, she has an illegitimate child by him. Gerardo disappears, and because of the ravages of the Civil War, Matilde is forced to flee with her daughter Amadora to Madrid. She marries Macario, the portero or manager of an apartment building. Macario does not measure up to Matilde's qualifications for a husband, but he offers an opportunity for the woman to obtain financial security for herself and her daughter. La Matildona promptly assumes dominion over her husband and begins to manage the building. However, she soon yearns for the simple and serene life of the huerta in which she was reared, and her eulogies of the country are reminiscent of passages from Antonio de Guevara's Menosprecio de corte y

⁹²Juan Luis Alborg, Hora actual de la novela española (Madrid, 1962), p. 182.

alabanza de aldea. She frequently criticizes Madrid, ". . . donde todo el mundo vive y naie sabe e qué: unos e trampear, otros e chocarrear, otros e adular, otros e limosnear, otros e hurtar. . . y bastantes a alcahuetear."⁹³

By means of a collusion with the owner, she herself becomes a kind of alcahuete by reserving rooms and arranging conditions whereby his wealthy friends can have illicit assignments. These appreciative friends pay the owner well, and la Matildona receives a substantial percentage of the money for her part. She saves these earnings in hopes that she can eventually buy a plot of land in the country.

Another of her undercover operations, this one unknown to the owner, is the sale of part of the coal stored in the basement for heating the apartments. She compensates for the reduction in the winter supply of coal by turning down the furnace, or "caloría" as she calls it. When the tenants complain about the lack of heat, she tells them that the "caloría" is not operating properly.

La Matildona expresses her dislike for the tenants by such puerile acts as the placing of a sign on the elevator which reads: No funciona, thus impelling them to climb several flights of stairs. Her inhumane attitude toward one of the tenants, a coquettish girl named Catalina, results in physical combat between the two. In an ensuing court battle,

⁹³Juan Antonio de Zunzunegui, Una mujer sobre la tierra (Mexico, 1959), p. 181.

Catalina, who has previously been taunted by la Matildona for having an illegitimate child, reveals to the members of the court that Amadora, the portera's daughter, is likewise fatherless. Amadora, who is present and becomes aware of this fact for the first time, later reacts by disdainfully ignoring her mother's advice and supervision. Amadora becomes pura ciudad, a lover of the beguilements and luxuries of the city, and refuses to accompany her mother on her occasional trips to the country.

La Matildona is finally able to purchase a small plot of land in the country, but continues to sell coal surreptitiously in order to save for a barraqueta or cottage in which to pass her remaining years. She becomes more subdued and withdrawn from the vecinos, who have defensively adopted a disdainful attitude toward her. Her gluttony causes her to become obese, and she develops a heart condition which she blames on the evils of city life. She takes refuge in her garden from the hard realities of life. Her garden is situated on the roof of the inmueble, and she has planted flowers and vines there with sand which she brought from her trips to the country.

True to her husband Macario's warnings, the tenants eventually discover that la Matildona has been selling the apartment's supply of coal. They burst into her room in order to take revenge for the suffering to which they have

been subjected during the winter: "Cayeron sobre la Matildona y la sacaron a rastras hasta el portal y allí la escupieron, insultaron y patearon."⁹⁴ Although her cottage has been completed and is ready for occupancy, the portera's ailments, combined with the heartbreak over Amadora's sudden disappearance, cause her to succumb before she can return to the country.

Another significant character is Filomeno, one of the apartment residents. Filo is a veteran of the Civil War and is extremely sensitive about a crippled leg, the result of a wound he received during the fighting. His strong-willed wife has deserted him years before because of his weak character: "Filo es lento y desganoso y friático, como todo hombre de naturaleza pobre."⁹⁵ He later marries a more understanding and sympathetic woman, Gregoria (Goyita), and peddles books among cafés and restaurants to earn a living. In one of the novels most poignant scenes, Filo patriotically attends a mass rally composed of former Civil War prisoners of war and veterans, organized to protest the United Nations' refusal to recognize the Spanish government. The rally is attended by thousands of ardent protestors, and Filo locks arms with other war invalids. When Generalísimo Franco speaks to the throng, they become more and more

⁹⁴Zunzunegui, Una mujer sobre la tierra, p. 582.

⁹⁵Ibid., p. 32.

emotional: "Gente de todas las edades, enardecida y exaltada hasta el paroxísimo, rugía en los finales de párrafo, como si sintiese la quemadura en la propia carne."⁹⁶ Filo is trampled by the enthusiastic crowd and after being helped to his apartment by a sympathetic observer, he feels further humiliation upon discovering that he has had his wallet stolen.

Filo's fellow employee, the book-seller Nicomedes, is a kind of oracle whom he consults on topics ranging from personal problems to politics. Nico is shrewd but extremely pessimistic and disillusioned with contemporary Spain--its rigid social structure, its poverty, its preoccupation with religion. Discoursing on the starving Spaniard, he includes himself in this category: "Hay días, entre once y doce, que siento tales ganas de masticar algo, que me meto en el cuchitril y cierro la puerta por miedo a empezar a mordiscos con los clientes."⁹⁷ He says of the Spanish Catholic: "Este nuestro pueblo es un pueblo de vagos, por eso es un pueblo de malos católicos. Sólo a un católico español se le puede ocurrir pedir a Dios que le arregle sus cosas sin poner una nada de su parte."⁹⁸

There are numerous characters whose actions are narrated at various intervals throughout the novel, and

⁹⁶Ibid., p. 397.

⁹⁷Ibid., p. 256.

⁹⁸Ibid., p. 148.

their stories serve as novelistic entremeses which provide diversion from the main plot. Zunzunegui's literary genius is evident in this regard, since he can skillfully switch from one vignette to another and still maintain the reader's interest. He often employs epithets in order for the reader to identify readily the minor characters, such as Amparo, la costurera del tercero B, and Modesto, el ex tablajero. One of the tenants, Eulogio el riojano, is a fifty-nine year-old professional poker player who, although in rather poor health, is an incurable romantic. He is married but is in love with Patro, a beautiful young woman who maintains her relationship with Eulogio only as long as he will help to support her indigent family. Eulogio must therefore continue another love affair with Luchi, an aging matron whose generosity he must rely upon in order to subsidize Patro. When Eulogio suffers from complete physical exhaustion, his wife sympathetically cares for him, ignorant of the fact that his illness is due to his overindulgence in love affairs.

The Spanish aristocrat is portrayed in the character Tina, a charming, intelligent, and amusing duchess who has an illegitimate son, the result of an affair with Alfonso XIII before the fall of the monarchy. Tina observes that her husband's wealth is dwindling rapidly and in order to continue her frivolous spending habits, she becomes the mistress of her wealthy friend, Modesto el ex tablajero.

When Modesto asks her how long she believes their affair will endure, she answers casually that she will be faithful to him up to the last cent of his bank account.

The numerous sub-plots are unified by the fact that most of the characters are residents of the inmueble managed by la Matildona and thus frequently come in contact with other. The thin walls of the apartment enable the tenants, whether they care to or not, to become intimately acquainted with each other's lives, and their information is supplemented by frequent gossip, especially that of Jesusa, a peddler who sells raffle tickets and gains a wealth of details on her daily rounds.

In spite of the proliferation of characters, Zunzunegui manages to portray each of them in a thorough and realistic manner. Alborg states: "Con ser tan numerosos los personajes que desfilan por las casi setecientas páginas de Una mujer sobre la tierra, nunca hay tipos abocetados, ni apresurados, ni fáciles dibujos, despachados por el tramposo recurso de la linda pirueta o la convencional caricatura."⁹⁹

The central idea or unifying philosophy found throughout the novel could perhaps best be expressed as man's inhumanity to man. Sorrow is prevalent in the lives of the characters, and most of them suffer because of the cruelty

⁹⁹ Alborg, op. cit., p. 183.

of others. In the case of the two bachelors Venancio and Marcos, who adopt an orphan boy, the latter, Bruno, causes the men continual grief because of his inconsiderate behavior. Venancio, after Marcos' death from alcoholism, eventually dies of asco, a common ailment in Zunzunegui's characters, because of Bruno's delinquent actions. The protagonist la Matildona, although she arouses the sympathy of the reader, is dictatorial toward her husband and daughter and cruel in her treatment of various tenants. However, the tenants are unduly vicious toward la Matildona when they have the opportunity. When they discover that she has been selling their coal, they beat her unmercifully even though she is on her deathbed. When the portera finally does die, the reaction of the tenants, rather than being one of regret or shame, is instead "un suspiro de descanso."¹⁰⁰

Los caminos de El Señor

Los caminos de El Señor, written in 1959, is lengthy enough to be considered as a novel, but in structure it is similar to Zunzunegui's short stories. In its unrealistic events it is almost like a fable; Juan Luis Alborg terms it an ensiempro, a ". . . puro juego novelesco, al servicio de la moraleja. . ." ¹⁰¹ The plot abounds in inverisimilitudes, and the characters are representatives of ideas.

¹⁰⁰Zunzunegui, Una mujer sobre la tierra, p. 622.

¹⁰¹Alborg, op. cit., p. 180.

The protagonist, Begoña, is beautiful, wealthy, athletic, and has a good disposition, but she is disdainful toward men. After her mother dies, her aging father forces her into an engagement at the age of twenty-two to the son of a wealthy merchant. Begoña, however, refuses to marry her fiancé, and upon her father's death, her aunt, Ruperta, comes to the mansion to live with her.

Several years later, a burglar climbs through Begoña's window. Awakened, she angrily attacks him and breaks several of his ribs. He threatens that if she calls the police he will tell them that she has been having an illicit love affair with him and had mistaken him for a thief. Faced with this threat, Begoña decides that even to call a doctor would be harmful to her reputation. She nurses the thief back to health, and in the process she experiences an attraction toward him that she has never before felt toward any other man. Although the thief, whose name is Gabriel, is small, he is handsome and extremely masculine: "Se da cuenta de que por primera vez en su vida ve al hombre: al macho altanero y galleante."¹⁰²

Begoña's aunt, Ruperta, observes that her niece is spellbound and tries to reason with her. But Begoña, in love for the first time, is oblivious to her aunt's warnings. After Gabriel makes love to her, Begoña, ashamed and penitent,

¹⁰²Juan Antonio de Zunzunegui, Los caminos de El Señor (Barcelona, 1959), p. 141.

confesses her transgressions to the priest don José, who advises her to marry Gabriel in spite of his past. When confronted with the proposition of marriage, Gabriel has conflicting emotions. He is reluctant to abandon his profession: "Pero y de mi libertad, de este delicioso vivir incierto y acosante del ladrón. . ." ¹⁰³ However, after considering the financial advantages of the marriage, he consents.

Even after the marriage, Gabriel continues to regard everything in the mansion with the eye of a thief. Begoña observes that her husband's thieving disposition is unchanged and becomes apprehensive about his covetous glances. She conceals valuable items such as silver and jewelry in order to circumvent any unpleasant occurrences. After a scandalous episode in which Gabriel is caught cheating in a card game at the casino, he and Begoña temporarily leave town. In Madrid, the city in which Gabriel learned his profession of thievery, his compulsion to steal returns. One day, seeing his wife out alone, he notices that her purse is vulnerable to any pickpocket who might pass by. Gabriel, suddenly seized by an unusual desire to rob his own wife, adeptly removes three thousand pesetas from her purse. Later, at the hotel, he finds Begoña in a state of frenzy because of the robbery, and he realizes that he cannot

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 106.

reveal to her that he himself took the money. For the first time in his career, he is ashamed of his lowliness: "Lo que acababa de brotarle en la mente y en el pecho era la conciencia y el remordimiento, y con el remordimiento el arrepentimiento."¹⁰⁴ Gabriel recognizes that, because of remorse and repentance, he can no longer be a serious thief, ". . . porque un ladrón que se arrepiente es un ser despreciable."¹⁰⁵

Shortly after Gabriel and Begoña return home, the news is spread that a wealthy tourist has been robbed of her jewels. Begoña and Ruperta immediately suspect that Gabriel is guilty and accuse him of the crime. Gabriel is exonerated when the real thief is apprehended, but he is humiliated by the accusations and is aware that Begoña will always consider him a thief. Soon after this occurrence, Begoña tells her husband that she is going to have a child. He is displeased with the news, for he feels that a child will cause further alienation between him and his wife. He finally decides that he will never be able to gain Begoña's trust, and one night he departs for Madrid. He leaves Begoña a letter explaining to her that since she could never accept him as anything but a thief, it would be useless for him to remain there. He cites a passage from Cervantes'

¹⁰⁴Ibid., p. 178.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., p. 179.

Rinconete y Cortadillo, in which one of the characters attempts to justify thievery as a profession as worthy as many others: ". . . lo que yo sé es que cada uno en su oficio puede alabar a Dios. . ." ¹⁰⁶ Gabriel tells his wife that, because of his having lived in the Catholic, bourgeois atmosphere of the town, he acquired remorse and repentance, which defeated his desire for his prior profession of thievery. However, he believes that their son will become a thief like his father. He makes this suggestion: "Cultiva y favorece su vocación, y como eres mujer muy rica, en vez de un ladrón vulgar, como el padre, te saldrá un gran financiero." ¹⁰⁷ Begoña, after reading the letter, vows to raise her child for the profession of high finance.

In a previous novel, La vida como es, Zunzunegui depicts a society of thieves for whom guilt is an unknown concept. Gabriel is a descendent of this society, for in Los caminos de El Señor Zunzunegui mentions that he was a pupil of "Cielín," one of the pickpockets who appeared in La vida como es. Gabriel at first possesses no feelings of guilt, for, having been born into a poverty-stricken family of ten children, he always regarded thievery as a necessary occupation. When Gabriel enters the carefree and opulent atmosphere made possible by Begoña's wealth, he temporarily

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 225.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 227.

forgets his previous profession. His associations with the bourgeois and devoutly religious townspeople cause him to recognize his conscience and to develop a feeling of remorse and repentance for his past. The townspeople, ". . . aquel pueblo con su moral chata y exigente, con su moral de Misa Mayor y de párroco alerta. . . ,"¹⁰⁸ are Gabriel's downfall.

Speaking through Gabriel, Zunzunegui theorizes that conscience and remorse are modern inventions and did not exist in primitive man. They were born with religion and the establishment of man in society. The society, which rejects Gabriel, is one founded upon a false morality, a morality based upon bourgeois propriety and a faith of exaggerated piety. In Los caminos de El Señor, Zunzunegui portrays the entire society as the antiheroes.

El mundo sigue

El mundo sigue, written in 1960, is a social criticism set in post-war Madrid.¹⁰⁸ The main action concerns the lives of two sisters, Eloisa and Luisita Rendueles, whose strongly contrasting personalities are the basis of their hatred of each other. Eloisa, the oldest, wins the beauty contest of the Dos de Mayo celebration and becomes a fashion model. When she announces her engagement to an unambitious barber, Faustino Cáceres, her father Agapito angrily retorts: "Y para eso nos hemos sacrificado y hasta la han reconocido los

¹⁰⁸Ibid., p. 215.

téznicos la mujer más bonita de Madrid, para que se la lleve un barberillo que ni siquiera es el dueño de la barbería. . . y que no tiene donde caerse muerto."¹⁰⁹ Most of the people of the barrio are amazed that Eloisa has spurned a wealthy suitor named Julián for Faustino, and a neighbor comments that the marriage will be like throwing "margaritas a puercos."¹¹⁰

The younger sister, Luisita, was ignored during most of her childhood because of the attention directed toward Eloisa. As a result, she is now extremely resentful and jealous of her sister, even though she herself is very attractive. Luisita works in a department store and has ambitions of being wealthy someday. She becomes involved in an affair with her employer, Guillermo, who is married, hoping to derive from it financial benefit. Eloisa learns of the affair and vindictively tells her parents: "Esa zorra de Luisita se ha liado con el dueño de la tienda y nos está deshonrando a todos."¹¹¹ However, Luisita observes that Guillermo is reluctant to spend money on her and terminates the affair. She buys herself an expensive wardrobe, poses as a wealthy and naïve student, and attracts the attention of various businessmen and industrialists. Luisita profits considerably

¹⁰⁹Juan Antonio de Zunzunegui, El mundo sigue (Barcelona, 1960), p. 53.

¹¹⁰Ibid., p. 48.

¹¹¹Ibid., p. 68.

from these liaisons: "Maestra en el arte del fingido amor, traía a los hombres encelados y calentones, y ella los llevaba y manejaba entrando a saco en la Roma de sus carteras. . ."112

Eloisa and Faustino are married and have a child each year during the first six years. Faustino, an enthusiastic sports fan, occupies most of his time going to soccer games and betting on quinielas or lotteries. He considers work of secondary importance, for he believes that eventually he will win a large enough prize to be able to retire. Although Faustino does not provide adequate support for his large family, Eloisa is optimistic that he will eventually tire of gambling and return to steady employment. She loves him in spite of his shortcomings and believes that a wife's duty is to be subservient and long-suffering. When her former suitor Julián, who is now unhappily married, offers to help her financially, she refuses. Even though the family is in difficult straits, Eloisa is intent on maintaining her honor above all else. Faustino finally wins his first lottery and tells Eloisa that they may be millionaires. However, he soon discovers there are 484 winners beside himself, and he receives only 5,069 pesetas when the money is divided. A day later he loses most of his winnings in other lotteries. Faustino then proceeds to get drunk and is injured when he

¹¹²Ibid., p. 254.

staggers in front of an automobile. At the hospital he finds that he has been robbed of his remaining winnings.

Luisita occasionally visits her parents and is always well received by her mother doña Eloisa, who is proud of her daughter's beauty and success in spite of her dishonorable profession. Agapito, Luisita's father, is at first aloof toward her, but is gradually won over by her thoughtfulness and generosity toward the family. Sometimes, however, her sister Eloisa is present, and the girls' hatred for each other results in violent arguments which occasionally end in physical combat.

Luisita tires of her profession as a prostitute and decides to attempt an acting career. She begins acting with small parts in a music hall. One of her former lovers, Anselmo Selles, sees her on stage and approaches her after the show. Selles, a wealthy Valencian miner, quickly wins Luisita's affections: "Anselmo Selles, un tanto soberbio, duro, altanero, seguro de sí, era el hombre a su medida."¹¹³ Luisita and Anselmo live together for a while, but Luisita, who is now thirty-seven, realizes that she must plan for the future before she loses her appeal to Anselmo. She goes to the Cardinal of Toledo and reveals to him her situation, asking him to intercede in her behalf and request that Anselmo give legal and ecclesiastical status to their union. She is

¹¹³Ibid., p. 385.

confident that her lover will grant the request: "Es tan petulantemente vanidoso que no sabrá ni podrá negarse a su petición."¹¹⁴ The interview is successful and Anselmo and Luisita are married in the Cathedral of Toledo.

After Faustino's gambling fiasco and injury, Eloisa is forced to go to work to support her six children. She learns that her husband has a mistress, known as "La Alpujarreña," but believes that the woman will only be a temporary diversion for him. Faustino takes a job at a bar after he recovers from his injuries. The bar handles bets on the quinielas, and Faustino decides that if he cannot win the money he will steal it. One night he hides in a broom closet and is locked in the bar at closing time. He steals the quiniela proceeds and escapes before dawn, thinking that no one will suspect him. However, Faustino is not perceptive enough to realize that since he is an employee at the bar he will be one of the prime suspects. When he is apprehended, the money is found; and he is sentenced to a prison term.

Soon after Faustino's arrest, Luisita receives a new automobile which she had ordered from the United States. The car is the utmost in luxury, and Luisita, wanting to call attention to it, has a vindictive idea: ". . . se acordó de su hermana, hundida en la miseria, menospreciada, abandonada duro e injusto, mientras ella vivía casada con un millonario, rodeada de pieles, lujos, llena de salud y de fuerza

¹¹⁴Ibid., p. 456.

. . . y con aquel coche."¹¹⁵ Knowing that Eloisa is staying with her parents, Luisita has the chauffeur drive her to the family's apartment and sound the horn. Eloisa, who is suffering from malnutrition and in a state of shock from the news of Faustino's imprisonment, comes out on the balcony. Unable to tolerate her parents' adulation and obsequious praise for Luisita, she commits suicide by throwing herself from the balcony onto the hood of her sister's car.

Luisita Rendueles is the female equivalent of Zunzunegui's typical male protagonist, for she is entirely willing to sacrifice virtue and self-respect in the pursuit of wealth. During her career as a prostitute she associates with various lowly characters who are part of the underworld of vice in Madrid. These minor personages sometimes arouse more interest than do the main characters. Zunzunegui's forte is the brief character sketch, which in many of his works prevents the main plot from lagging. Luisita's "professor" in the art of prostitution, Pepe Rueditas, gives her advice on how to meet wealthy men discretely, with whom to associate, and how to be a "cortesana" with dignity.

Although Faustino is an antihero, one cannot blame him entirely for his vices. His long-suffering wife Eloisa seems to contribute to her husband's worthlessness by tolerating it rather than resisting it. Eloisa's concept of honor, as

¹¹⁵Ibid., p. 479.

tenacious as that of the heroine of Golden Age literature, could hardly be regarded as admirable. It stems from her preconceptions of romantic love, her close adherence to Church dogma, and her notions about the obligations of a wife. Zunzunegui does not portray Eloisa in order to criticize one particular individual, however, but to expose the evils inherent in certain Spanish traditions and institutions. He indirectly criticizes, for example, the Church's attitude on birth control, the Spanish weakness for sports and gambling, and the machismo concept of the Spanish male. Faustino is, in essence, a caricature of the male: "Faustino vivía feliz en aquel baño de adulaciones, chatos, pronósticos, 'banderillas,' y augurios deportivos. No era dichoso más que en aquel ambiente."¹¹⁶ The Rendueles sisters portray two extremes of the Spanish woman and of universal woman as well: Eloisa is the indulgent, devoted, suppressed wife and mother; Luisita is the amoral, money-hungry, aggressive prostitute.

One of the minor characters, don Andrés, serves as the spokesman for the author and is the critic of the society which is portrayed. Andrés is a dramatist who refuses to write anything but outmoded classical tragedies. He observes the real-life tragedy occurring around him, suffers vicariously, and then escapes into the make-believe world

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 353.

of his dramas. The playwright lives in the same apartment building as the Rendueles family and witnesses the suicide of Eloisa, for whom he has always felt great affection. Don Andrés interprets Eloisa's death as an indication of the tragic state of humanity, and comments: "Hasta cuándo esta comedia en una sociedad que se titula cristiana. . . Es un mundo corrompido, un mundo podrido, en el que triunfan los pícaros y se hunden las personas honradas. . ." ¹¹⁷ El mundo sigue, like many other of Zunzunegui's novels, portrays a society in which the unprincipled pícaro prevails, while those who attempt to cling to a standard of morality perish.

El premio

El premio, a satire upon Spanish literary prizes, written in 1961, ironically received the Premio Nacional de Literatura in the following year. Zunzunegui has a legitimate reason for criticizing literary awards, for in 1948 he suffered an affront resulting from his reception of the Premio Nacional for his novel La úlcera. In the preface to the latter novel, he explains the circumstances. The first prize was to have been 10,000 pesetas for a novela de humor, however one of the judges complained that La úlcera was not a humorous novel in the strict sense of the word. Zunzunegui's prize money was consequently reduced to 7,000 pesetas, and the remaining 3,000 pesetas was designated for

¹¹⁷Ibid., p. 480.

a third-place winner. In El premio, the author attempts to expose some of the unfair practices involved in literary prizes.

The fictional victim in the novel is Alejandro Martínez-del-Coso, a lawyer from Burgos who wins a prize for his first novelistic endeavor Ancha es Castilla. The editor of the publishing house which awards the prize is a Malagan named Agustinito Blásquez. Blásquez has never intended to give Alejandro the 100,000 pesetas which was announced as the prize money, and he manages to talk the novelist into telling the press that he has received the money. Alejandro knows that he is being swindled, but his fear of being humiliated keeps him from protesting.

Agustinito, nicknamed "El Pizquita," introduces Martínez to various literary circles in Madrid, flatters his ego, and promises him that his book will be translated into several languages. El Pizquita never reads the books for which he awards prizes but instead has his secretary Antolínez skim them. The books are chosen not for their literary value, but for their possible appeal to the general public. The winner of the prize is given much publicity, the book is widely distributed, and El Pizquita prospers by granting the author only a small percentage of the royalties.

In spite of these circumstances, Alejandro Martínez-del-Coso becomes involved in the interviews, photographs, and homages which accompany his fame, and neglects his

occupation as a lawyer. He continues to make trips to Madrid to consult with his publisher and to mingle in the literary atmosphere. During one trip he accepts an offer of 25,000 pesetas for the use of his novel as a film script. He also begins to frequent a nightly tertulia composed of idle writers who discuss literature and life in general. He becomes so enthusiastic about writing that he decides to give up his law practice, move his family to Madrid, and devote his full time to writing. His wife Nieves is aware that he is a mediocre novelist and will have difficulty making a living from his literary endeavors, but she is powerless to reason with him.

Once in Madrid, Alejandro undertakes the writing of a second novel but is frustrated by a complete lack of inspiration. Nevertheless he resolves to continue in his attempt: "No tengo más remedio que seguir, y con más decisión, ímpetu y entusiasmo, porque a estas alturas no me es permitido decepcionar a estas gentes: se sentirían engañados, y con razón."¹¹⁸ He begins to harbor doubts about his talent; but his literary companions, seeking to flatter him, continue to praise his first novel. However, when Alejandro is not present, they express their true thoughts about his lack of talent. One novelist says of the

¹¹⁸Juan Antonio de Zunzunegui, El premio (Barcelona, 1961), p. 263.

prize-winning book: "No es nada; es una novela rosa con gotas de tragedia rural. . ." ¹¹⁹ Alejandro doggedly persists until he finishes his second novel, which is immediately published by Agustinito. The literary coterie of which Alejandro is a member proclaims that the novel is a masterpiece. Most of the group have not read the novel; but having heard brief discussions of the plot, they are able to comment on it in a convincing way. One of Alejandro's friends, Aurelio Boadilla, who is an excellent author, tries to warn him about mediocre writers who are so quick to praise: "Pues de éstos, de los que no van a dejar nada, de los que se lo van a llevar todo en el momento de su muerte, no aceptes ningún piropo verbal. En cuanto empiecen a elogiarte, retíralos con la mano." ¹²⁰ Alejandro, however, is too obsessed with his popularity and fame to consider whether his friends' praise is insincere.

Alejandro finally becomes so displeased with Agustinito's practice of withholding royalties from him that he contracts with another publisher, Ceferino Nicolau. Ceferino is an ex-writer who has married a wealthy older woman, Clarita, in order to finance his publishing business. Ceferino extols Alejandro's first two novels and agrees to publish any of his succeeding ones. Alejandro returns to

¹¹⁹Ibid., p. 317.

¹²⁰Ibid., p. 354.

his routine of excruciating periods of writing in the daytime and tertulias which begin in the evening and often continue until dawn. He is again uninspired, and in his desperation he reads some of the classics in an attempt to discover a universal formula for greatness. He concludes that most of these great books are characterized by an aloofness, an other-world atmosphere, and a density: "Ahora a más densidad, más pesadez. Por eso las grandes novelas son algo pesadas. Ahora sólo la gran densidad crea el gran hermetismo, el gran ámbito cerrado que tiene que ser la novela."¹²¹ He surmises that intuition and instinct are also important, and realizes that in his gropings he completely lacks these qualities. However, he rationalizes his inadequacies by assuming that since most themes have already been written about, it is doubly hard for the novelist of today to write successfully.

Meanwhile Ceferino continues to laud Alejandro's novels, not mainly for business reasons but because he is attracted to the novelist's wife Nieves. Nieves is disgusted when she reads a billet doux from Ceferino. She is determined to uphold her virtue regardless of her husband's important business dealings with the publisher. She reflects to herself: "¡Qué tipo repugnante ...Que no puede vivir sin mí... Pues viva como pueda con su vieja, porque

¹²¹Ibid., p. 537.

ésa es una vejancona que le llevará a lo menos ocho o diez años!"¹²² Ceferino persists in his advances, but Nieves is as pure as her name implies, and rejects him. Ceferino retaliates by informing Alejandro that he will no longer publish his novels.

During a tertulia, Alejandro becomes acquainted with Elena Alcoriza, a distinguished-looking and intelligent woman who praises his novels. She informs him that she has connections with a publisher in Paris and offers to get his latest work translated into French. She inspires new enthusiasm in him, and he becomes physically attracted to her as well: "Le gustaba cada día más aquella mujer. Su misma aparente frialdad. Su dificultad de trato. Su actitud enigmática a la hora de la efusión. . ." ¹²³ Elena's "enigmatic attitude" toward Alejandro is due to the fact that she is a homosexual, and her interest in the novelist is purely monetary. Alejandro, who is not very perceptive, is unaware of this fact until one day he discovers Elena with another woman, "como les echaron su madre,"¹²⁴ in a romantic embrace. Alejandro is so overcome by the encounter that he reveals his humiliation to the first acquaintance he sees, a young writer called Perecito. Perecito passes the

¹²²Zunzunegui, El premio, p. 611.

¹²³Ibid., p. 704.

¹²⁴Ibid., p. 710.

information to Ceferino Nicolau, who vindictively tells Alejandro's wife Nieves, as well as various friends of the novelist. Alejandro, already in disrepute for his literary ineptness, becomes the object of disdain and ridicule because of his farcical love affair. Nieves immediately plans the family's departure, telling her children: "Si lo peor de la literatura es su clima y su aire mefítico y es de lo que yo quiero escapar y sacar a tu padre antes de empecinarnos en esa charca y acabar amarillos de ese paludismo."¹²⁵ Alejandro, no longer worthy of asserting his authority, allows himself to be led meekly back to Burgos by Nieves.

Zunzunegui presents in El premio an interesting and revealing picture of the literary atmosphere of contemporary Spain--its numerous mediocre writers, its critics, its literary prizes, the status of the Spanish Academy, and the Spanish reading public. Above all, he criticizes the writers, describing their bizarre existence, their long periods of idleness, and their vindictiveness. The protagonist Alejandro, who was a successful lawyer in Burgos, falls under the influence of this literary group and becomes idle, unenthusiastic, and unable to support his family adequately. In addition, he wastes many hours engaging in meaningless and trivial literary debates, and loses all concern for his moral uprightness by having an occasional

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 741.

love affair. Most of the mediocre writers in Alejandro's group cultivate friendships with critics and newspaper columnists and try to influence them, with money if necessary, to print glowing reviews for their books. This collusion between novelist and critic results in misleading reviews which greatly influence the book market and the reading public.

Zunzunegui criticizes the Spanish Academy at length. This is rather surprising since he himself is a member of the Academy and has received several honors from this group, including the Premio Fastenrath and the Premio Hermanos Quintero. However, he cautions writers who aspire to membership in the Academy:

Es curioso el enfermizo afán que por alcanzar la Academia ha entrado en estos últimos años a todos los españoles que tienen una pluma más o menos literaria entre dedos, como si la Academia fuese la salvación de un escritor, y no lo es. . . .¹²⁶

One of the characters, don Amadeo, constantly strives by means of bribes to be elected to the Academy, but does not succeed. Upon his death an acquaintance of his inquires as to the reason for his demise, and someone quips that it was because of "academicitis."

In contrast to these seekers of fame are the "negros" or ghost writers, who are solely interested in monetary gain. One such writer, Pablito, produces excellent novels

¹²⁶Ibid., p. 162.

for Aurora Puertas de Raedo, a wealthy matron who pays him well for his services. Aurora first explains to Pablito her specifications as to the length of the desired novel, its plot, characters, and setting. Pablito later presents her with a hand-written novel which is completely opposite in regard to her criteria. She does not protest, however, but copies it by hand, making numerous revisions, and gives it to her secretary to type. In spite of having to maintain his anonymity while his employer becomes famous, Pablito is later able to retire to the country and write poetry for his own pleasure. Zunzunegui obviously illustrates by portraying the "negro" that writing has other more rewarding aspects beyond those of fame and recognition.

Zunzunegui is concerned as well with the fact that literary partisanship in Spain is a great detriment to the status of literature in that country. He describes the various literary regimes which determine the success or failure of an author:

Toda la literatura actual está dividida y subdividida en grupitos al frente de los cuales va un capitán de cuchara de las letras. Esos oficiales de cuchara ocupan a veces sillones en Academias y puestos importantes en editoriales y en periódicos y administran y reparten tanto los votos como las colaboraciones y adjetivos sólo entre sus neófitos y seguidores. . . La literatura actual española es de hacer reír y llorar.¹²⁷

The author portrays one of the few good writers in the novel, Aurelio Boadilla, as a failure. As one of the characters

¹²⁷Ibid., p. 415.

observes: "Boadilla es un francotirador; como se siente fuerte va solo como los tiburones, sin estar afiliado a ningún capilla. . . su mordacidad es sangrienta y, claro, no se la perdonan."¹²⁸ Boadilla refuses to cater to the critics and the other writers and is therefore almost an unknown author to the public. However, when Boadilla goes insane over the death of his wife and is confined to an asylum, his new novel is enthusiastically acclaimed by both the critics and the writers, who no longer consider him a threat to their hierarchy.

Judging from an article about contemporary Spanish literature by Janet Winecoff,¹²⁹ Zunzunegui is justified in much of his criticism. Since the Civil War a proliferation of literary contests has sprung up, and the production of the prize-winners is often mediocre. Camilo José Cela, perhaps the best of today's writers, boasts of never having received a literary prize. The literary elite of pre-Civil War times has been replaced by a large group of amateurs, many of whom achieve only temporary fame upon the reception of an award. The nonliterary basis of many of the prizes, such as those offered by publishing houses, has helped to destroy the prestige of writers in general. Few writers are able to earn a living from their novelistic endeavors,

¹²⁸Ibid., p. 415.

¹²⁹Janet Winecoff, "The Contemporary Spanish Novel," South Atlantic Bulletin, XXIX (November, 1964), 1.

causing literature as a profession to come into disrepute. The author has dedicated this novel, ". . . áspera, sarcástica, y desengañadora. . .,"¹³⁰ to all the discontented and restless young people in the Spanish provinces who dream of literary glory.

El camino alegre

El camino alegre, written in 1962, is one of Zunzunegui's bitterest attacks against Spain, and in particular against his native Basque Provinces. It is significant to note that this novel escaped censorship in spite of its anti-Catholic sentiments, probably because its criticism against the Church is more indirect than that of Una mujer sobre la tierra, which was censored.

Soledad, whose father works in the mines of Gallarta, is assaulted by a vagrant when she is eighteen. Ashamed to stay in Gallarta after this unfortunate occurrence, she goes to Bilbao to work as a servant girl. Alberto, the libertine son of the family for which she works, is attracted to her and employs her as his mistress. When Soledad becomes pregnant, Alberto insists that she have an abortion, but she vehemently refuses. He then takes her to the house of doña Elisa, a middle-aged woman who leases rooms. Soledad rents a room from doña Elisa, who is motherly and sympathetic toward her. In several months Soledad delivers a still-born

¹³⁰Zunzunegui, El premio, Author's Dedication.

child and attempts suicide, but she is prevented from carrying through with it by doña Elisa. With the help of this kind woman, Soledad recovers from her depressed state and attains a renewed interest in life.

A friend of doña Elisa's, don Felix, is captivated by Soledad. He is a businessman of forty-eight, wealthy, and unhappily married. Don Felix is attracted by the good nature and unadorned beauty of the girl and tells her: "Tú no has nacido para servir, pequeña, sino para que te sirvan."¹³¹ After her association with Alberto, Soledad takes pleasure in the kindness and adulation of this older man. She feels, however, that because of his generosity she may eventually become too obligated to him. On the eve of a planned trip to Paris with Felix and Elisa, Soledad packs her belongings and leaves. Elisa does not discover the girl's absence until the next morning.

Soledad takes a job as a maid but incurs disfavor with her employer and is dismissed. While searching for another position, she encounters her former lover Alberto. The two go to San Sebastián and later to Paris, where Alberto indulges in a continuous drinking spree. When Soledad can no longer tolerate him, she returns to Bilbao and obtains another position as servant. She contacts a chronic lung

¹³¹Juan Antonio de Zunzunegui, El camino alegre (Barcelona, 1962), p. 79.

infection, and her employer, fearing tuberculosis, has her taken to the hospital. Soledad, now completely alone, sends for doña Elisa and don Felix. When they arrive at the hospital, the doctor recommends that Soledad be taken to the Sierra de Guadarrama. Don Felix leases an apartment for her there, and doña Elisa takes care of her. During Felix's visits, Soledad finds herself becoming more attached to him. At this time Felix's wife, who has suffered from a psychosis for years, dies in an insane asylum. Felix and Soledad take a trip to Valencia and Andalucía, and upon their return plan their wedding. However, Felix is killed by a falling high-tension cable shortly before the wedding.

Thereafter, Soledad undergoes an abrupt and rather unconvincing personality change. Her bitterness toward fate expresses itself in an aversion to all men. She feels that she can best express her hatred of men by exploiting them. She uses the money that don Felix willed her in order to open a house of prostitution. Soledad explains to doña Elisa the reasoning behind her new business:

Me da náusea y repulsión esta farsa del mundo, y deseos de vómito esta sociedad que se dice cristiana, y mi negocio es a manera de carga de dinamita contra esto y aquello. . . por eso, por eso lo abro.¹³²

Dona Elisa, who has a chalet in Las Arenas, a seacoast town outside Bilbao, allows Soledad to lease it for her place of

¹³²Ibid., p. 269.

business. However, the woman refuses to associate with Soledad as long as she resides at the brothel. Soledad names the house "El cielo," and it is eventually the most prominent casa de cita around Bilbao. The girl remains aloof from the patrons and acts only in a managerial position.

Soledad's indifference to men is put to the test when she meets Daniel Ferrández, a policeman who has been assigned to patrol her casa de cita. Daniel is friendly and talkative and soon reveals to her his past. He was educated in a monastery but decided that a religious career did not appeal to him and left before being ordained. Nevertheless, his religion has been meaningful to him throughout life. Soledad sees that Daniel's friendship could be a rewarding experience: ". . . tiene una gran simpatía humana y es muy amable y educado, y una mirada cordial y acariciadora. . ."133

Soledad befriends a young girl, Sofi, who comes to her requesting employment. Sofi is in love with a wealthy young man, Jaime, but is afraid that he is only physically attracted to her. Soledad recalls her own experience with Alberto and tries to persuade Sofi to dissolve her relationship with Jaime. However, Sofi does not want to relinquish the material comforts derived from her affair with Jaime. As was the case with Soledad, Sofi becomes pregnant and Jaime

¹³³Ibid., p. 294.

refuses to marry her. She becomes so remorseful that she drowns herself. To Daniel, who is from Castilla, this occurrence is another justification of his feelings about the Basque Provinces: "Este país tuyo, querida Sole, es una tierra áspera y arrebatada, llena de extraños secretos . . . Pueblo inteligente y laborioso, testarudo y fanático . . . de tuberculosos, de locos y de alcohólicos, donde florecen el sanatorio, el manicomio y la taberna. . . ."134

Soledad's relationship with Daniel causes her to become preoccupied with her spiritual state. She goes to confession, and the Jesuit father tells her that the only way she can be forgiven is to give the Church the money she has made from her house of prostitution. Soledad reveals to Daniel the priest's prerequisite for her absolution. Daniel's opinion perhaps reflects Zunzunegui's own: "Los vascongados tenéis un concepto temible de la religión, un concepto de Dios castigo, de Dios justicia severa, no un concepto de Dios perdonador y misericordioso."135 He theorizes that the Jesuits, through Loyola, had perpetrated a great fraud in the Basque Provinces by subscribing to the theory that woman is the basis of all evil.

Soledad, who is engaged to Daniel, wants to feel that she is in God's favor before she marries her fiancé.

134 Ibid., pp. 392-393.

135 Ibid., p. 487.

However, she cannot follow the priest's dictates and relinquish her fortune. In her despair, she throws herself into the path of an oncoming truck, but she receives only minor injuries. Daniel, realizing that she must find peace of mind, suggests that she go to Rome, where he is confident that she will obtain absolution. He tells her: "El camino a Roma siempre ha sido un camino alegre."¹³⁶

Soledad goes to Rome, where she finds renewed faith and spiritual comfort. A priest tells her that to obtain forgiveness she need only live a just life. He absolves her, and she takes communion. When the novel ends Soledad is still in Rome in a state of religious ecstasy, and the reader assumes that she will eventually return to Bilbao to marry Daniel.

El camino alegre is a somewhat perplexing novel, for the reader finds it difficult to differentiate between non-subjective narrative and philosophical moralizing. For instance, does Zunzunegui intend for Soledad's pilgrimage to Rome to be a true religious experience or merely a hypocritical excuse for retaining her wealth? Soledad's religious experience in Rome could either be interpreted as sincere description or disguised satire. Nevertheless, this circumlocution may be one of the ways in which Zunzunegui escapes censorship of this work.

¹³⁶Zunzunegui, El camino alegre, p. 522.

Zunzunegui points an accusing finger at the Basques, as usual condemning their excessive preoccupation with wealth. In this novel he shows how wealth can cause religious hypocrisy. Daniel speaks of the Jesuits and other priests as being influenced by wealth: "Y es que la Compañía y en general los sacerdotes del país tienen un enorme respeto y un sentido reverencial del dinero."¹³⁷

Zunzunegui is critical of some of the symbolism of religion, such as the crucifix which Soledad buys in Sevilla. The girl's faltering faith is indicated by her dependence upon the crucifix, which eventually has a detrimental effect upon her. She comes to fear the crucifix and its meaning, but it is a fear she masochistically enjoys: ". . . nada me conturba y arrastra y mete mi carne en temores y pavores como el Cristo agónico en la cruz."¹³⁸

Daniel's saner and less mystical faith stands in contrast to the confused religious sentiment of Soledad. Daniel left the convent long ago because of his desire to lead the life of a layman. However, he retained his deep faith and was able to apply it realistically to his secular life. Through Daniel, Zunzunegui criticizes the Basques, and more particularly the Jesuit order and their influence upon religion in the Provinces. Since Daniel serves mainly

¹³⁷Ibid., p. 495.

¹³⁸Ibid., p. 247.

as a spokesman for the author, he is not realistically portrayed as a character. However, he is highly significant because of the fact that his role was convincing enough to prevent El camino alegre from being suppressed by the censors.

Don Isidoro y sus límites

Don Isidoro y sus límites, written in 1963 and printed in Barcelona, is refreshing in that it does not contain the detail and excessive moralizing of many of Zunzunegui's novels.

Don Isidoro, the only son of a widow, studies metallurgical engineering, goes to work at an iron foundry, and eventually marries the daughter of the owner. When the owner dies, Isidoro inherits the profitable industry and expands it. He has one son, whom he names Isidoro after himself, and plans to have the son step into his position someday. "Isi," however, fails in school through lack of interest and becomes an irresponsible idler and libertine. He says of himself: ". . . necesito del aire libre y de la violencia y del ejercicio como del oxígeno. . ." ¹³⁹ He meets Águeda, a lovely but submissive woman, and after fathering two children, refuses to marry her. When don Isidoro's wife dies she leaves her inheritance to "Isi," who sets out to squander it. Águeda and her children come to don Isidoro

¹³⁹Juan Antonio de Zunzunegui, Don Isidoro y sus límites (Barcelona, 1963), p. 49.

for assistance, and the old man is charmed by the woman's beauty and the children's affection for him. After the three visit him several times, don Isidoro begins to depend upon their presence because of his loneliness. He also regards Águeda's son as a possible successor to the presidency of his company.

When "Isi" learns of his mistress' visits to his father's house, he is infuriated. However, his anger is short-lived, for he soon leaves the country on another escape. Don Isidoro invites Águeda and her children, Aguedita and "Isi," Jr., to live with him so that he can help them financially, and they gratefully accept. Later when Aguedita is seventeen years old, she is rejected by society because of her illegitimate birth, about which everyone knows. Don Isidoro hears reports that his son is leading a dissolute life in Mexico and is aware that he is unlikely to return. There is a rumor circulating around Bilbao that don Isidoro is having an affair with Águeda. Upon hearing this rumor, the old man feels an overwhelming pride: "No le ocupó más que su vanidad, su oceánica vanidad. Y es que si hay disculpa para una vanidad, es para esta del viejo, que se siente irresistible y cree poderla seducir y enamorar."¹⁴⁰

Don Isidoro's lawyer suggests a matrimonio blanco, a marriage without physical consummation, to give the children

¹⁴⁰
Ibid., p. 158.

a legitimate name and to allow don Isidoro's grandson to succeed him in his business. Águeda, when presented with this proposition, at first considers it repugnant. However, after meditating upon its advantages to her children, she agrees to marry don Isidoro. After the marriage, the old man's affection for Águeda turns to desire. But Águeda, oblivious to the old man's rejuvenescence, lives only for the return of his son "Isi."

Aguedita falls in love with one of don Isidoro's employees, a young engineer named Ricardo, and the two plan to be married. Prior to the wedding, however, Aguedita becomes ill and almost dies from a high fever. Águeda nurses her daughter back to health, but her worry and constant vigilance over the girl's health cause her to appear much older. Don Isidoro, seeing his wife's beauty fade, is almost pleased: "Era. . . una venganza de viejo impotente, de macho fuera de órbita que se regocija al sorprender los primeros síntomas de la hermosura venida a menos."¹⁴¹ Aguedita recovers and marries Ricardo. Don Isidoro looks forward to having Águeda's son "Isi" become director of his mining concern when he receives his engineering degree.

The young "Isi" falls in love with a shopgirl, Enriqueta, and reveals his marriage plans to his mother. Águeda is infuriated that her son has chosen a girl with neither

¹⁴¹
Ibid., p. 257.

money nor prestige. She is resentful that Enriqueta could obtain financial security so easily, while she herself has sacrificed both her youth and happiness to acquire it. Enriqueta is shrewd enough to recognize her future mother-in-law's obduracy and anticipates the difficulties that may accompany it. She persuades her fiancé to sign a contract as an engineer in Argentina, and the couple leave without even a farewell.

Don Isidoro, upon hearing of the departure of his grandson and heir, suffers a stroke. When Águeda is informed that her husband is gravely ill, she secretly rejoices and even begins planning her mourning attire. But the old man rallies miraculously, forgets about "Isi," and develops a renewed interest in his foundry: "Y se fue recobrando, y su corazón empezó a marchar con una andadura elástica, ágil, alacre, como la de un corazón moceril."¹⁴² Águeda hears a rumor that her former lover "Isi" is back in Spain. She regains her enthusiasm and prepares for his return, feeling that she is again a young girl in love. "Isi" arrives in several days and eagerly rushes upstairs to embrace Águeda. Don Isidoro, however, follows close behind him with a pistol. Interrupting the lovers' embrace, he threatens to shoot his son if the latter refuses to leave. Don Isidoro, who has reached the límites referred to in the title, utters

¹⁴²Ibid., p. 299.

to his son the words which end the novel: "¿Pero qué pretendes, hacer cornudo a tu padre?...¡Hasta ahí podíamos llegar!"¹⁴³ Since the novel ends at this point the reader's imagination must be employed in order to contrive a subsequent dénouement. It is possible that Zunzunegui implied, by means of don Isidoro's final statement that the son was forced to accept the marriage of his father to his former mistress. Notwithstanding the dubious nature of the outcome, the novel's ending, although abrupt, is extremely effective. Zunzunegui has utilized this same stylistic device successfully in other novels such as La quiebra and El hijo hecho a contrata, in which the protagonist's dilemmas are left unresolved.

Don Isidoro y sus límites is brief enough to be consistently entertaining and the plot is adhered to throughout. After reading the novel, one feels that Zunzunegui wrote it mainly for the pleasure of telling a story, and although there is a moral, it is implicit rather than stated. Don Isidoro y sus límites and Los caminos de El Señor are both unique novels in Zunzunegui's repertory, for in neither of these does the author attempt to include historical data, numerous secondary characters, or sub-plots. Don Isidoro y sus límites, free of the digression and detail that weight other novels, is proof of Zunzunegui's skill as a raconteur.

¹⁴³Ibid., p. 312.

It is perplexing as to whether or not Zunzunegui intended to portray don Isidoro as an admirable character. The reader often receives the impression that don Isidoro is an egotistical, sentimental fool. When the old man invites Águeda and her children to stay with him, he seems to be attempting to alleviate his loneliness rather than to assist his son's illegitimate children. Don Isidoro also strikes the reader as being weak and overly sentimental because of his tendency to weep uncontrollably in response to any difficult or tense situation. It is possible, however, that Spanish men are uninhibited in displaying their emotions, and that Zunzunegui merely intended to portray the protagonist as a sensitive and sympathetic man. Don Isidoro nevertheless redeems himself, upon the return of his son, by maintaining an unshakable composure and an adamant attitude in regards to his wife Águeda. By adopting a firm decision, don Isidoro rises above the level of the weak-willed anti-hero who appears in many of the author's novels.

Don Isidoro's son "Isi" appears only briefly, but it is apparent that he is a genuine scoundrel and a typical señorito rico. Águeda is an ambitious woman who, after obtaining financial security and a legitimate name for her children, hypocritically rejects her son's fiancée because the girl has neither wealth nor prestige. However, the conclusion implies that Águeda will receive her just punishment by having to remain with don Isidoro thenceforth.

Todo quedó en casa

Todo quedó en casa, printed in Barcelona in 1964, is one of Zunzunegui's many satires of various segments of society in Madrid. It deals with the offspring of a poor family and the varied lives they lead.

Zacarías, the oldest son, is serious and studious, and is working to pay for his law career in the university. The mother, seña María, is partial to the younger son Raul, who is handsome, carefree, and ambitionless. However seña María respects and admires Zacarías more. Zacarías' ultimate aim is to become a professor of administrative law at the Universidad Central, and he submits himself to a rigorous routine in working toward this goal. Celia, the oldest of two sisters, is "el quicio sobre el que giraba la familia."¹⁴⁴ She is serious and businesslike, and her main interest is to achieve for herself a comfortable financial position. Celia's personality is very much akin to that of Luisita in El mundo sigue. Celia is strong-willed and has good judgment, and thus her family puts great trust in her opinions. The other sister, Araceli, is seldom mentioned in the novel.

The family learns that Raul has become a rufián or pander, and is soliciting business for a prostitute named "La Covadonga." Scandalized, they force Raul to move out of the house and forbid him to return until he gives up this

¹⁴⁴Juan Antonio de Zunzunegui, Todo quedó en casa (Barcelona, 1964), p. 25.

profession. Raul moves in with "La Covadonga" and the two prosper from the numerous clientele which Raul introduces to her.

Celia, who has a keen eye for financial opportunity, observes that her employer don Sergio has a weakness for women. When don Sergio is left widowed, Celia is quick to place herself at his disposal. However, his attentions are directed toward the attractions of Lolita, a flighty but beautiful employee in his shop. Lolita beguiles don Sergio into marrying her, and Celia surmises that she must utilize other means for advancement. She persuades don Sergio to open another shop, employ her as manager, and then to grant her one-fourth of the profits. Through Celia's shrewd business sense the shop is successful, and she is able to alleviate considerably her family's economic stress.

Raul is arrested for pandering and faces a prison sentence. His family, with the exception of his mother, is humiliated by the news and has no desire to prevent his prison sentence by posting bail. His mother refuses to believe that her son is immoral and asks Celia for the money necessary for Raul's bail. Celia refuses, believing that while her brother is in prison he may reflect upon his immorality and amend his ways.

Celia commences to receive considerable financial returns from her interest in the shop. Suddenly, with her monetary problems solved, she is able to enjoy life more

fully. She begins to dress well and improve her appearance, and her personality even undergoes a favorable change. Don Sergio, who has tired of his wife Lolita, is attracted to the "new" Celia. The girl, aware of her newly-attained power over her business partner, takes advantage of the situation. Knowing that Sergio's passion prevails over his judgment, she utilizes her role of mistress as a means of securing greater authority in the business. She begins to urge Sergio to separate from Lolita, who is an impediment in her ambitious plans for control. She reflects to herself: "Dos mujeres a tirar de su bolsa..., no y no...Una vez legalmente separado sabré cuales son los límites de la otra... y podré yo obrar y maniobrar en consecuencia."¹⁴⁵ Celia counsels Sergio to attempt to catch Lolita in flagrante delicto with one of her lovers, so that he will have grounds for divorce. Sergio, however, is so ashamed when he finds Lolita in an amorous embrace with a lover that he does not press for divorce. Celia nevertheless continues her affair with her employer, since she gains monetarily from it. In any event, she feels repugnance at times because of his unattractive physical appearance. She compares him with Ismael, a handsome salesman from Barcelona who works for Guerlain of Paris and supplies her shop with cosmetics. She is greatly attracted to Ismael; however, her devotion to

¹⁴⁵Zunzunegui, Todo quedó en casa, p. 221.

business prevents her from forming a lasting relationship with him.

After two years of imprisonment, Raul is released and returns to Madrid. He discovers that his business partner "La Covadonga" has deserted him for another pander and that he no longer has any means of livelihood. Since he is penniless he returns home, much to the chagrin of Zacarías and Celia, who are both contemptuous of him. Raul is aware that his threadbare clothes would be detrimental to his career of pandering, and he begs his mother to lend him money for a new wardrobe. She refuses, knowing that he wants to return to his former profession, and entreaties him to find a respectable job. Instead, Raul entertains himself with the family's servant girl, Marinita. When Raul's mother orders both her son and Marinita out of the house for scandalous behavior, he sets the girl up as a prostitute and becomes her "rufián."

After a lengthy courtship, Celia marries Ismael, who is well suited to her. She introduces Zacarías to a charming and wealthy Bolivian woman named Casita, and the two are married, much to Celia's delight. Casita, who has heart trouble, dies soon after the marriage, leaving "Zaca" with a considerable fortune. Zaca decides that he has never thoroughly enjoyed life, having been constantly preoccupied with his studies, and begins spending money excessively.

He meets a beautiful but clever prostitute, Soledad, upon whom he begins lavishing money. His brother Raul, being acquainted with many prostitutes, knows Soledad as well, and sees her occasionally. Zacarías is often conscience-stricken about his association with Soledad, who is draining both his funds and his strength: "De seguir con ella, esta mujer me desangrara física y económicamente. . . y acabaré en doble ruina y catástrofe. . ." ¹⁴⁶ He is, however, powerless to discipline himself. He goes to Soledad's apartment one night and finds her with his brother Raul. A fight ensues, and Raul seriously wounds Zaca, who is taken in an unconscious state to his home.

Raul reveals to Celia the fact that Soledad has managed to confiscate most of Zaca's fortune during the relationship. Celia subtly conceives the plan of having Raul marry Soledad, thus securing Zaca's inheritance for the family name. She asks Raul to introduce her to Soledad, anxious to become acquainted with such a woman: "Pero una mujer que consigue que un hombre hecho y derecho enloquezca y pierda por ella la cabeza..., no es una cualquiera." ¹⁴⁶

After a brief courtship, Raul and Soledad are married, and Soledad subsidizes the idle Raul. After the occurrence in Soledad's apartment, Zaca never recovers from his injuries and becomes a feeble-minded invalid. Celia observes

¹⁴⁶Ibid., p. 563.

her invalid brother Zaca and compares his miserable state with that of the now contented Raul. She develops a contempt for Raul but realizes that she herself was the agent who perpetrated this arrangement. Her reasons were based on her own selfish desires, "porque el dinero le daba una tranquilidad, una seguridad, un sosiego un un aplaciente bienestar. . . Y era más fuerte que ella, dominándola y sojuzgándola. . ."147 Celia's bitterness finally compels her to show Soledad the paralytic and demented Zacarías, who had heretofore been hidden from the girl's eyes. Soledad, upon observing Zacarías, immediately grasps the situation. Her reaction is entirely different from the one of disgust and horror which Celia had anticipated: "Gracias por habérmelo traído--le dijo a Celia. --Y tu codicia puede estar satisfecha..., pues al ser mi marido y mi hombre, a quien adoro, Raul...todo, todo ha quedado en casa."148

This is one of Zunzunegui's more recent novels and one would hope that the characterization could be more convincing and more realistic. However, this novel contains the same basic flaw as some of his others--the abrupt transitions which the characters undergo are not convincing. Zacarías seems much too sober and intelligent to suddenly desert his moral uprightness and lavish his riches on a prostitute.

¹⁴⁷Ibid., p. 601.

¹⁴⁸Ibid., p. 604.

Nor is the prostitute Soledad convincing when she progresses from a selfish and emotionless businesswoman to a loving and understanding wife. However, the author, like many moralizers, sometimes sacrifices realism and verisimilitude in the attempt to portray the evils of greed, wealth, and immorality.

Celia is a typical heroína zunzuneguiana, a girl of humble origin who uses her feminine guiles to achieve the financial comfort which she has never known. One cannot help but admire Celia and others like her, who are able to break down the barriers which prevent most Spanish women from striking out on their own. Celia does not rely upon the skill or intellectual ability of any man to achieve her goals for her, but instead utilizes her own talents, both physical and mental, to place herself in a position of independence and self-sufficiency. Only then does she consider marriage to Ismael.

Un hombre entre dos mujeres

Un hombre entre dos mujeres, Zunzunegui's most recent novel to date, was printed in 1966. The main plot deals with a woman's incestuous love for her son; however, there are several sub-plots within the story.

Don Sergio, administrator to the Duke of Guadalquivir, and his aristocratic wife Rafaela, have four daughters. Rafaela's main concern is to marry her daughters into rich,

aristocratic families, and she encourages the girls to attend all the important social functions in order to mingle with the alta sociedad. Of the daughters, Luisa and Victoria enthusiastically attend the numerous festivities, balls, and Embassy functions, and are more than willing to indulge in the flirtations necessary to attain a suitor. However, one of the daughters, María Jesus, eventually rebels against the customary upper-class rituals of husband-hunting and tells her father: ". . . me revienta esta vida atosigante de sociedad en busca afanosa de un hombre. . ."149 At the age of twenty-one, she falls in love with José Luis Borao, a middle-aged plantation owner whose moderate habits are a welcome relief from the youthful excesses of María Jesus' former suitors. José Luis is equally attracted to María Jesus: "Es una cría preciosa que va a descomponer y precipitar mi marcha hacia la muerte. Pero es tan encantadora y tan viva y tan alegre. . ."150 When don Sergio dies, María Jesus and José Luis are married at the respective ages of twenty-two and forty-nine.

After a year of marriage, María Jesus becomes disheartened because she has not yet been able to have a child, and she fears that José Luis is impotent. When she meets a young medical student named Javier, she cannot resist his

¹⁴⁹Juan Antonio de Zunzunegui, Un hombre entre dos mujeres (Barcelona, 1966), p. 22.

¹⁵⁰Ibid., p. 78.

youthful, handsome appearance, and she regards favorably the possibility of having his child. A love affair ensues and María Jesus becomes pregnant. Although she loves Javier, she ceases her relationship with him and remains with her husband so that her child will be legitimate.

María Jesus later has a son, names it Javier, and thereafter becomes obsessively involved in its care and upbringing. José Luis is killed in an accident at his plantation, and María Jesus becomes even more devoted to the rearing of her son. Now that she is widowed, she reflects upon the possibility of a reconciliation with her son's real father, but she finally decides to relegate him to her memory and to lavish all her affections upon her child. Free of financial worries, she alternates her residence between her home in Madrid and chalets in San Sebastián and Alicante. She rejects the offers of marriage of two successive suitors, preferring to devote her time to her son. She becomes so obsessed with Javier's health that when he receives even the slightest injury she becomes hysterical. She reads every available book on child psychology and constantly consults with Javier's pediatrician to assure herself that her child is normal and healthy.

At the age of sixteen, Javier enters the University of Madrid to study law, and his mother persists in her extreme preoccupations with his progress. She plans his daily caloric intake, scrupulously governs his associations with

friends, and even reads his mail. When Javier takes a short vacation away from Madrid, María Jesus becomes aware of her utter dependency upon him: ". . . yo vivo en mi hijo y de mi hijo y para mi hijo y con mi hijo. . ., y todo lo demás es desolación y confusión. . ." ¹⁵¹ When the monarchy falls, Javier becomes involved in the political factionalism at the University and, much to his mother's dismay, joins with the Monarchists to fight against the Republicans. While Javier is away, María Jesus occupies much of her time at church praying for her son's safety. Javier, who is present during the Republican offensive at the Ebro River, is struck by a bullet which temporarily blinds him. He is returned to his mother, who has been residing at San Sebastián during the war. After Javier regains his sight, he and his mother return to Madrid, where he becomes acquainted with Carola, a rich and aristocratic woman who is separated from her husband. Their subsequent love affair becomes a topic of conversation among the fashionable circles of Madrid. When María Jesus learns of her son's love affair, she is greatly disturbed, until she finds out that Carola is separated from her husband and thus cannot marry Javier. When the gossip about their relationship becomes intolerable for Carola, she proposes to Javier that they go away together to France. Javier, however, is too practical-minded to consider such an

¹⁵¹Zunzunegui, Un hombre entre dos mujeres, p. 428.

action, and replies: "¿Pero cómo voy yo a abandonar mis asuntos familiares y desterrarme de mi patria a meterme en este frenesí de la vida de París?"¹⁵² Carola commits suicide because of Javier's rebuff, and the tragic incident becomes known throughout Madrid. Javier, rather than being reproached for his disloyalty, is sought after and admired because of the fact that a rich aristocrat had committed suicide over his faithlessness. María Jesus is pleased that her son commands so much attention and admiration. However, in order to prevent him from associating with any other women, she tells him: "No te voy a consentir salir más que conmigo, eso será la solución."¹⁵³ Thus begins an extremely close relationship between mother and son, and María Jesus' affection for Javier begins to develop into an incestuous love. María Jesus' brother-in-law, Claudio, believes that with the advent of menopause she has been seized by a passion which was seldom satisfied during her youth and which is now directed toward her handsome son.

When Javier becomes engaged to Rosarito, a beautiful Andalusian girl, his mother is naturally extremely jealous and resentful. Nevertheless, after the marriage of Javier and Rosarito, María Jesus gradually adjusts to the new situation, and even resides with her son and daughter-in-law.

¹⁵²Ibid., pp. 624-625.

¹⁵³Ibid., p. 646.

The couple soon have a baby daughter, Pilarín. It later becomes apparent that the baby is frightened by the grandmother, whose face has become horribly wrinkled due to the ill effects of an earlier facelifting operation. Pilarín suddenly becomes ill, and her mother Rosarito, who is of gypsy descent and therefore very superstitious, believes that María Jesus has cast a "mal de ojo," or evil spell, upon the child. Rosarito takes Pilarín to a gypsy sorceress, "La Lloricas," who performs symbolic rites over the child and then insists that the grandmother be cast out of the house in order to cure the evil spell. Rosarito forces Javier to ask his mother to leave, and María Jesus moves into a hotel room, where she broods upon the ill-will of her daughter-in-law and her own wretched existence. She plans an elaborate scheme, and one morning goes to Javier's office and tells him that Rosarito is being unfaithful to him. She suggests that he hide outside his residence on a certain night, and he will discover Rosarito's lover entering the house. Javier at first refuses to accept his mother's tale, but gradually he begins to doubt his wife's fidelity, and on the appointed night he buys a gun and conceals himself outside his home. When he sees a "bulto de apariencia varonil"¹⁵⁴ start to ascend the steps, he impulsively shoots.

¹⁵⁴Juan Antonio de Zunzunegui, Un hombre entre dos mujeres (Barcelona, 1966), p. 762.

What follows is a rather incredible tremendista ending:

Se abalanzó sobre el caído cuerpo muerto y vio con horrendo espanto que los dos tiros disparados de la pistola habían atravesado el inquieto corazón de su madre.¹⁵⁵

Of the minor characters, María Jesus' sister Irene is the most memorable. She marries Ruperto, the administrador general of a Catholic publishing house and an extremely religious man of high moral character. When the Civil War breaks out in Madrid, Ruperto is arrested by revolutionaries because he will not reveal to them valuable information. Irene obtains the desired information and releases it to the revolutionaries, who nevertheless shoot Ruperto. Irene, widowed with seven children, thenceforth suffers a rapid deterioration of her mental faculties. Irene's transformation into a hopeless manic-depressive is portrayed with vivid realism. The attempts of her daughter Matildita to repress her mother's irrational behavior are heart-rending, and Irene's suicide is a relieving end to her madness.

Other minor characters serve to illustrate various segments of Spanish society during and after the Civil War. María Jesus' brother-in-law Claudio is an ambitious government official who is able to advance to an important position because of a change in the governmental regime. Other representative figures are doña Olga and her son Alvarito, profiteers who take advantage of the chaos of the

¹⁵⁵Ibid., p. 762.

Civil War to reap benefits for themselves. On the day that San Sebastián is occupied by Navarrese troops, doña Olga and Alvarito move there and establish residence in a luxurious abandoned apartment. Alvarito secures an important position in the Nationalist Army, and during the battles he loots while the others fight. Alvarito and his mother live sumptuously from the despojos de guerra that he brings back to San Sebastián.

As in previous novels, Zunzunegui has incorporated into this massive work the historical background of World War I and the Spanish Civil War. He has also taken the opportunity to criticize and evaluate various institutions in Spain, such as the government and the Church. Unfortunately, the author's habit of interweaving documentation with the plot results in some rather tedious passages. There are lengthy discussions of such subjects as child psychology, battle maneuvers, politics, descriptions of Sevilla and Alicante, and the mechanics of a bicycle. Moreover, Zunzunegui occasionally resorts to literary conceits which are more characteristic of his earlier novels, such as the following: "El teclado de sus dientes, dando do, re, fa, soles, blanquísimos."¹⁵⁶ Nevertheless, for the student of Spanish, Zunzunegui's novels can be an invaluable experience because of their detailed information about Spain--its institutions,

¹⁵⁶Ibid., p. 116.

its people, its customs, and especially its language. One of Zunzunegui's virtues as a writer is his masterful employment of the vernacular. Each character is typified by his own individualized speech habits, expressionisms, or jargon, in such a way that he or she becomes a realistic individual, without the necessity of lengthy physical descriptions. "La Lloricas," for instance, is a gypsy sorceress who is vividly portrayed by means of her Andalusian colloquialisms. Her practice of witchcraft, which is a blend of superstition and Catholicism, is strongly reminiscent of that of La Celestina.

In portraying María Jesus, Zunzunegui veers from his usual conception of Spanish woman as having a weakness for wealth or for an irresponsible lover, and instead characterizes a woman who has a passionate yearning for her own son. However, her son Javier does not share her feelings, and there is no suggestion that she ever enjoys a consummation of her incestuous love. María Jesus is instead condemned to observe her son's emotional attachments to other women and finally to his wife. Previous to his marriage Javier is subconsciously governed in his amorous affairs by his mother's wishes. However, María Jesus' tyranny is finally defeated by the powerful personality of Rosarito, who impels Javier to rank her own wishes above those of his mother. When María Jesus observes that she can no longer govern her son's affairs, life ceases to have

meaning to her, and she effects her own punishment by contriving an end to her existence.

CHAPTER III

CONCLUSION

It has been observed that Zunzunegui portrays a protagonist with antiheroic traits in order to demonstrate a moral. In none of the author's novels is there a protagonist who is worthy of being called a hero. On the contrary, his characters seem to be the antithesis of the characteristic hero of a novel, who is the person regarded as a model and who takes an admirable part in the action. Eugenio de Nora writes of Zunzunegui's characterizations: "La estrechez, la limitación mental y la mezquindad de espíritu son a este respecto casi proverbiales."¹ Ironically, these characters, so lowly in spirit, are the ones who attain high positions of power and wealth. Zunzunegui believes this is due to the confused standard of values set forth by society today. In El camión justiciero, for example, Felipe, an unprincipled opportunist and a cynical político of the post-war era, is voted into an important political post. As a more extreme example, Joselín of El chiplichandle, a simple-minded but conniving fisherman, is elected to the governorship of the Republic. In other instances, Chiripi,

¹Eugenio G. de Nora, La novela española contemporánea (Madrid, 1962), p. 320.

a chauffeur, is deified for his soccer-playing ability, and Alejandro, a mediocre writer, is given an important literary prize. Paul Ilie states: "En nuestro siglo se ha hecho patente un cambio; una nueva valoración y una nueva moral comienzan a difundirse por la España de Zunzunegui."² As has been previously stated, Zunzunegui believes, as did the writers of the Generation of 1898, that the times have been influential in bringing out man's bad qualities, such as abulia or lack of will-power, avarice, religious hypocrisy, fear of death, dishonesty, and egotism. The novelist's spokesman in El mundo sigue, the bitter dramatist Andrés, declares his belief that in the world of today the pícaro prospers while the honorable man is doomed.

In view of the frequency of the occurrence of greed in the characters, it might be assumed that Zunzunegui believes this vice to be the most common. The antihero who appears most often is the businessman (or businesswoman) whose one obsession is monetary gain; this individual will sacrifice everything--self-respect, loved ones, friends--to improve his or her financial status. Pedro of El supremo bien, for example, alienates his whole family because of his avarice. As for the female protagonists, Celia of Todo quedó en casa, Luisita of El mundo sigue, Soledad of El camino alegre, and Bea of La quiebra are all willing to forego their virtue and

²Paul Ilie, "Zunzunegui y la nueva moral española," Cuadernos americanos, XCI (1957), p. 217.

self-respect for monetary gain. These four women, all from families in the lower economic bracket, are primarily concerned with improving their financial status. All of them except Soledad utilize their feminine charms in order to persuade some wealthy male to assist them in their endeavors. La Matildona, the protagonist of Una mujer sobre la tierra, is the most scheming of all of Zunzunegui's female characters, although her ambition of living in the country is more modest in comparison with that of the other women. As for the male characters, Zunzunegui presents a strong indictment against the Basque businessman who attains his wealth rapidly due to such forces as the advantageous political climate or the Spanish financial euphoria of World War I. Manolo of El hijo hecho a contrata is an example of such an affluent individual who employs his wealth as a means of gaining social prominence, for he "purchases" a wife who is a marquesa in order to improve his social status.

The religious hypocrisy to which Zunzunegui is so bitterly opposed is often a result of the characters' avarice. The novelist is not opposed to the Catholic religion per se, but he objects to the manner in which it is employed by many for purposes other than spiritual edification. He believes that the decline of a meaningful religion in contemporary Spain is a consequence of the hypocrisy and self-delusion of many present-day Catholics. The protagonist

who is the most memorable for her use of religion to conserve her wealth is Soledad in El camino alegre. Soledad travels all the way to Rome to find a priest who will absolve her of her sins without demanding that she donate part of her wealth to the Church. Another common reason for hypocritical piety in Zunzunegui's characters is the use of religion to circumvent their obsessive fear of death. In ¡Ay!...¡Estos hijos!, the reconversion of Luis is a reaction to his mother's death and is not a true act of faith. León, in Esta oscura desbandada, uses faith as a stabilizer and as a refuge against his amoral wife. Bea of La quiebra is driven to religion by her egotism after she is rejected by Ramón.

Sloth is a common characteristic of the señorito rico. This lack of volition is typical of Luis in ¡Ay!...¡Estos hijos, of "Isi" in Don Isidoro y sus límites, and of Ramón in La quiebra. The pícaros of La vida como es and Joselín of El chiplichandle, although they are more industrious than the señorito rico, are individuals who seek to advance their financial positions by means other than work.

Probably the most extreme case of egotism is the philanthropist don Lucas of La úlcera, for his ulcer itself is a manifestation of his ego. The soccer player Chiripi and the novelist Alejandro Martínez are other vivid examples of individuals whose lives are ruled by their egos. Moreover, most of Zunzunegui's antiheroes are dominated by this vice,

for they are ultimately concerned with their own welfare and place it above that of others in importance.

Many of the characters are defeated by their weaknesses, which are often manifested by an infatuation with another individual. Several of Zunzunegui's female protagonists are burdened with extravagant attachments to men who do not reciprocate their feelings. Carmen, of Las ratas del barco, allows her whole life to be ruined because of her unrequited love for Ismael. Águeda of Don Isidoro y sus límites brings suffering upon her two illegitimate children because of her compromising behavior with her lover "Isi." Such women as Begoña of Los caminos de El Señor, Eloisa of El mundo sigue, and Consuelo of El camión justiciero bring misery upon themselves because of the attraction which irresponsible men have for them. Such devotion on the part of these women would be a virtue if directed toward worthy mates; however, their blind infatuation with unethical men such as hypocrites and thieves reveals their lack of perception, good judgment, and self-control.

True to his moralistic ends Zunzunegui usually has his antiheroes punished for their evils and weaknesses, but not always. Often, the few virtuous characters are the ones who suffer because of the transgressions of others. Paul Ilie states: "Los que se empeñan en aferrarse a la vieja moral, y en sus novelas son escasos, invariablemente

sucumben y perecen."³ Thus the intelligent doctor of La úlcera is sacrificed by the townspeople in order to preserve their myth, Eloisa of El mundo sigue commits suicide because of her sister's vindictive actions, and Jacinto of Las ratas del barco kills himself after his fiancée's renouncement of him.

³Paul Ilie, op. cit., p. 231.

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