THE NOVELS OF MARTA BRUNET

APPROVED:

[Signatures and names]

Major Professor

Minor Professor

Director of the Department of Foreign Languages

Dean of the Graduate School
THE NOVELS OF MARTA BRUNST

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By

Ben H. LaFon, Jr., B. A.
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. MONTAÑA ADENTRO</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. BESTIA DANINA</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. MARIA ROSA, FLOR DEL QUILLEN</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. BIENVENIDO</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. HUMO HACIA EL SUR</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. LA MAMPARA</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII. MARIA NADIE</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX. AMASIGO</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X. CONCLUSIÓN</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Marta Brunet was born in Chillán, Chile on August 9, 1897.1 Her parents were Ambrosio Brunet Molina, a Chilean, and María Presentación Odraves, a Spaniard. While she was an infant, she lived in Victoria. It was here that she received her first instruction, given privately by teachers from the normal school.

In May of 1912 she traveled with her parents through much of Europe—Spain, France, England, and Italy.2 At the beginning of World War I she returned to Chile after having visited Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil.

From 1914 to 1919 she resided in many different cities in Chile. During this time reading was her passion and joy. She familiarized herself with many writers who had revolutionized their own time such as Proust, Unamuno, Pirandello, Giraudoux, Gorki, Ortega, and Azorín.3

It is said that one who reads extensively will end up

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2Ibid.

by sitting down and also taking up writing. At least this was the case with Marta Brunet. She began as most writers do by trying to write that which is most difficult—poetry. A description of her poetry is given by Hernán Díaz Arrieta, whose pen name is "Alone." He comments thus: "Los versos estaban bien, como están bien los de Maupassant; pero eran versos de prosista." By mail in 1922 she sent Alone her first novel, Montaña adentro, which was published the following year. His comments this time were quite different.

Eso se llamaba escribir, éas eran las historias que debían contarse, en esa prosa, con ese brío, sin desperdicio: los paisajes breves y visibles, los personajes robustos, las escenas parlantes, fuertes los colores, continuado y seguro el movimiento, la sensación de vida omnipresente.4

The boldness and erotic frankness of this work were uncommon for a woman writer and astounded many writers of the time. The completeness of the narrative and the correctness of the language were like that of a much older writer.

This novel brought Marta Brunet immediate recognition and prestige as a novelist. The literary style of this novel is realism. It deals with the people of a certain region in southern Chile, the town of Rari-Suca and its surroundings. It gives the colloquialisms of the country people, a good description of their homes, the way they lived, and above all the way they thought. Fatalism is often seen in the thinking of the leading characters in Montaña adentro.

4Ibid., p. 12.
In 1925 the author moved to Santiago. Around the same time her father died and she felt the necessity of seeking some other type of work, since writing at that time paid little even to the best of authors. She opened a palmistry office but learned, however, that people were more interested in finding someone to listen to their misfortunes than in having their fortunes told. Soon she closed her palmistry office and began writing short stories for newspapers and journals in order to earn a living. Nevertheless, she did not lose interest in human destiny, but instead of telling people's fortunes orally she wrote about the destiny of people in her novels. Fatalism is seen again and again in her works.

In 1926 her second novel, *Bestia dañina*, was published and was well received by the reading public and by the literary critics of Chile. The literary style of *Montaña adentro* is seen again in this novel and in her next two novels: *María Rosa, Flor del Guillén*, published in 1927, and *Bienvenido*, published in 1929.

Day by day her literary output increased, especially in short stories and articles for newspapers and magazines. In 1933 the Chilean Society of Writers gave her its award for the novel. Up to this point her novels followed the *criollista* tradition of her time, dealing mainly with the customs, manners, dress, and speech of the country people in southern Chile.
One can easily see a new theme being developed in her fifth novel, *Humo hacia el sur*, published in 1946, and in her next three novels: *La mampara*, published in 1949, *María Nadie*, published in 1957 and *Amasijo*, published in 1962. In these four novels the main theme is solitude. Marta Brunet never married and lived alone much of her life. Probably no other author is better qualified than she to depict the loneliness of people, especially in the last part of her life, when she wrote her last four novels. In two of her last novels, *Humo hacia el sur* and *Amasijo*, the protagonist commits suicide because of loneliness.

Julio Durán Cerda sees two divisions in her novels:

El conjunto de su obra muestra una línea evolutiva muy firme y clara, que puede dividirse en dos etapas: la primera, desde 1923, año de la publicación de su novela inicial, *Montaña adentro*, seguida luego de *Bestia definita*, . . . *APA RÓSA*, *Flor del Guíllén, Bienvenido*, . . . período en que la autora se mantiene dentro de la tradición criollista, con los nuevos alcances de superación que la escuela ha conseguido durante el curso de ese decenio.


Los últimos veinte años de su labor corresponden al momento de plenitud, cuando la autora se ha incorporado de lleno a las corrientes modernas del relato, con una temática nueva y con procedimientos, igualmente nuevos. Sin abandonar del todo su gusto por los motivos de la tierra, Marta Brunet asimila profundamente las tendencias expresionistas de los escritores europeos y norteamericanos de vanguardia, en vigencia ya entre los narradores hispanoamericanos, que se imponen.
como tarea básica iluminar las estructuras interiores del ser humano, enfrentado a las complejidades ambientales del mundo moderno. De esa problemática, se destaca el tópico de la soledad y la angustia derivadas de la incommunicabilidad con su prójimo, aún cuando con él comparta su vida.

During Marta Brunet's life she was assigned to many government posts and received several literary awards. In 1939 the government of Pedro Aguirre Cerda of Chile appointed her honorary consul in La Plata, Argentina. In 1943 she was assigned cónsul de profesión in Buenos Aires, and in this same year she was given the Atenea award for the most imaginative work in Chile. Later she served as second secretary in the Chilean embassy in Buenos Aires. In 1961 she received the National Award of Literature. In October of 1967 her posts of duty and earthly rewards ended when she died of a heart attack while directing a conference in Montevideo.

It will be the purpose of this thesis to comment upon the eight novels by Marta Brunet. Chapters II through IX will examine her novels in detail, giving special consideration to her emphasis on fatalism and destiny. Chapter X will examine critical opinion of her work and draw conclusions as to the author's place in the modern Latin American novel.

6Statement by Julio Durán Cerda, professor of languages in University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa, April 1969.
CHAPTER II

MONTAÑA ADENTRO

Montaña adentro is Marta Brunet’s first literary work to bring her renown and prestige. This novel was published in 1923 in Santiago, when the author was only twenty-six years old. The public received it with enthusiasm, and her critics eulogized it.

Montaña adentro is a regional novel of country life and customs in southern Chile. The story begins in a wheatfield during harvest time. Juan Oses and Segundo Seguel, who are cutting wheat with a threshing machine pulled by oxen, have a breakdown but do not want to tell their boss, the administrator. Finally they tell him and are strongly scolded and reproved. However, due to the scarcity of work, they accept the scolding without returning a word. Juan is sent to get another machine for the next day and Segundo to round up people to cut wheat by hand. That day they work until late in the night, by the light of the moon.

Even though it is late, supper is still ready for the farm hands. Doña Clara, widow of the former steward, and her daughter, Cata, are the cooks. Juan Oses and another man, Ohano Almendras, come for supper. Doña
Clara's house is a gloomy and dingy little shack with no ceiling and no flooring except dirt. The only way for light to get in is through the cracks in the walls or when the front door is left open. Cata is young and attractive, though not beautiful. She has had an illegitimate child by a former worker, who ran off and left her when the baby was born. Doña Clara feels that her daughter has lost her honor and until the baby is born, she pays no attention to Cata.

Juan Oses admires Cata, and in the weeks that follow, as they see each other occasionally, she responds to his looks and words of affection. Her mother warns her that he is not different from her first man—that all men are alike and that she should not have anything to do with Juan. She protests, saying that Juan is different.

One day the baby, Aladino, becomes very ill. He has a high fever and will not eat. Cata and Doña Clara do not know what to do to relieve the baby. Juan knocks on their door and offers his help. He tells Cata and her mother of a good remedy, and soon after the remedy is given, Aladino begins to recuperate. In the meantime Doña Clara begins to doze, giving Juan and Cata some time alone to express their love for each other. Juan tells how his mother has erred in a way similar to Cata. Juan is an illegitimate child whose mother married a good man who
helped to rear him. Juan wants to be the good husband to Oata and volunteers to be a father to Aladino. Soon Doña Clara awakens, having heard none of the conversation of the two lovers. Aladino is much improved, so Juan bids them good night and leaves feeling very happy.

At this same time San Martín, a carabineer, or mounted soldier, arrives at the home of the administrator, looking for horse thieves. There has been a theft on the previous Saturday night in Rari-Maca, and it is thought that the thieves will be found among the new farm hands from the hacienda. The administrator tells the soldier that Segundo Seguel and Juan Oses, both new farm hands, have not worked since the previous Saturday. However, he asks San Martín not to punish the men too severely if found guilty, for they are good workers.

Arriving at Doña Clara's place when the men have just finished supper, San Martín calls for the arrest of Juan Oses and Segundo Seguel. Juan refuses to be arrested unless a good reason is given. The soldier does not think he has to give a reason and starts to fight with Juan. When Oata comes in and asks what is happening, San Martín explains the reason for the arrest. Oata tells him that Juan was at their house the previous Saturday night when Aladino was so sick. Nevertheless, San Martín takes the two men to be tried and tells Oata and Doña Clara to go to the police station the next day to bear witness. Oata
is very unhappy when the two men leave. The atmosphere seems to sympathize with her as a heavy fog descends and misty rain begins to fall.

The rain lifts at dawn, and it is a beautiful sunny day as Cata and Doña Clara start to the police station in Rari-Ruca to bear witness. Upon reaching the bridge to the town, they find Juan Osés lying face downward, half-dead and terribly beaten. Wanting to help him, Cata sends her mother to get water in a nearby friend's house and to ask permission to leave Juan there until he is better. The friend refuses for fear of San Martín. Late in the afternoon Cata obtains an oxcart from the hacienda and carries Juan to her own home.

In the oxcart on the way home Cata covers Juan's face with her shawl to keep off the flies. She begins to feel that the forces of destiny are at work in her and in Juan and that it is of little use to rebel against them. She is fatalistic in much of her thinking.

On the Sunday after harvest has ended and everyone
has been paid, the nearby town of Rari-Ruca is in a lively spirit of festivity. The farm hands reach town in the afternoon. Some go on through town while others stay and enter the small restaurant to drink and dance. San Martín enters the restaurant and seats himself by Chano Almendras, one of the farm hands. Normally he would break up the drinking sprees and throw the men out. They fear him and calm down a bit. Chano tells him of the coming marriage of Juan Oses and Cata.

At about the same time Pedro Pereira, the father of Cata's child, enters. He has been away for a year or more. Chano and San Martín tease him about Cata, saying that he is going to regret her approaching marriage. Finally Chano calls him a coward, saying that he is afraid of Juan Oses. Pedro throws a bottle at Chano, and quickly San Martín gets up and shoves Pedro out of the restaurant. Pedro tries to come back in, but San Martín almost knocks him unconscious and locks the door.

Pedro manages to get up, saying to himself, "Am I a coward?" Quickly he makes up his mind to get even with Cata, Juan Oses, Chano, and San Martín. On a stolen horse he starts toward Doña Clara's hut, being so drunk that he can hardly hang on. Once he goes to sleep, and when he comes to he is still on the horse. For a moment he wonders where he is and why he has come on that road. Then he remembers being called a coward and continues on his way to
Doná Clara's dwelling.

When he arrives, Doná Clara is busy cleaning a cooking vessel and Juan and Cata are talking before the fire. Pedro enters and greets them, and when they ask why he has come, he replies that he is the father of Aladino and tells them that he is against the marriage of Juan and Cata. He then challenges Juan to a fight. Juan knocks Pedro down and kicks him out the door.

As Juan starts to go back in the house, Pedro jumps on his shoulders and drives a knife up to its handle into his back. The wounded man staggers and falls. Inside the house Cata and Doná Clara wonder what has happened. Soon they hear a horse go galloping off. When they reach Juan, he is already dead. Temporarily Cata wants to die, and Doná Clara groans, "¡Ay, Señorcito! ¡Qué fatalidad tan grande!"  

The next day San Martín arrests Pedro, who surrenders indifferently, saying, "¡Sería mi destino!"  

\[^{2}\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 387}\]
\[^{3}\text{Ibid.}\]
CHAPTER III

BESTIA DAÑINA

Marta Brunet’s second novel, entitled Bestia dañina, was written in 1926. This work was well received by the reading public and by the literary critics of Chile. It is regionalistic and pictures the country people of southern Chile with the same literary style as Montaña adentro.

The protagonist of the novel is Santos Flores, a man sixty years old and the maestro carpentero of the hacienda. He is the son of a carpenter that worked on the hacienda before him. He learns the trade as a child serving as his father’s helper. When his father dies, he takes his place as the leading carpenter on the hacienda. He also takes care of his mother, Rosario, and refuses to marry while she lives.

When Santos reaches forty years of age, his mother dies. At that time he marries Juana, his mother’s choice for him. One of the main reasons he marries is to have a son, but instead he has three daughters, María Juana, María Mercedes, and María de Tránsito. His fourth child, a son, is born dead and his wife dies at that time. He refuses to remarry immediately because he does not feel that it is right to rear his girls with a stepmother. For ten
years he refuses to marry, although he terribly wants a son.

María Juana, the eldest daughter, becomes the cook of the family and sees after Meche and Taitito, the two younger girls. Juana is diligent, smart, obedient; Meche is intelligent but stubborn like her father in that she always wants her way. She is consequently often whipped for her disobedience. Taitito is anaemic, sickly, and seems only to care for religion.

One morning when Don Santos is sixty years old he calls his children together and tells them he is going to marry the next month. All the children are astonished, for they cannot understand why he is going to marry Chabela Rojas, who is the same age as Juana.

Meche makes fun of her father for wanting to marry Chabela and for his courting while leaving them locked in the house. He whips and beats her terribly. Nevertheless, when he leaves for work, she says, "If you marry Chabela, I swear I will leave." Don Santos, before whipping her, calls her "Mala bestia." Meche receives one other beating before the marriage for refusing to give up her bedroom for the new stepmother.

The day of the wedding arrives and half of the people from the hacienda go to the town, Curacautin, for the civil ceremony. The women and girls ride behind the men on horses and all go in their gay and best apparel. Meche rides
with Victor Alfaro, the youngest son of the steward. He is a good-for-nothing boy, low in morals, always seen at dances, fiestas, and weddings.

Meche attempts to seduce him all the way. When her skirt gets hung on a dry limb, Victor stops, gets off his horse and little by little frees it from the tree. All of the other people are out of sight by this time. She again tempts him and he makes love to her. They make plans to elope during the wedding feast and live together without being married. Meche has wanted to get away from her father for a long time and she had carefully planned all of this long before. He just falls into her trap. At Curacautín during the wedding feast they plan to take the train to Rari-Ruca and from there to Púa and Temuco.

The wedding feast is held in the best eating place in Curacautín, the bride's uncle's house. Don Santos pays all of the expenses. They drink, dance, and talk. At about five in the afternoon Don Santos tells Chabela that they must say good-by to all and start on the three-hour ride back to the hacienda. When they are getting everyone together, Meche is not to be found, nor is Victor. The woman singer, who is not legally married to her young lover but is living with him así no más, says she has seen Meche go toward the train station. Victor's father and Chano Almendras go to investigate and learn that both Meche and Victor have bought tickets and left for Rari-Ruca. The
police chief, San Martín, says that they can telephone Hari-Ruca and have them arrested. Víctor's father lets Don Santos decide what to do. He decides to do nothing, saying, "M' hija Meche murió pa mí."  

Don Santos and his family start home--Chabela ahead, Juana next, and Don Santos carrying Taitito last. Taitito, weary and half asleep, says many things that she has heard from Meche and bemoans the fact that Meche has eloped. She asks her father why he has married. He repeats to her that it is for the purpose of having a son. She repeats what she has heard Meche say several times, that Chabela is a bestia deíina. Don Santos is disturbed and does a lot of meditating about what Taitito has told him. While Don Santos is thinking about Chabela being a bestia deíina, in his mind he is resigned to his fate and says to himself, "Sería mi destino."  

Eight months pass and there is no sign that Chabela will give birth to a son for Don Santos. Chabela is lazy and lets Juana do most of the work, but she prudently does not do anything out of the way. At first there is very little friendship between her and the family, but little by little she gains their confidence. 

Don Santos is very busy in his work and Juana carries him his lunch by horseback. One day while going to leave

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1 Obras completas, p. 404.
her father his lunch she meets the new blacksmith for the hacienda. He is young, an illegitimately born child of a German man and one of the mountain women, blue eyed, with bronze-colored hair, strong and well built. He stares at Juana and she blushes. Soon the young man comes to Don Santos' house under the pretext of asking him how many iron hooks he should make for the house Don Santos is building. Don Santos marvels at his question because he has already told the boy one time that same afternoon. The boy is embarrassed and Juana is very nervous. Chabela takes over the situation and tells the boy to come in. He introduces himself to all the family as Federico León. He and Juana go to the flower garden and talk, and soon it becomes a daily custom of Federico to visit Juana. One night he proposes to her and she accepts.

Maria Juana marries and goes to live with her husband in the house at the blacksmith shop. Being alone to do all the housework now, Chabela says she cannot do it. Don Santos gets a young boy of fourteen, Chineol, to help. The boy has no morals; all that he cares for is making money. Soon Chabela has him doing all the work while she lives as she did while Juana was at home.

Chabela begins to visit her mother, who manages the grocery store of the hacienda. Before marrying Don Santos, she flirted with Fanor, the nephew of the adjoining hacienda owner. Now it is vacation time from school and Fanor is
spending his vacation on the hacienda. He is quite bored until he sees Chabela and learns that she is married.

Before Chabela married Santos, she would let Fanor embrace her, pet her, and kiss her; but she would not allow him to go any further. Now she is married and is looking for adventure. They meet at the grocery store but can never find themselves alone, because of Chabela's mother. One day Fanor tells Chabela's mother that he wants to buy all of the eggs that they have. When she leaves to gather the eggs, Fanor approaches Chabela and gives her a long kiss on the nape of the neck and afterward several kisses on her lips. He asks her when and where. She tells him that she will advise him.

Through Chincol she advises him one afternoon when Taitito is asleep and Don Santos is at work. The place is her bedroom. They continue in their licentiousness day after day with more boldness, although one day Juana almost discovers them when she comes to borrow a cooking pot. Chincol tips them off to be quiet and he tells Juana that Chabela is asleep.

One day while Fanor and Chabela are making love, Chincol leaves his place as watchman to kill a lizard. Suddenly Don Santos appears, having decided to pass by his house in order to refresh himself with a drink. Chincol greets him loudly in order to warn the lovers. When Don Santos comes to Chabela's door, it is locked. Fanor has already escaped through
another door. Don Santos, with a hard push on the door, opens it and finds his wife almost naked. He questions her and she lies, but then he sees a necktie and the collar of a man's shirt on the floor. He asks her what man has been with her, but she does not tell. He calls her a bestia dafina, knocks her down on the bed and begins to choke her. Calling for help, she unwittingly betrays her lover. She cries, "¡Socorro...Panor!" It is the worst thing she can say. Don Santos says, "Because of you Meche is lost and Taitito will die. I gave you my name and you have dishonored it. I brought you to my house and you have stained it. I expected a son from you but you gave me nothing." He chokes her to death.

Taitito faints. Don Santos goes outside to the crowd that has gathered and gives himself up as a prisoner.

\[\text{Ibid., p. 415.}\]
CHAPTER IV

MARIA ROSA, FLOR DEL QUILEN

Marta Brunet's third novel, Maria Rosa, Flor del Quiñen, was first published in 1927 in Concepción, Chile. It was published again in 1929 by "La Nación" in Santiago and during the same year was published again in Buenos Aires with her first two novels. Very little has been said by critics about this work.

The novel is regionalistic, written about the people of Quillén in southern Chile. It vividly describes their speech, customs, and working conditions, following the same literary style as the author's earlier novels. For the first time the author speaks up against the poor working conditions in southern Chile. She uses one of the workmen, Cachi Roa, as her vehicle of expression. Cachi has just arrived from northern Chile and says that the men should strike for better wages and working conditions, that they are living worse than dogs. The other men are afraid to strike and one of the older men says, "Hay que conformarse con el destino."  

1 Obras completas, p. 420.
As the conversation continues, Pancho Ocares, an outsider who has come there to work, makes the statement, "There is not any woman that I cannot seduce." Chano Almendras makes fun of this and says, "You can only get the good-for-nothing women that anyone else can get, but a good woman like María Rosa, la Flor del Quillén, you can never seduce." Pancho replies by saying that all women are alike and makes up his mind to have María Rosa.

María Rosa has married Saladino Pérez three years previously. She is eighteen years old, has a pleasing figure, and is tall, dark, and slender. She has the aspect of an immature child. She is of a serious and reserved nature and is a very industrious worker. Her parents are of the opinion that "como la María Rosa no hay ninguna."2 Because of the attitude of her parents, she has grown up with a feeling of pride.

Saladino Pérez is sixty years old, a widower of several years and a hard worker. María's parents feel that her marriage to him is a blessing from heaven, so she accepts it without protest, feeling that destiny has so ordained it in order to keep her from possibly falling in love later with someone and running away to live in sin.

Don Saladino and María live in a poor but clean house with a flower garden, near the Quillén river. María keeps

2Ibid., p. 422.
everything pretty and neat. She does not have any children and thus has time to care for her house. The other men have tried to flirt with her, but she is not fickle and so has rejected all of their advances. They come to respect her highly and they give her the name "La Flor del Quillén."

Pancho Ocares brags that he can seduce María Rosa. He maintains that all women are vulnerable to seduction. Therefore, one day when María Rosa is alone outside the house weaving, he passes by to look the situation over. He greets her, then passes on to the other side of the creek. After a time he returns with many small branches of wild berries. He again greets her by telling her what a good crop of "maqui" berries there is. She tells her husband about this but neither of them gives it any significance. Soon Pancho passes by and gives María a bunch of berries. But Pancho is not making any headway in his intention to seduce her, so he searches for another way. He hits upon the idea of addressing María as "Lady" and treating her with deference. He thereby offers himself as her errand boy. Almost every day he passes by her house and says something to her, sometimes telling a funny story or giving her fruit. Since she has been the center of attraction in her home, she now is greatly pleased by Pancho's admiration and attention.

Pancho becomes impatient that María has not noticed
his desire. So one day he tells her frankly that he loves and desires her. She is horrified, and when he draws near her speaking words of seduction, she picks up a piece of firewood and gives him a hard blow on the hand. Then she runs and locks herself in the house.

Her blow has brought blood and terrible pain to Pancho's hand. He is angry and thinks of breaking the door down and forcing María, but he decides to follow a better plan. He begins to mar her reputation among the men and women of the village by telling them that María now belongs to him and is like all the rest of the women, that she is not the "Flor del Quillén."

On one occasion the families and farm hands go to the mountain to gather piñones, a food from trees that is eaten during the winter. María Rosa rides along in the oxcart beside Don Saladino. They do this every year, and always before, the people have treated her like the "Flor del Quillén," but this time they treat her just like all the other women. Pancho goes along and María finds out for sure that Pancho is ruining her reputation.

One day while Don Saladino is away, she runs out of water and needs some to finish cooking dinner. Pancho is there and offers to get it for her. She does not want him to, but he forces the water crock from her and goes after it. Since María has kept secret all that Pancho has done, she feels all alone, and there is a great
emptiness in her heart. She longs for something to fill her loneliness. Pancho makes advances day after day, saying such things as "Ejeme servirla... es l'unico que quiero en el mundo... es uste... ."

One night all of the people want Maria to sing and play the guitar so they can dance. Pancho seats himself close to her and while she sings, he whispers loving words to her like, "Mi Rosita... Mi Rosita querida... ." This disturbs Rosa to such an extent that she becomes choked and has to stop singing. He continues his words of love when she begins singing again. Little by little her defense is broken down. She knows that she does not want to hate him. She becomes so disturbed that she tells Don Saladino that she is ill and wishes to go home.

When she arrives home and has time to think, she realizes that she loves Pancho. She is drunk with love for him and has visions of him, seeing him dressed once in Don Saladino's clothing in her bedroom.

Two days afterwards, the cat causes a disturbance in the kitchen. Maria goes to calm the disturbance and as she goes in, the door closes behind her. Pancho is behind the door. She turns toward him with love, deciding not to rebel against the force of destiny. Soon his lips are on hers and she abandons herself completely to him.

\textsuperscript{3}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 436.
Once he has satisfied his desire, he has no further use for her. All he wants is to seduce her to prove to the other men that she is like all the rest of the women. Also he has made a bet with two men that he can seduce her.

Maria then asks Pancho if he loves her. He replies, "Pa eso tenís a tu viejo..." When she realizes that she has been deceived, she grabs a large whip and lashes him up one side and down the other. He runs out of the house, and she sets the dogs on him. He flees from the house just as the two men with whom he has made the bet are arriving. From all appearances he has lost the bet. Maria shouts at them to lash the rascal Pancho with their whips, for he is a criminal.

Pancho tries to explain, but with the dogs barking and biting him he can only stammer a few words. He runs for the woods. Maria has gained back her respect and reputation as the "Flor del Quillén." One of the men, Chano, says with pride, "La Flor de Quillén na más."
CHAPTER V

BENVENIDO

Bienvenido was written for Marta Brunet's mother. Under the title of this work is the following note: "Para mi madre, que quería una novela rosa." Of Marta Brunet's eight novels, this is the only one that has a joyful and happy ending, and it was probably so written to satisfy her mother's desire for a novela rosa.

Bienvenido is Marta Brunet's fourth novel. It follows the same regionalistic trends of her first three novels by portraying country people on haciendas near Chillán in southern Chile, her birthplace. However, before this work the leading characters of her novels had been poor, uneducated people, but in this work, the administrators and owners of the haciendas are depicted. Thus the language is that of the educated, with very few grammatical errors. Nevertheless, the same low morals of both men and women that had been pictured previously are seen in this work. In Bienvenido the author effectively shows that riches and education do not necessarily change the character of people.

1Obras completas, p. 485.
Juan Ramirez, the protagonist, has graduated from school as an agronomist by means of the financial aid of his mother and sister, who are poor. He is now on his way to manage a good hacienda and return some of what his mother and sister have invested in him. We find Juan riding a horse as Pancho, one of the farmhands, leads the way to the new hacienda. As they draw near the buildings of the hacienda, they see a river flowing down from the snow-covered volcanic mountains in the background. Drawing nearer still to the main house of the hacienda, they see a beautiful waterfall and lagoon, and as Juan stops in breath-taking wonder of this beautiful view, he is well pleased and thinks that he is going to like his new job as overseer.

Pancho’s wife, Peta, has lunch almost ready for the two men. While they eat, Peta tells Juan that in the past the ranch has flourished. Juan tells her that it will again prosper under his management.

In the past, a rich man named Enrique Gana has bought thousands of acres of land at the lowest of prices in the states of Malloco and Cautín. When he died, he divided the land into four haciendas—one for his wife and one for each of his three children. The very beautiful and prosperous hacienda "El Rosario" now belongs to his wife. The hacienda of his son, who also is named Enrique, did not produce sufficient income to cover his needs. Therefore,
he decided to put a sawmill on his hacienda and to raise sheep. Thus, Enrique sought an expert in agronomy and hired Juan Ramirez.

Juan's family is composed of his mother and his sister Enriqueta. Juan's father has died of paralysis a few years previously. Before the father's death, the family was rich. The Ramirez had a nice home in town and a good hacienda. While Juan is ambitious, studious and industrious, Enriqueta is quite the opposite. She is idle and loves reading romantic novels. Her desire is to marry a millionaire, take long trips, get a divorce, marry another millionaire, and travel some more. She loves to keep up appearances and it is, therefore, a great humiliation to her when the hacienda has to be mortgaged and finally sold, and when the house in town is divided into rent units, with only the smallest part being reserved for Enriqueta and her mother.

Juan receives his degree and goes to serve as administrator of the Malleco hacienda of Enrique Gana. The winter is rainy and cold, with much snow. Juan almost gives up in discouragement several times, but when he receives letters from his mother and sister, he decides to stay on. As the long, hard winter draws to a close, things change for the better. Sheep are fattened and sold. Trees are cut and lumber sold. Then Juan receives a letter from Enriqueta saying that she is getting married in March to a
previously poor young man who through an inheritance has become a millionaire. It begins to look as if their struggle against the forces of destiny is paying off.

Upon being advised by the overseer of the hacienda, "El Rosario," of a buyer for cattle, Juan takes a herd of cattle over to the neighboring ranch where the buyer is waiting. While there, Juan sees a slender and attractive young lady whom he has never seen before. He asks her for a drink of water, which she gladly gives to him. When he thanks her, her only response is a smile. Juan finds himself enamoured of the girl. Upon inquiry, he finds out from Enrique that the girl, Filomena, is the illegitimate daughter of Doña Rosario’s husband, whom Doña Rosario has taken to rear.

When Juan returns to the hacienda, he is discontented and lonely. His thoughts are constantly on Filomena, whom they call "Mena" for short. One day while he is out rowing on the lagoon, he decides to go and ask for Mena’s hand in marriage. The two young people walk alone in the garden and make plans to be married.

Their marriage is happy, although after two years they have no children. They go to the woods in summer with their dog, Bobby, and take long walks for diversion, gathering wild berries and having wonderful picnics together. Another of their favorite summer diversions is rowing on the lagoon, going across to the other side, then walking up to
the beautiful waterfall. On the days that Juan has to go to the sawmill, Mena, like a true lover, goes to meet him in the afternoon.

During the middle of the summer, Enrique, the hacienda owner, telephones to say that he is going to visit Juan and Mena. Mena arranges everything very attractively in anticipation of Enrique's visit. Enrique arrives in a bad mood, but after he has eaten the delicious meal that Mena has prepared and seen the neatness and attractiveness of the ranch, he begins to feel happier.

Enrique has lived a dissipated life, and although he and Juan are of the same age, he has a sickly pallor, while Juan has strong, athletic features and looks ten years younger. He has gotten into debt by spending money on worthless women. Marcela, his current mistress, spends money by the handfuls, and Enrique is heavily in debt. His mother, who in the past has paid his debts, now has him watched closely by Don Samuel, the overseer of the hacienda "El Rosario" to see that he has nothing more to do with Marcela. Marcela has moved nearer his hacienda and lives at a distance of only two hours by horse. Doña Rosario and Don Samuel do not know this, and Enrique asks Juan to keep it a secret.

Enrique leaves early the next morning to visit Marcela. Four days later he returns and borrows a thousand pesos from Juan, which is the money given him by Don Samuel for running the hacienda. Marcela decides that she would like
to see the hacienda, and Enrique plans an excursion to see it with her. When Juan learns of this, he tells Enrique, "The hacienda is yours, but the house is my home." He does not want to have anything to do with bad women like Marcela.

On the day when Enrique and Marcela arrive, Juan advises Mena that he thinks it will be better for her to remain inside and avoid meeting them. She agrees to do so, but not for the reason he had intended. She feels ill. When Juan returns for lunch, Mena's head hurts and she goes to lie down for a rest.

That afternoon, instead of going to work Juan takes Bobby and goes to visit Enrique and Marcela. After Juan is introduced to Marcela, he continues to address her as "Señorita," which she does not like because she wants him to address her more familiarly as Marcela. Enrique stays behind while Juan and Marcela go for water from a nearby spring. Marcela asks many questions about the hacienda—its value, if it is mortgaged, if Enrique's mother is very old, and many other questions about money and the property. Marcela begins to flirt with Juan, doing her best to allure him. When Juan leaves for home, Marcela asks him to visit her at Las Termas.

\[2\text{Ibid.}, \text{ p. 526.}\]
Juan finds himself greatly affected by Marcela's enchantments, so much so that it is difficult for him to fall asleep that night. He knows that she is a bad woman, but still he hopes that the forces of destiny will let them meet again. It is not long before the opportunity presents itself. The next day at noon when he comes home from work, Don Samuel and Kena are waiting for him. Don Samuel has come looking for Enrique. Through a friend from Santiago, Doña Rosario has learned that Enrique is at Las Termas with Marcela. She has sent Don Samuel to explain to Enrique that as his only creditor, she is ready to foreclose and take all of his properties unless he returns to her immediately and leaves off his relations with Marcela. Doña Rosario also sends word to Marcela that she will pay her twenty thousand pesos if she will leave Enrique and move to Buenos Aires. Juan agrees to deliver the messages to Enrique and Marcela.

Upon arrival at Las Termas, Juan finds Enrique sleeping off his drunken condition, while Marcela sits in an easy chair reading. The setting seems perfect, so he delivers the message to Marcela first. She begins to flirt with and to tempt him. He is at the point of yielding when Enrique awakens. Juan comes to his senses and remembers his errand. While Juan is endeavoring to tell Enrique the message, Marcela interrupts him, telling Enrique that she is going on to greener pastures in Buenos Aires. Her
words almost drive Enrique to the state of hysteria, but Marcela is indifferent to his suffering, for she has never loved him. As Juan starts to leave, Marcela brushes her body against his and tells him, "Mañana te espero a almorzar. Ven."  

When Juan returns and tells how he has delivered the messages, Don Samuel and Mena are pleased. Don Samuel eats supper with them, and in their conversation he reminds Juan and Mena that it is time that they were having a baby. Just as Juan is about to reply with a joke, he looks at Mena and can tell by the light that radiates from her eyes and countenance that evidently she is pregnant. They close the conversation with Don Samuel hastily and retire to their bedroom, where they stay up past midnight talking and planning for the baby which is on the way. Juan is quite thrilled at the news that Mena is expecting a baby.  

Early the next morning, Juan is up to get Don Samuel off and to see that he has a good breakfast. Mena wishes to get up and serve him, but Juan forbids it, saying that he will do it. Juan makes the breakfast and Don Samuel then leaves, feeling very happy. That day as Juan goes to check over the hacienda, he finds the sawmill broken down. He works all morning trying to repair it, but to

Ibid., p. 540.
no avail. At last he has to telephone Don Samuel to send a mechanic. All of this work and bother has served a good purpose: Marcela has not entered his mind all morning. Mena is waiting for him for lunch and they continue happily making plans for the arrival of their first child.

In the afternoon he returns to the sawmill and works until four o'clock. When he starts back to the house he comes upon Marcela, who has come looking for him. She says that he is ungrateful and calls him "picaro" because he has not kept the engagement with her. This enrages him and he commands her to go back to Las Termas. As he heads for home, she shouts pitifully to him that she does not have anyone to accompany her and cannot go back alone. He secures a farm hand to accompany her and sends her back.

As he thinks back over it all, Juan realizes that if the news of Mena's being pregnant had not reached him when it did, he would have fallen into Marcela's trap. Was it God, Destiny, or some other force that ushered him headlong toward her trap? If so, what force has blessedly saved him from it? "¡Cómo se eslabona todo! ¿Qué fuerza nos empujó? ¡Dios? ¡El Destino? Quienquiera que sea quien haya hecho que sólo ayer noche, precisamente ayer noche, el arribo de un hijo me haya sido anunciado, ¡Bendito sea!"\(^4\)

\(^4\)Ibid., p. 547.
CHAPTER VI

HUMO HACIA EL SUR

Marta Brunet's fifth novel, Humo hacia el sur, was published in Buenos Aires in 1946 and is her longest work. The author has written a note before the beginning of the narrative to acquaint the reader with the setting, which she describes as "un pueblo de la Frontera, año 1905." The story takes place in a town in southern Chile at the end of the railroad on the Argentine border. Being a border town and at the end of the railroad, there is much movement both day and night. People come from all parts of the world to the town, creating a situation which makes this work more universal than any of Marta Brunet's previous novels. The novel is also different from her previous works in that it concentrates heavily on psychological description and almost completely ignores the characters' physical traits. Here also the author introduces a new theme, solitude or loneliness. Hernán Díaz Arrieta (Alone) well describes the author's new theme as "un sentimiento de soledad irremediable." Most of the characters of this novel have plenty of

1Obras completas, p. 549.
2Prologue to Obras completas, p. 16.
money and are educated, and their speech, therefore, has very few defects. Destiny and fatalism appear time and time again in the work. It would appear that the author is teaching a lesson—that material things, money, land, and possessions of all kinds, are temporal and are like humo that the wind drives away. It is upon this thought that the title Humo hacia el sur is based.

The story begins in the richly furnished home of the main character, Doña Batilde. She is a millionaire who acquired her wealth by being a stingy and calculating person. Her philosophy is that for one to really live he must possess material things. Everything else is like smoke which the wind drives away.

On the night when the action begins, María Soledad and her family are visiting Doña Batilde and her husband. The two women take turns visiting each other for one hour each evening, from nine to ten, because their husbands insist upon it so that they can play billiards. During the game, the women discuss a familiar theme: Doña Batilde advises her friend to save up some money, then invest it in some business and increase her wealth. At ten, the game of billiards finished, María Soledad and her husband, Ernesto Pérez, leave for home.

When Doña Batilde came to this region, there was no town. Being a practical person, she laid out the plans for a town, then directed the building of it. It grew swiftly
and became a state capital. At the time of our story the town is a beehive of business activity, located just inside Chile on the Argentine border. The railroad from central Chile, where the capital of the republic is located, goes as far south as the town, so that all the people from southern Chile have to go there in order to board the train or market their merchandise. Long mule trains come from Argentina loaded with produce and return with other commodities. The town is the crossroads where people from all parts of the world meet. Some of the people are of ill repute, so a woman has established a "hotel" in which prostitutes are kept in a large building bought from Doña Batilde.

A railroad bridge which will span a river in the southern part of town is partially finished. Doña Batilde has constantly fought against the bridge, for when it is finished the town will go down financially, for most business will go to a new town further south at the end of the railroad. Doña Batilde, of course, will suffer a great financial loss. Also, it appears that her husband, Don Manuel, will not be re-elected senator. If he were re-elected he could fight the finishing of the bridge, but he seems unconcerned. This angers her, so she turns on Don Manuel with all of her pent-up fury and cruelty.

¡Capón! Miserable enano. Hombre que lo creo, porque lleva pantalones . . . y yo sé que no lo es . . . . Incapaz de defender su derecho.
Claro, viene cualquiera y le dice: "Usted se va ahora, no lo necesitamos. En su sitio vamos a poner a otro . . ." Porque bien segura podía estar de que usted hubiera dicho como ahora: "Hay que conformarse!"³

Dona Batilde tells him she is going to the capital to talk personally with the president.

In her bedroom as she prepares for her trip to the capital, Doña Batilde begins to reminisce. Looking at a wedding picture, she sees that all of her features once were womanish, sweet, and kind. Now she is hard and cruel. The town knows her as Viela Ayara, because of her passion for power through money.

On Sunday afternoon a dark cloud arises from the south, covering the entire horizon, and there is every indication that a terrible storm is coming. Don Manuel visits his friend Don Ernesto. From their conversation we learn the details of Don Manuel's life. He feels he has not done anything of value in life. As a child and as a young man, he permitted his mother to rule him and make his decisions. After marriage he has allowed Doña Batilde to govern him. In their conversation the two friends discuss destiny. Ernesto says, "Todos somos juguetes de fuerzas obscuras que en un momento determinado nos manejan, desgraciadamente."⁴ Both believe that their lives are controlled by destiny.

³Ibid., p. 597.
⁴Ibid., p. 634.
For a week it rains without letup. Doña Batilde remains in the capital and her husband, being lonesome, decides to visit Ernesto and María Soledad each evening at six. Ernesto, a distant relative of Doña Batilde, now begins to detest Don Manuel after he has told him his hard-luck story.

On the following Sunday Ernesto leaves his house in the early part of the night as if guided by an unseen force. He reasons that all the town has rebelled against Doña Batilde during her absence. Still guided by an invisible force, Ernesto arrives at Don Manuel's home. The two former friends now find conversation impossible. Due to nervousness, Don Manuel drops a blotter, and as he bends to pick it up, Ernesto looks at his own big hands and then at Don Manuel's neck. He is seized by the impulse to choke Don Manuel to death. "En su estado de tensa sobreexcitación, de actuar movido por fuerzas incontrolables, piensa en la socorrida imagen de la mano del destino, que a tientas busca su persona, trabando la acción que está a punto de realizar." At this moment the green, phosphorescent eyes of Don Manuel's cat look up at him. He reaches down and pets the cat. The two men stare at each other, and somehow Don Manuel has understood Ernesto's bad intentions. Soon Ernesto leaves, now feeling free from hatred.

When Doña Batilde returns from the capital, she admits

Ibid., p. 671.
that her trip was a failure, for nothing can be done to prevent the completion of the bridge. She soon learns, also, that those who had tried in the past to purchase her properties are no longer interested.

Later that same night a fire breaks out in one of Doña Batilde's lumber sheds near the railroad station. The fire spreads rapidly, and general panic results. In the confusion, Don Manuel cannot find Doña Batilde, and he spends the night in a frantic search.

It appears that the entire town will be burned. "Hay ventanas abiertas, puertas abiertas, a la espera de su destino, presas en su imposibilidad de articular también ellas un grito." For the sixth time Don Manuel has returned home in search of his wife. This time he finds her, crying in a shrill voice. It is not like Doña Batilde to cry. For a few moments she reminisces, remembering the sweet, lovely person she has been before marriage. Now she is ashamed of her hardness of heart. Don Manuel tells her that all is finished. Slowly she gets up without saying another word, goes into the street and starts toward the bridge. The bridge has been her enemy since it was begun. She sits down on a rock near the bridge and looks at the fire, which, the reader learns, was started by Doña Batilde. Looking again

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6Ibid., p. 699.
at the bridge she realizes that it "tenía una fuerza de permanencia. La seguridad de su destino. Y había acabado por vencerla."\textsuperscript{7} Suddenly she begins to walk straight onto the unfinished bridge. The novel ends as she falls into the great abyss below.

"El viento había cambiado. Llevaba el humo hacia el sur, y una de sus guadejas parecía prolongar el puente eternidad adentro."\textsuperscript{8}

\textsuperscript{7}Ibid., p. 708.
\textsuperscript{8}Ibid., p. 709.
The setting of Marta Brunet's sixth novel, La mampara, is quite different from that of the quiet country life in southern Chile seen in her early novels; it is the busy and noisy metropolitan city of Montevideo. The language is not the broken and incorrect Spanish of the uneducated, but it could very well be the well spoken Spanish of any Latin American capital. The action of this work is no longer limited to one place or locality but is universal and could easily have happened in any large city in Latin America. La mampara was published in Buenos Aires in 1946.

The theme of solitude which the author started using in her fifth novel, Rumo hacia el sur, is also used in La mampara. The three main characters, Ignacia Teresa, Carmen, and their mother, are lonely people who live in an attic of a warehouse. There are two rooms, a small kitchen and a bath, all of which are dark from the shadows of the high walls on both sides. As one goes from the attic to the street, he has to go down a stairway, cross the patio, and pass through a long narrow opening of sixty-five meters' length to the gate that opens to the street.
The gate is made of multicolored glass, red, yellow, and blue, with a rose-colored glass in the center. When the sun shines on the multicolored glass it gives it the appearance of a large, sparkling diamond. This is the mampara of the title and is the only attractive thing about the so-called home.

In the morning, when Ignacia Teresa leaves for work, the mother has already gotten up and spotlessly cleaned and shined the mampara. She then slowly walks to the attic, gets dressed and goes to the market for a few things to eat. She tries to act like a well-to-do woman, wearing high heel shoes, a corset, gloves, and her best clothes to go to the market, which in reality is no more than to do the work of a servant. She does so to satisfy her proud and pretty daughter, Carmen, who is twenty years old. All this time Carmen is fast asleep.

When the mother arrives home from the market, Carmen awakens and asks if anyone has called her on the telephone. The mother replies, "Not while I was here. Someone could have called while I was away." She says this in a sarcastic manner, for she does not like the useless life Carmen is living. Carmen has been spoiled by her father while he was still living and now her mother has continued to pamper her. Her mother brings hot water to her, fixes her breakfast, and washes and irons her clothes. Carmen is attractive, with large blue eyes, a beautiful set of
teeth, and a good figure. She exercises daily to keep in shape. After a bad beginning in her conversation with her mother, she tries to make up for it by kissing her and saying a few loving words. Then she dresses and goes out. Generally she never notices the outside appearance of their home, but she does pay close attention to the beautifully colored and well polished mampara. On this particular day she says to herself, "No importa lo que haya adentro." To her all that matters is a good outside appearance. The mampara separates them from the outside world.

Lunch time comes at the office where Ignacia Teresa works. The manager calls and asks her to get some important papers out of the files for him and to stand by for further instructions. She obeys but is not content with having to work overtime. She always goes home at lunch, and on this particular day she only has thirty cents, just a little more than enough for her streetcar fare. The work is not finished until it is too late for her to go the long distance home for lunch. The manager tells her to eat in a restaurant and return at three. He gives an order to give her money for her lunch, but the teller is already gone and she cannot get it until after three. She knows that her mother will be worried about her for she has never done this before, and not knowing anyone or any

1Obras Completas, p. 459
restaurant where she can eat with only thirty cents, she becomes very perplexed.

Finally she calls her mother, telling her that all is well. Then she goes out walking, looking for a cheap cafe. She sees a cafe advertising milk and decides to go in, for at least she should be able to pay for a glass of milk. When the young man comes to wait on her, she asks what she can buy with thirty cents. To her amazement she is able to buy a ham sandwich and a glass of milk.

While eating, a man comes in and sits down beside her. She observes his large hand beside her little hand and in reality longs for that hand to take hers and protect her. Finally he says something to her and she openly tells him her fear of being alone. He then tells her that he is a refugee from Spain and that he has set up a bookstore near the cafe. Later, he gives her some good advice about being careful, and tells her of many things to avoid. He too has the desire to take her hand in his in order to protect her from the many dangers that exist for a young girl in that section of town.

At about this same time of day in another part of Montevideo, Carmen is curled up fast asleep in a friend’s home. She is nothing more than a play-girl, sleeping most of the day and staying up late at night. Finally her friend, who is tired of sleeping, awakens Carmen and tells her that it is time for them to get dressed and go to the party.
Tel, the girl friend, is very wealthy. Her mother comes in with gifts for both Tel and Carmen. This delights them, especially Carmen, who receives a beautiful blue dress colored with butterflies. Carmen jumps out of bed, showering Tel's mother with kisses. Then she dresses and goes with her friend to the party.

Nina, Tel's sister, who shares the same bedroom with her, is provoked by the way that her mother pets Carmen. She tells her mother that she is helping to spoil the girl, that the girl ought to be at work just like her sister, Ignacia, and that day by day she is making Carmen more and more of a parasite. Nina attends the university and thinks that there is a great need for a revolution. Being a practical person, she does not fit in well with those that want to live doing nothing more than sleeping, eating, drinking, and having a good time.

At the party where Carmen and Tel go, Hans, a European war refugee, asks for Nina. Tel calls her sister, telling her that she should come to the party, for Hans has asked to see her. When Nina arrives and finds that Hans wanted only to greet her, she becomes disgusted and soon leaves.

Hans and Carmen then begin to dance. Hans is a good dancer, and he thoroughly enjoys the attractiveness of the sensual Carmen. He tries to seduce her, whispering the words, "Ten una aventura,"² over and over in her ear.

²Ibid., p. 476.
Hans is only out for a good time; he is not interested in marriage. Carmen keeps quiet, only lowering her eyebrows. He takes her home, and when they arrive at the mampara, he takes her in his arms and kisses her for a long time. She is left weak and almost faints before she can get the gate open. He continues trying to seduce her, but she refuses to give in. Eventually he leaves, saying he will return soon. When she gets inside and closes the mampara, she faints and has a terrible nightmare. The rough, cold lime and sand wall and the coolness of the early morning rapidly bring her to. She struggles to her room, taking off her shoes in order not to awaken her mother, who has fallen asleep waiting for her to arrive. She turns the light off and hops into bed, but being disturbed by what has happened, she is unable to go to sleep. She feels that her situation is worse than that of her mother and sister, for they are submissive to the forces of destiny and to a certain extent happy.

Ellas, viviendo la rutina y lo mediocre, sumisas al destino, manteniendo tan sólo una actitud, porque saben cómo las vigila y hostiliza. Ellas! Si estarían felices en un conventillo, en el peor barrio, amistades con los vecinos, dándole gracias al Altísimo porque el trabajo les proporciona lo imprescindible para subsistir.\(^2\)

The work ends with the implication that Carmen will continue trying to live as a poor girl trying to live in

\(^2\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 480.}\)
the social whirl of a rich group. All that she has to keep her going is her strong will and good-looking body, which sometimes deceives her by fainting. Hans wants to rob her of her virginity, the one thing that can help her to get married. She feels all alone and is horrified as she thinks of the world and people on the outside of the beautifully multicolored mampara.
Marta Brunet's seventh novel, Maria Nadie, was published in Santiago in 1957. It is written in two parts: the first part about the small lumbering town of Colloco in southern Chile and the second about a young lady, María López. Both parts concentrate on character psychology, describing what the characters think and how they react to circumstances, but little attention is given to the physical features of the characters.

The author again in this work concentrates on the theme of solitude or loneliness, which she began using in Humo hacia el sur. The protagonist, María López, is nicknamed Maria Nadie partially because of her desire to be alone, to be a "nobody." The low morals of the people, especially the men, are portrayed so strongly that one critic takes issue with the novelist, asking, "Are all men really that bad?" The work is less criollista and more universal than the writer's first four novels. Even though many of the people are poorly educated, their speech is without defects. Colloco could very well be any small lumbering town.

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town in Central or South America.

One of the families that Marta Brunet describes in *Maria Nadie* is composed of Reinaldo, his wife, Ernestina, and their only son, Cacho. As a child, Reinaldo dreams of studying law and politics and becoming a great leader. However, in his primary grades, his marks are so poor that his father places him in a mechanical trade school. He does so well in the trade school that he gives up his political ambitions and begins to dream of going to the United States to perfect his mechanical ability so that he can return to Chile and revolutionize industry with his great inventions. His father finds him employment in a lumber company in Colloco.

His mother feels that he must not go to Colloco alone. She finds him a good young girl, Ernestina, for a wife. Reinaldo does not understand his wife. During the day she is very peaceful and placid; she creates such a gentle atmosphere that Reinaldo does not dare kiss her anywhere but on the forehead. At night, however, she is like a magnet, pulling him to her for petting, kissing and sexual intercourse. He cannot understand this duality, and he is ill at ease with his wife, for he has never been greatly interested in sex. He feels he has become a slave to Ernestina, describing himself as "convertido en una especie de garañón entregado a esta burra de mujer."\(^2\)

\(^2\)Obras completas, p. 720.
Reinaldo begins to wonder how other women are. When his wife becomes pregnant, he takes her to stay with his parents until the child comes, and during her absence he experiments with many women. He has relations with Cochoca, young mountain girls, prostitutes, a licentious adolescent, and many other women, and he finds that they give him more satisfaction than Ernestina. Later, when she returns home with their baby, he approaches her for sex relations and she rejects him. Her rejection causes him to turn to other women, and Ernestina "nunca más fue su mujer." Ernestina is fairly satisfied about this, for it gives her time to concentrate on rearing and educating their child.

The other family in Colloco that the author describes in her novel is also a family of three. They are Don Lindor, his wife, Petaca, and their sickly son, Conejo. Petaca is overweight and overbearing. She manages their store, their restaurant, their home, her husband, her son, their servants and their employees.

Don Lindor is a very vulgar man, as seen from his vivid and realistic description of his relations with women. He resents Petaca's dominance of him and eventually gives himself up more and more to licentious living. He has learned that Petaca will not speak harshly to him in the presence of their little son, so he waits until Conejo is present before he approaches Petaca.

There are also two widows who live together in Colloco.
Melecia is in charge of the post office and Liduvina is the telegraph operator. They know everything that goes on in the town and keep gossip going.

The arrival of a new telephone operator, María López, in Colloco causes a stir. The men are especially interested in María and much of their free time is spent at the telephone office. María, quite attractive, dresses in the latest styles of the capital, going even so far as to wear slacks. This provokes much criticism from Melecia, who circulates the story that María strips off all her clothes on the patio and sun bathes, a pattern of behavior which thoroughly shocks Melecia's sense of modetry. In the two months that María has been in Colloco, no telegrams or letters have arrived for her. This leads Melecia to suggest that María López's name should be changed to María Madie.

Seinaldo is chosen to meet María's train and see that she is well settled when she arrives in Colloco. At sight of María he falls in love with her. For him, "Fue el comienzo de otro sueño que tampoco había soñado nunca. Pero que esta vez sí era el amor." He is thirty-five years old and has in reality never been in love with a woman. Now life is different for him and takes on new meaning.

The two little boys, Cacho and Conejo, have a favorite place to play, a cave in the mountains. The location of the

3Ibid., p. 737.
place is secret until María, on one of her solitary walks, comes upon them. They do not know her name, so they call her "Cabellos de Oro," for her hair is very pretty. They fall in love with her, and almost daily Conejo gathers violets for her. The boys' love for her continues until the night when Cacho sees violets on his father's coat like the ones Conejo has given to "Cabellos de Oro." A gloom comes over Conejo, and the thought of María's betraying them pierces his heart. He becomes ill with a high fever and believes that he is floating through the air, carried by "Cabellos de Oro."

Reinaldo, abandoning reason and respectability, begins to pursue María quite openly. He attempts to pick her up in his car and later makes a public display of his emotions at a theatrical performance. María becomes the object of gossip and is accused in public by Petaca of attempting to lure even children: "No le basta manosear a todos los hombres para también agarrársela con los niños." Depressed by Petaca's attack, María begins to reflect on her past.

She had an unhappy girlhood, being the daughter of a government treasurer who travelled from place to place, and a dominating mother. María disliked her mother's dominance and her constant effort to be the leader in every social function. As soon as she could, María sought employment in order to get away from her family. She desired peace and

solitude, but she has learned that there is no peace in solitude. Being alone is miserable at times. In her opinion, even God needs companionship: "Ni siquiera el Dios de los cielos fue capaz de existir en ello y creó el mundo para su compañía."5

Her reflections then turn to her affair with Gabriel, which also failed to provide the contentment she was seeking. She met Gabriel on a bus, and he managed to seduce her on the night that they met. He spent many nights in her room, visiting her only when he desired her body. Her life became a life of waiting for him, and in reality she was not happy. This constant waiting and anxiety made her nervous, and she was not doing her work as a telephone operator as well as she should. She concludes that "el no estar sola tampoco me dio la paz."6

The affair with Gabriel began to disintegrate when María learned that she was pregnant. When Gabriel realized this, he wanted to send her to his doctor for an abortion. She objected, saying that she loved her baby, but Gabriel maintained that he did not want a baby unless it was legitimate. María believed that having a baby was just what she needed to bring her happiness and take away her loneliness. Then one day Gabriel violently took her and had relations

5Ibid., p. 772.
6Ibid., p. 781.
with her. When he left, she was bleeding, and a doctor had to be called to perform a curettage. For several days she lay near death's door, and in all this time, Gabriel did not come to see her. However, when she went home from the hospital, he was there to meet her, again desiring her body. But now she was different. She asked him for the key to her room and told him never to come back again.

As the days went by, she missed Gabriel tremendously. Solitude was less comforting to her than ever before. Soon she was asked by the boss if she would like to be transferred to Colloco. She believed that things would be different with a change of environment, so she came to Colloco seeking a new life and a new personality.

In Colloco, however, she does not find life different. Solitary life is difficult and many people have evil suspicions about her, even though she has not done anything evil in Colloco. Even her two little friends, Cacho and Conejo, have abandoned her. Being María Sadie is not an enjoyable experience. She makes up her mind to leave Colloco and go back to Gabriel in the other town, where she will again be her real self, María López.
Amasijo, Marta Brunet's eighth and last novel, was published in Santiago in 1962. The theme of solitude or loneliness also dominates the tone of this novel. It is so vividly expressed that one is made to think that the work is somewhat autobiographical. Marta Brunet was sixty-five years old when she wrote this work and was from all accounts quite lonely herself.

Although the theme of loneliness is a familiar one, the novelist's technique in this work is quite new to her. She begins in the first chapter with the central character when he is thirty years old; in the second chapter, she starts with his parents before he was born. These two divisions of the story are carried along side by side until near the middle of the novel when they are joined.

The story begins when a young man leaves his parents in Asturia and comes to America, where he amasses a fortune of millions of dollars in the hardware business. When he is about fifty years old, he hears of the death of his parents and suddenly realizes that since he is not married and has no children, he has no heir. Taking
up his mind to marry and have a family, he buys attractive clothing and a sports car and begins to look over the young women. He is more interested in marrying a woman with pretty breasts than with pretty legs, but to his surprise, he marries a girl of fifteen who dresses in old-fashioned clothes that do not reveal what kind of breasts she has. The man and his wife, Linda, are extremely happy.

One night she entices him to go to the beach. In the car, she urges him to drive faster and faster. He loses control of the car, runs into a bridge, and is killed instantly. His wife is injured for life. She waits week after week for her broken limbs to mend and for her baby to be born. Linda's back is permanently injured, and she can be relieved of pain only by lying flat on her back on an orthopedic bed. Her joy during this time of pregnancy is in the expectancy of a baby girl to be born to her. When the baby finally is born, it is a boy, and has to be delivered by caesarean section. Although for a time she is depressed because the child is a boy, as it grows, Linda's life is soon built completely around her child. She wants him by her side day and night. She bathes him, combs his hair, feeds him, and attends to him in every way while she sits in a wheelchair. Members of her family, the doctors and her maid counsel her to allow other people to see after her baby,
but she refuses. Being kept so closely confined, the child is slow in learning to crawl and walk. He also has some difficulty in pronouncing words.

The nursemaid cannot do anything with the child, Julian. If she tries to correct him or force him to do something against his will, he frees himself from her by kicking and biting. The rumor gets out in the neighborhood that Julian is worse than a wild animal. His mother continues trying to keep Julian at her side. He seems fascinated by organ music played by a man in the street. When he wishes to go hear the man play the organ, she offers to buy him an organ. When this does not please him, she offers to have the organ man come to their house. Nothing pleases him. His mother buys him books and toys of all kinds, but the little boy does not seem to be happy. She tries to make him perfect so that he will never spill food on his clothing, remain seated quietly in a chair when there are visitors, and never go near dangerous places. He grows up rather abnormally, since Linda will not allow him to play with children his own age. Many people, including the priest, notice this, and they urge Linda to send the boy to school. At first, she is infuriated, but finally she is persuaded.

Julian is sent to school, and from that day on his mother becomes worse. The local priest tries to convince her to amuse herself in different things, but she
refuses and shuts herself up alone. Now there is no genuine communion or love between Linda and Julián. They talk, but only about perfunctory matters, and there is never any love expressed. Usually Linda prefers to be alone, even though she feels very lonely. Day by day she grows weaker, and finally, when Julián is eight, she dies.

After his mother's death, Julián finishes high school. He never makes friends in school and continues living a withdrawn and solitary life. After high school, he devotes his time to reading, listening to music, and to going from his house in the city to the one in the country. But always he is alone. His cousin tries to get him to take an interest in his business, which is worth millions of dollars, but he refuses. When Julián is twenty-one years old, he tries to find pleasure in travel. He goes to many different countries, sees many different people, and still finds nothing that will fill the emptiness in his life. Tired of travel, he returns home and begins writing. He finds some pleasure in writing and he is a success at it. The public enthusiastically receives his stories, but even with this new outlet for his life, he still does not make friends. His only friend is a dog.

Julián has written fifteen or more dramas. Five of them have been presented in the theater, and the sixth is in rehearsal. One day while going home from a rehearsal, he notices a strange woman. He is astonished at her
rhythmical step, her calmness of expression, her rare
dress, and, above all, her apparent peace of mind. He
follows her, walking only a few steps behind. Soon she
turns and tells him that she wants him to either walk by
her side or in front of her. For a short distance, they
walk together and converse. Julián admits to his lack
of faith in God, while she tells him that faith in God is
one of the things that gives her calmness and peace. Soon
they arrive at her car. Before leaving, she promises to
meet him the next day.

The next day they introduce themselves. She is Teresita
Carreño, born in Panama of a Guatemalan father and a Sal-
vadoran mother. She has travelled widely. Julián tells
her who he is and then she shocks him by asking him why the
characters of his dramas are all so irremediably lost in
trouble and misery and abandoned to destiny and fatalism.

He slowly begins to open up his past life to her.
First, he takes her to his home and shows her the library
room, where all of the toys of his childhood are kept to-
gether with the things of his mother, in remembrance of
her. It is almost impossible for him to tell her of his
past life. He often falters and trembles as he speaks of
his solitary and unhappy life. He feels like a criminal,
responsible for his mother's death. He has never made
friends of either sex. He has had many women in his
life, but always in intimate relations, his mother's image comes before him and frightens him. He has resorted to homosexuality, but finds no happiness in this. Always his mother's phantom appears and haunts him. He cannot free himself from it.

Teresita admonishes him that if he follows this way of life much longer, it will lead to suicide. He wonders why he is opening his past life to this stranger; he has never before done this for anyone. Then she reveals to him that she is dying of cancer of the breast, and because of her great suffering, she is able to comprehend the lives of others who are going through severe trials. Teresita bids Julián good-by, saying that she will not see him again; all the days ahead have been carefully planned to distract her from the fact that she is slowly dying. Her last advice to Julián is that he get rid of all of his toys and the things that remind him of his mother, and of his past unhappy life.

After Teresita leaves, Benedicta, the maid, calls him to lunch. She tries to find out all she can about the strange woman who has visited him, but he refuses to talk about her. He amazes Benedicta by telling her that he wishes to give all of the articles of his library room to an orphanage. She disagrees vehemently, saying that it will never be done. She accuses Julián of his mother's death and says that his wish to give away his mother's
things shows gross disrespect for her. She accuses him of unfairness to her, reminding him that she has served him faithfully for years. She assures him that if all the childhood things are removed to the orphanage, it will be over her dead body. Enraged, Julián takes his anger out on his poor dog.

In Julián’s bewilderment, he does a lot of thinking. He lost his faith many years before; he loves no one and is interested in nothing. He thinks of giving away all his wealth and getting a job, but realizing that this would involve innumerable explanations, he gives up the idea. Besides, he does not know a trade. Then he begins to wonder why he has been attracted to Teresita and why he has opened up his past life to her. Why did he do it? Was it because she is confronting death?

That night he continues his thoughts on his past as he goes for a drive in his car. As he passes through many streets filled with children, he ponders the nonsense of having children, when they are born "para el sufrimiento, para el hambre, para la angustia, para la destrucción."¹

Julián enters a restaurant but leaves soon, having again found himself totally alone in a crowd. Then he begins to wonder why he should live at all. The novelist asks:

¿Para qué todo el esfuerzo de vivir? ¿Para qué? ¿Qué le aportaba a él la vida? ¿Esto? La

¹Obras completas, p. 851.
repugnancia, el insomnio o el huir de los senos presentes en sus manos para caer en "eso." ¿Qué era peor? ¿Qué? Sabía que nunca, como otros, indiferentemente, abiertamente, reconociéndose un derecho, aceptando una fatalidad, iba a darse a "eso" que, sin ambages, sin tapujos, sin excusas, era su meta sexual. Reviví las experiencias. La atracción de sima, el hecho consumado, el repudio. . . .

Julián looks for a reason to live, for somebody or something, but to no avail. All hope of finding contentment gone, he goes to the theater, climbs to the highest place above the stage, and jumps. "Cuando llegó el médico dijo que la muerte había sido instantánea."

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2 Ibíd., p. 856.
3 Ibíd., p. 859.
Marta Brunet is classified by literary critics as a realistic criollista novelist. One critic says that she belongs to the escuela criollista for the following reasons: "Por la busca de los personajes en las clases más rudas, por la escena misma dentro de la cual se circunscriben las tragedias y los conflictos en que aquellos seres aparecen mezclados, por la reproducción fiel de la lengua malbaratada de huasos y de peones." Generally speaking, criollismo or regionalism is a style of literature which describes a particular geographical section--its habits, speech, manners, history, folklore, or beliefs. By this definition, Marta Brunet well qualifies as a criollista writer, for she describes in her novels the speech, beliefs, habits and customs of the country people in southern Chile.

In the first part of the twentieth century when Marta Brunet began to write, the Chilean reading public had very little interest in criollista scenes of country people.

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but her novels were an immediate success. One of the reasons for this is that her novels differ from most criollista novels of rural scenes in that they put emphasis on the psychological development of the principal characters instead of on their physical characteristics. Her effective presentation of character psychology is well illustrated by the reader’s introduction to Juan Oses in Montaña adentro. The novelist begins with a conversation between two anonymous workers about a broken-down harvesting machine. During the discussion, the character of one of the workers begins to emerge. We see that he is firm, strong, calm, discreet, and valorous, although his name has not yet been mentioned. Pages later, when he speaks "con voz entera . . . mirando bien de frente al administrador," Juan is fixed in the reader’s mind as a good man worthy of respect.

Other aspects of Juan’s character are seen when he shows tenderness, generosity, and affection in caring for Cata’s sick child and later when he offers to marry Cata and to become a father to her illegitimate child. His physical strength is seen when he fights with San Martin and Pedro Pereira, but his muscles are not described. Even at the time of Juan’s death he is pictured as tranquil and sober, expiring with only one groan, as seen

\[2^\text{Obres completas, p. 360.}\]
in the following quotation:

Con su habitual modo tranquilo, volvióse Juan para entrar. Mas el otro esperaba el momento y de un salto prodigioso cayó sobre las espaldas de Juan Oses esgrimiendo el corvo traidor que se hundió hasta el puño.

—¡Ay!—se desplomó Juan Oses fulminado.  

The secondary characters of the same novel are developed with the same technique. We see, for example, the personality of the administrator in the fear that Segundo Seguel and Juan Oses have of him, in his bossy and domineering manner with them, and finally in his cruelty to a playful dog. "Dando saltos que torcían de lado su cuarto trasero, llegóse al administrador olfateándole los zapatos. Con un formidable puntapié lo envió el hombre lejos, dolorido y aullando."  

In summing up the deep character penetration in Marta Brunet's writings one critic says that the author "nunca vacila en el desarrollo seguro y continuo del carácter de su protagonista, sólo por medio de acción y conversación." The same critic goes on to say that only in rare cases does Marta Brunet give the physical features of persons in her novels.

When Marta Brunet was in her teens, she was extremely religious; at times she was considered abnormal in her manner

\[^3\]Ibid., p. 387.  
\[^4\]Ibid., p. 361.  
\[^5\]Martha E. Allen, "Marta Brunet," Revista Iberoamericana, XVIII (Diciembre, 1952), 64.
of worship. Though once over-zealous with religious fervor, due to the sickness of her mother and other problems that occurred when she was about twenty, she lost her faith. This aspect of her philosophy of life is reflected in her novels. Not one of the main characters in any of her novels is a religious person, even though the setting for all of her novels except one is Chile, a predominantly Roman Catholic country.

From her novels, it would appear that her basic philosophy of life is fatalism, a belief that all things are predetermined to happen regardless of one's efforts. She speaks of fatalism and destiny time and time again. However, it would appear that there is confusion in her mind as to whether this force over our lives is of God or Destiny. Juan, the protagonist in Bienvenido, when he is distracted by his wife's pregnancy from committing a sin of passion with Marcela, states this ambiguous view of the force which saved him as follows: "¡Cómo se eslabona todo! ¿Qué fuerza nos empujará? ¿Dios? ¿El Destino? Quienquiera que sea . . . ¡bendito sea!"6 The author recognizes that there is a power greater than man, but apparently it is unknown to her whether this force is called God or Destiny. Usually, she calls it Destiny or Fate in her novels.

6 Obras completas, p. 547.
The author's first four novels are known as Chilean novels. In her youth she lived for twelve years in the small town of Victoria, in southern Chile, where her father owned a large ranch. In her Chilean novels she describes the country people in small towns and haciendas, the life she knew best.

In 1939 she went to work in the consulate in Buenos Aires. Her next four novels are set in Buenos Aires. One writer describes the effect that the new environment had on Marta Brunet:

La atmósfera cosmopolita de la capital del Plata, el trato de intelectuales refinados, la cercanía de Europa, el influjo de escritores de orden superior, como Jorge Luis Borges, después de un período de silencio, hicieron surgir en la campesina del Sur una escritora nueva, de cualidades distintas, para algunos, acaso demasiado distinta.7

Her fifth novel, Humo hacia el sur, which was written in 1946, shows a distinct change in setting and style which is carried through her last four novels. The settings are more universal and the action could have taken place in almost any Latin American town or city. The speech is not that of the uneducated country people in her Chilean novels but of cultured city people.

Among the many themes that Marta Brunet used in her works, solitude or loneliness especially stands out in her last four novels. The main characters in these novels are

7Hernán Díaz Arrieta, Prologue to Obras completas, p. 15.
lonely people who are worried and lost in their troubles. The protagonists in both *Humo hacia el sur* and *Amasijo* become so lonely that they see no reason to continue living. Both novels end with the suicide of the leading character.

Another dominant trait of her novels is that they are filled with illegitimate children. The protagonist of her first novel, *Montaña adentro*, was an illegitimate child, and several illegitimate children appear in subsequent works. It is said that in several Latin American countries over fifty percent of the couples living together are unmarried. Therefore, it would seem that Marta Brunet’s purpose in having so much illicit sex conduct in her novels is for no other purpose than to paint a true picture of the society of Latin America.

Another favorite character type of the author is the dominant female. In the author’s childhood she liked to play with boys and she was the leader among them. In her novels, the woman often dominates. Doña Batilde governs her husband in *Humo hacia el sur*. Petaca rules her husband in *María Madre*. Teresita captivates Julián in *Amasijo*, and Enrique is hopelessly lost under the charm of Marcela in *Bienvenido*. This trait is unusual in Latin America, where traditionally the man is the head of the household.

In some of her last novels the author uses the spiral technique. Especially is this true in *Amasijo*, where she
begins in the first chapter when Julián is thirty, and starts again in the second chapter at a time before his birth. The two divisions of the story are carried along side by side until near the middle of the novel when they are joined.

There are several autobiographical elements in her works. Solita as a child of eight in Humo hacia el sur is taught by a private teacher, has a tremendous imagination, likes to read, does not like dolls, but likes pets. This is an exact description of Marta Brunet's childhood. Julián in Agasijo had a sick mother in his childhood, lost his faith, never married, wrote about people hopelessly lost in their troubles, and was very lonely. Again, the events form an exact parallel to the novelist's life.

Marta Brunet's first novel, Montaña adentro, is considered her best work. It is said to compare favorably with the works of the maestros del arte criollo. All critics seem to be of the opinion that it ranks alongside the works of the best male writers of her day. It is an almost perfect composition which describes the land of southern Chile, very accurately portraying the speech of the people, and giving many typical scenes in which not a detail is wasted. The language has been described as prose with a poetical touch.

The value of her novels lies not only in the regional descriptions of southern Chile, but also in the artistic psychological portrayal of her characters. The rich vocabulary and effective use of language contribute much to the prestige of the Latin American novel.

Kathleen Chase considers Marta Brunet one of her country's leading contemporary writers. Another critic writes:

La literatura femenina empieza a existir seriamente en Chile, con iguales derechos que la masculina, el año 1923, cuando aparece Montaña adentro de Marta Brunet. La sorpresa de todos fue grande . . . . Nada semejante se había visto hasta entonces en su género . . . .

She is a pioneer who has smoothed the way for the other women writers in Hispanic America. It is hoped that this thesis has contributed to a better understanding and appreciation of an excellent novelist who deserves more attention and recognition outside her native Chile.

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10 Guzmán, *Las letras chilenas*, p. 11.
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