

*Reflections on a Conversation with Ana María Jiménez,
Wife of Ángel Escobar*

Juliet Lynd

“All of the poems my wife has written”
 “Todos los poemas los ha escrito mi esposa”
 —Ángel Escobar
 “Cuba and the night” (“Cuba y la noche”)

Ana María Jiménez, Anita as she is called, exudes at once fragility and strength, tears and joy, caution and generosity. In July of 2009, she graciously agreed to talk with me about her husband, the celebrated Cuban poet Ángel Escobar who tragically ended his long battle with schizophrenia when he jumped from the fourth-story window of his Havana apartment in 1997. I met up with Anita in Santiago de Chile, in her office at the Institute for Nutrition and Food Technology (Instituto de Nutrición y Tecnología de los Alimentos) at the University of Chile, where she ekes out a living doing secretarial work, a job that is a far cry from her true passion and the subject of her studies, music. It is not the life she would have envisioned as a young leftist militant in the tumultuous days of Salvador Allende’s Chile, nor is it the future she dreamed of after meeting the love of her life, Ángel Escobar, in Cuba, where she was sent by her party as she continued her militancy in exile. It is a job that allows her to remain in Chile, post-exile, with her son; she offers music classes in the evenings at a local community center. Anita’s continued support of leftist causes and her lifetime of concern for the collective well-being is a testament to her strength: two years of abuse in the clandestine political prisons of Augusto Pinochet’s dictatorship did not break her spirit or her commitment. Her story of exile, displacement, and disillusionment is one that marks a generation of Latin Americans, and the life she shared with Ángel is inseparable from the two national histories that connected them. Anita shared her stories with me, and talked of how Ángel had once listened to them as well. Her memories of him are filled with love and understanding, and talking to her one comes away with a new comprehension not only of his life, but also of his poetry. The story of their life together is one of love and compassion, of solidarity and struggle—for their own lives and for a more just world.

Ángel Escobar’s poetry is a fragmented art, one that pushes the reader to forge connections between historical, cultural, and literary references, images of deep personal significance for the poet, and often competing poetic voices. This, along with the poet’s tragic suicide, has led many critics to contemplate Escobar’s struggle with



mental illness. While Anita constantly defers to the reader to interpret her husband's work—she says Ángel would insistently do the same, never revealing his own intentions behind a poem—she is concerned that some critics have overemphasized the evidence of schizophrenia in his work. As she put it to me, “Yo creo que poner énfasis en esto [su esquizofrenia] desmerece su obra, su exquisita sensibilidad y originalidad. Él es un gran poeta, enfermo o no, aunque sus vivencias lo hayan marcado como a todos los mortales” (“I believe that putting emphasis on this [his schizophrenia] takes away from the value of his work, his exquisite sensibility and originality. He is a great poet, sick or not, although his life experiences marked him as they mark all mortals”).¹ In other words, the risk in focusing on Escobar's struggles with mental illness is to miss the poet's ordinary, indeed extraordinary humanity and the very real, very historical experiences of pain and injustice that shaped both his illness and his poetry.

It is a difficult balance for critics to strike. The poet himself, and the Cuban commentators who first articulated his importance, often emphasize trauma, the painful experiences that probably played some role in aggravating his illness, and which are part of the symbolic system through which he addresses the pain of human mortality. Up to a point, it is necessary to acknowledge these issues that the poet and his community have articulated. The stories that mark Ángel's troubled existence begin with his earliest memories of a tragically troubled family life. The horrific trauma of Ángel Escobar's childhood is well known: his stepfather stabbed his mother to death, an experience from which the poet never fully recovered. Anita tells of his conflicted emotions about having left behind his childhood home in the small, impoverished village of Sitiocampo in eastern Cuba where he grew up devastatingly poor. Recalling a painful detail, she remembers that he was scarred by foot injuries from so many years spent without shoes. Indeed, the poet reminds his readers that shoes are in fact a privilege when he quips back to Bertolt Brecht in “Continuidad de los parques”:

“Cambiábamos de país como de zapatos”,
Escribió Bertolt Brecht (1898–1956).

“Al menos, ustedes tenían países,
tenían cómo,
y tenían zapatos para cambiar por algo”,
dijo otro apabullado (1956–1983).

¹Quoted from personal email correspondence with Anita. Translations are my own unless otherwise indicated. Other translations I cite in this essay were done by Kristin Dykstra.



(“Continuity of Parks”: “We traded countries like pairs of shoes,” / wrote Bertolt Brecht (1898–1956). / “At least you guys had countries, / had a way to do it, / and had shoes to trade for something,” / said someone else (1956–1983), overpowered. Trans. Kristin Dykstra)²

Anita also talked to me about shoes: she told me that when she joined her political party, she was not thinking about the tactics and strategies of revolution, but rather the simple, metonymical fact that too many children did not have shoes, and something had to be done.

Speaking about her husband’s relation to revolutionary action thousands of miles away in Cuba, Anita is careful to note that Ángel Escobar rightfully credited the Revolution with allowing him to rise from poverty, giving him the opportunity of a university education and the possibility of becoming a poet. Yet he was the only one of his brothers and sisters to leave Sitiocampo behind, and in many ways he never did.³ Escobar was forever plagued by his memories, not only the violent memory of his mother’s murder and the domestic turmoil of his family life, but also the understanding of the region’s history of slavery and his own ancestral ties to such a brutal institution. Anita says that her husband would point out his triple marginality, but always come back to a proud declaration of his nationality: he was “pobre, negro y poeta... pero cubano” (“poor, black, and a poet... but Cuban”). His simultaneous affirmation of all four categories demands a complex reading of his work in terms of the overlapping critiques of economic and racial injustice, the marginalization of creative professions in modern life, and national identity within Latin America’s longest standing socialist experiment. Indeed, in “Balbuceo de un antepasado” (“Muttering of an ancestor”) even the poetic voice of the slave on the trading block looks upon “Ángel Escobar, / esa carroña del porvenir – / [...] “sin asco, / y con tristeza” (“Ángel Escobar, / that carrion of the future / [...] without disgust, / and with sorrow”).⁴ His poetry was a vehicle for expressing the painful realities he lived, and they are inextricable from

²“Continuidad de los parques” (<http://www.habanaelegante.com/Fall2000/Azotea.htm>). Dykstra’s translation in *Mandorla* 11 (2008): 373.

³See, for instance, “Poblador” (“Settler”), in which the poetic voice reports a violent past and suggests that a university education does not overcome the traumas of poverty, delinquency and abuse. The poem ends: “puede que haya ido / a la Universidad; pero eso no lo mejora, / y como cree que sigue siendo un hombre / y que está vivo, es un canalla, ruin como tú / y como todos” (“it might be that he has gone / to the University; but that doesn’t make it better, / and since he believes that he is still a man / and that he is alive, he’s a bastard, mean like you / and like everyone.”) The full poem can be found at <http://www.habanaelegante.com/Spring2002/Azotea.html>.

⁴Trans. Kristin Dykstra (*Mandorla* 2008).



history's injustices.⁵ "Alienation bleeds through the poems," Kristin Dykstra observes, "the pressures of an overarching, archaic sense of violence." And as she goes on to point out, "Within the contours of that scene, references to more specific forms of violence in modern life take shape: histories of economic and racial conflict, the damnation of rationality over-deployed by states to organize their subjects" (338).

Talking to Anita, it becomes painfully apparent that Ángel Escobar's worldview was formed not only by his childhood in the remnants of Fulgencio Batista's Cuba (he was born in 1957, just two years before Fidel Castro took Havana), his coming of age in Revolutionary Cuba, and his thoughtful if sometimes critical relationship with Castro's regime;⁶ Ángel's love life led him to an intimate understanding of the horrors unleashed by the brutal repression of the left by the military regimes of South America's Southern Cone in the 1970s. His first wife was a Uruguayan exile, and he later married Anita, who had left Chile upon her release from the now infamous clandestine detention center of Villa Grimaldi on the outskirts of Santiago. The stories of torture and abuse to emerge from Chile and Uruguay (and elsewhere in Latin America) reveal at one and

⁵See Francisco Morán's essay in *Mandorla's folio* on Escobar (vol. 11 2008). Morán elaborates on an essay he wrote for *Habana elegante*, analyzing, among other poems, "Paráfrasis sencilla" (translated as "Honest Paraphrase" by Dykstra in the same volume). The text is a reworking of Cuban Independence hero and modernist poet José Martí's *Versos sencillos* XXV and XXX, in which Escobar's poetic *I* assumes the voice of the slave that a young Martí saw hanging from a tree. The boy in the Martí poem vows to dedicate his life to redeeming the crime, and Martí will indeed become a martyred hero of Cuba's nationalism; Escobar's identification with the slave, Morán convincingly argues, reveals the paternalism of Martí's position. As Morán states, Escobar's verses "no constituyen, entonces, un juego meramente literario, sino un desafío y reescritura de la teleología nacional, y por tanto del cumplimiento de la promesa martiana" ("[they are] not merely a literary game, but rather a challenge and a rewriting of the national teleology, and therefore of the fulfillment of Martí's promise"; 388). Anita makes very clear that despite her husband's critiques of the Revolution, he remained true to its ideals. This is clear in his poems that underscore his marginality, for the voice on the verge of obliteration makes manifest the urgency of change. In this regard, too, Morán rightly points out that while Escobar is associated with a group of Cuban intellectuals critical of the Revolution, his pain and solitude take him beyond a political critique and to a position that "reniega de, que no acepta la posibilidad de redención, de redentor [...] más allá de cualquier gesto reparador o de generosidad por sinceros que estos sean" ("does not accept the possibility of redemption [...] beyond any reparative gesture or generosity, as sincere as they may be." He goes on to liken Escobar's poetry to that of Cesar Vallejo in that for both writers "no se trata de una angustia meramente ontológica —si bien hay algo de esto— sino que es el testimonio también, en ambos casos, de las marcas dejadas por la historia en la piel del indígena y del negro" ("it is not about an anguish that is not merely ontological —although there is some of that— but rather one that gives testimony, in both cases, to the marks left by history on the skin of the indigenous and the black"; 384–85).

⁶Anita makes certain to leave no doubt that despite his criticisms, Ángel Escobar would not want his memory associated with any antirevolutionary positions. He was unwaveringly in support of the ideals of the Cuban Revolution and its many triumphs.



the same time the limits—or limitlessness—of human cruelty and the disturbing extent to which the extreme right was willing to go to eliminate revolutionary designs for a more just, more egalitarian world. Furthermore, the references to rightwing violence and South American history in his work weave his expressions of Cuban identity with a broader social consciousness that extends to Latin America and to a profound critique of modernity and the human condition.

When Anita speaks of her initial bond with Ángel, memories of the immediate initial attraction that amounted to love at first sight mingle with the pain through which they bonded. Their relationship was founded on hours and hours of sharing unspeakably hurtful memories. Ángel spoke of his childhood suffering and she told him about the hell she endured as a political prisoner in Chile. “Nos conocimos en el dolor,” she told me (“We met in pain”), echoing Francisco Morán’s characterization of him as an “herida viva” (“living wound”; 385). They understood one another and helped each other to survive their own pasts, so while Ángel’s own life experiences surely fed his battles with mental illness, his love for a woman who had survived unimaginable tortures exposed him to other traumatic realities equally irreconcilable with any hopeful vision of humanity. This knowledge of the world—intimate exposure to human cruelty and the psychological devastation it can wreak—structures the fragments of his poetry: images of pain and irrationality reflect a world that escapes rational comprehension and defies transparent representation. As his dear friend Efraín Rodríguez puts it, “because of this difficulty in believing in the coherence of his person and in the persistence of will and of a certain number of compensatory forces, the greatest breakdown of vision and the absence of all tranquility and harmony with respect to the world around him are produced” (80).⁷

Ángel Escobar’s poetry is inhabited by numerous figures and other references to history, literature, and his own life that layer meanings onto his work. These range from French playwright Antonin Artaud to Cuban painter Nelson Villalobos, from the Bible to Franz Kafka, and countless personages from Cuban, Latin American, and European literary tradition. Yet his references are not just intellectual, they are also personal. Asked if there were any poems that Anita thought she might be in a particular position to elucidate for his readers, she began with “Apuntes hacia una biografía de

⁷“Y por esa dificultad de creer en la coherencia de su persona y en la persistencia de la voluntad y de una determinada cantidad de fuerzas compensatorias, es que se produce la quiebra mayor de visión y la ausencia de toda tranquilidad y concordia con respecto al mundo que lo rodea” (80; translation mine). This essay by Rodríguez is part of an homage to Escobar that he organized, with the collaboration and participation of Anita Jiménez, after the poet’s tragic death (*Ángel Escobar: el escogido. Textos del coloquio homenaje al poeta Ángel Escobar (1957–1997)*). Comp. y Prólogo Efraín Rodríguez Santana. Havana: Ediciones Unión, 2001.



Helene Zarour” (“Notes toward a biography of Helene Zarour”),⁸ which appeared in *Abuso de confianza* (Breach of trust), a collection first published in Santiago after Ángel accompanied his wife back to Chile in 1991.⁹ He had been invited by the Sociedad de Escritores de Chile (Society of Chilean Writers), so the trip, for him, was professional. But it was also deeply personal in that it was an emotional journey for Anita, who was returning to Chile after thirteen years, returning to the place she had been tortured and lost many friends, returning to a country transformed after sixteen years of a brutal dictatorship, returning to a fragile democracy in which the military still wielded the power of threat and in which she still—she recalls sadly—feared for her life. As Dykstra notes in her introduction to her translation of this poem and several others from *Abuso de confianza*, Helene Zarour was a woman who was imprisoned in Villa Grimaldi along with Anita, where both were tortured by the now infamous Romo referenced in the poem.¹⁰ Helene’s story is particularly horrific: she was arrested along with her daughter, and Anita notes matter-of-factly that the three-year-old girl witnessed unspeakable suffering in the notorious detention center. Helene’s daughter was not the only child to be processed through clandestine prisons,¹¹ and when Anita turned to me to be sure I understood the magnitude of what she was saying, she could only respond to my expression of shock by confirming, “Sí, un infierno. Un infierno” (“Yes, a hell. Hell”). The child was eventually given over to the custody of her grandmother, and Helene

⁸Dykstra’s complete English translation of the poem can be found in Brooklyn Rail’s online InTranslation: <http://intranslation.brooklynrail.org/spanish/poems-by-angel-escobar>. All English quotations from this poem are taken from this version.

⁹The compilation was later published in Havana (*Ediciones Unión*) in 1994. Indeed, Escobar wrote many poems from and about Chile. In addition to the collection *Abuso de confianza*, they can be found in *El examen no ha terminado* (1997), and *Cuando salí de la Habana* (1997). Ernesto Guajardo documents the impact of Escobar’s professional experiences in Chile on his poetry in “El poeta como un espejo: Ángel Escobar en Chile,” archived at Chile’s online site for literary criticism, letras.s5.com.

¹⁰Oswaldo Romo was an agent of the DINA (Dirección de Inteligencia Nacional, Pinochet’s secret police force from 1974–1978) and one of Chile’s most notorious torturers. A chilling interview with the Spanish-language channel Univisión puts him on record bragging about his deeds, revealing his disturbing misogyny, and regretting only that more dissidents had not been killed and that the bodies of those that were had not been sufficiently disappeared.

¹¹Chile’s Valech Report counts 102 children taken prisoner when their parents were arrested. Headed by Bishop Sergio Valech, the Commission on Political Prison and Torture was established in 2003 to take account of the thousands of victims who had not counted as such in the Rettig Report, which navigated the treacherous political waters of the Transition by documenting only the cases of political assassination and the disappeared presumed dead in 1991. Ana María Jiménez is now one of the many survivors receiving an extremely modest pension in a government attempt to compensate for the military regime’s legacy of trauma.



was later released as well, but she would never fully recover and she eventually took her own life.¹²

Remembering her *compañera* Helene—her cellmate and comrade in arms—Anita borrows from Gabriela Mistral, saying, meaningfully, that she “would have been a queen.” Mistral’s “Todas íbamos a ser reinas” (“We were all going to be queens”)¹³ is in fact the verse inscribed into the memorial that today stands at the site of what was once Villa Grimaldi, now a memorial park that includes a garden of flower sculptures to remember the women who passed through there, among other constructions to invite reflection on the gruesome history of the space. The verse is also echoed in Escobar’s poem:

Cree creer que oyó
que hubiera sido reina. [...]
un cuchillo.
A la reina, los cascos de caballos sudados.
El resto se ha perdido en las actas policiales.

(She believes she believes she heard / she would have been a queen [...] / A
knife. / For this queen the hooves of sweatsoaked horses. / The rest is lost in
the police records.)

At the end of the poem, Escobar finds another connection to Latin American literary history in Helene’s suicide: as the woman in the poem chants and drowns, the verses recall the Argentine poet Alfonsina Storni, who took her own life by throwing herself into the ocean or, as the popular song “Alfonsina y el mar” (“Alfonsina and the Sea”) has it, by walking out to sea.¹⁴ Escobar writes:

¹²Rodriguez painfully observes that suicide is a horrifically prescient theme in Escobar’s later work. He states, “el poeta se convierte, en muchos casos, en una especie de espectador lúcido de sus males, y aunque los repele, nada puede hacer con respecto a ellos y entonces especula intensamente acerca de los mismos. Suicidio y muerte se hacen alusiones permanentes” (“the poet becomes, in many cases, a kind of lucid spectator of his troubles, and although he rejects them, he can do nothing about them and thus speculates about them intensely. Suicide and death become permanent allusions”; op. cit. 82). Anita understandably worries that the event of her husband’s suicide will overshadow the memory of his work; despite this tragic end, Ángel also loved life fiercely.

¹³From *Tala* (1938).

¹⁴Storni killed herself in 1938, ending her battles with cancer and with solitude. The song was written by Ariel Ramírez and Félix Luna and has been performed by many famous singers, including Mercedes Sosa and Cristina Branco. Anita, remembering her friend, sang a few lines to me: “Y te vas hacia allá/ Como en sueños / Dormida Alfonsina / Vestida de mar” (“And you go away / Like in dreams / Asleep Alfonsina / Dressed in the sea”).



Al pie; a las manos flácidas; al pecho el agua.
Y canta. El agua. El agua. Y canta. El borboriteo—
trizas del mundo—, el leve reclamar un afecto.

(Very close by; her hands flaccid; water up to her chest. / And she chants.
The water. The water. She chants. The rumbling— / shreds of world—, a faint
claim on affection.)

The “shreds of world” to be found in the Helene Zarour text capture the pain of a life shattered by violence, by the “smashing of a skull against the wall” that begins the poem.¹⁵ Linking the poetic representation of Zarour to the real person who suffered in prison along with the poet’s wife lends testimonial horror to the experience of the poem; a real woman had her head smashed into a wall, a real woman was trampled. That this woman accompanied the poet’s wife in their political struggles and their deeply unjust punishment, that these abuses happened to the love of his life as well, multiplies the shocking, disturbing, devastating impact of the poem.

Yet beyond the tension between reality and representation, between fiction and history called into play, the poem complicates the notion of insanity through the figure of Zarour. He does not mention himself in the poem, and again, Anita points out the risks of seeking out evidence of schizophrenia in his work or overemphasizing his struggle with the disease throughout his life. Yet as she and I talked of the pain and complexity of mental illness—the entanglement of physical, psychological, and social causes that elude any simple explanation—I am reminded of how poetic fragmentation can allude to the unrepresentability of suffering, both physical and emotional. And “Apuntos hacia una biografía de Helene Zarour” reminds the reader that history itself can push a subject over the edge. This is not to suggest any comparison between Escobar and Zarour, but rather, on the contrary, to note how the poet’s social critiques, however fragmented, are indeed quite lucid. The movement of the poetic voice would seem a deliberate manipulation to capture the incoherence, a resistance to accept the irrational on rational terms. The poet, mentally ill or not, reflects a world that is indeed irrational. And as Rodriguez notes, “Para él la existencia es poesía y la poesía es existencia” (“For him, existence is poetry and poetry is existence”; 6).

Later in our conversation, Anita opens Escobar’s *Poesía completa* (*Collected Poems*) to another poem, this one from *El examen no ha terminado* (*The examination has not ended*). Written in a very different register from “Apuntes hacia una biografía de Helene Zarour,” “Un poco de paciencia” (“A little bit of patience”) is about Anita’s

¹⁵“Creía en las manos y en la boca, en los eventos / que al espejo remiten al cruzado / antes de que le astillen el cráneo contra el muro” (She used to believe in her hands and in her mouth, in the events / they transfer to the mirror and the crusader / before any smashing of the skull against a wall.)



son and the pain of exile. It is based on an anecdote about her father—who also left Chile—telling her son that back home in their native country one could reach out one’s hand and touch the moon. Upon their return, Anita’s son then had to reconcile his own experiences of his homeland with the stories he had heard from his grandfather. The poem reads:

Un poco de paciencia

Para Juan Carlos Maire

Al hijo de un Jorge, su abuelo por parte
maternal que recorrió todos los mares, todos
los continentes, y ahora recorre la muerte,
ese otro mapa, le dijo que en su país,
un sur donde comulgan la cordillera y el desierto,
el puerto que bien podría ser un verso,
una mujer, y diez o doce y hasta veinte supersticiones,
le dijo—te repito en mi angustia—que allí,
en su país, patria, nación, alma o desamparo,
o fuego, se podía tocar la luna con la mano.
Ahora ese niño está bajo la luna aquella, está
donde no está su abuelo. La lejanía, el frío
ahora le hacen preguntarle a la madre,
de parte de la omisión que aumenta el desconsuelo,
si es que él mentía en el exilio, lejos. Ella, ella
acerca su cara, calla; pero uno ve lo que dice su silencio:
la nostalgia, si no corrige la realidad, la inventa.

(To the son of a Jorge, his grandfather on his / mother’s side who traversed
all the seas, all / the continents, and now traverses death, / that other map,
he told him that in his country, / a south where the mountains and desert take
communion, / the port that could just as well be a verse, / a woman, and ten
or twelve and up to twenty superstitions, / he told him—I repeat to you in my
anguish—that there, / in his country, fatherland, nation, soul or abandonment,
/ or fire, you could touch the moon with your hand. / Now this child is under
that moon, he is / where his grandfather is not. The distance, the cold / now
make him ask his mother, / on the side of omission that augments the grief, /
if it’s that he was telling lies in exile, far away. She, she / brings her face closer,
quiet; but one sees what her silence says: / nostalgia, if it does not correct
reality, invents it.)

The poet asserts a first-person presence only once, but by setting off the “te repito en mi angustia” in the middle of the poem, the emotional pain is multiplied exponentially: the poetic voice expresses the grandfather’s nostalgia, the son’s disillusionment, the mother’s sadness, and his own sense of displacement. Anita recalls how touched her husband was by this anecdote and she in turn is moved by a poem that so poignantly captures the



nostalgia of exile and the innocence of the child, of her child. Ángel would also write poetry about his own sense of displacement away from Cuba, his own nostalgia for the Caribbean, and his own sense of distance from postdictatorship Chilean society, a critical perspective shared by his wife.

Those were the first two poems that came to mind for Anita when asked to share those that most touched her and of which she felt most qualified to comment on the referents. Yet she wished to leave me with a final memory of her husband: a man who loved deeply and laughed heartily, a man who would ask her to whistle as she was coming down the street on her way home so as to shorten the length of her absence, a man who would bring her flowers and who was kind and romantic. Surely one glimpses this lighter spirit in Escobar's wittier verses, those that play on words, invent nonsense names, and poke fun of the literary establishment. Anita is pleased to note that Ángel Escobar is revered by a new generation of young poets in Cuba and that they render tribute to him on his birthday, rather than on the occasion of his death. This does indeed seem the right memory to end on, for although Ángel lost his battle with schizophrenia on the day he made, as his friend, doctor, and fellow poet Pedro Márques de Armas calls it, that "gran salto hacia afuera" ("great leap outward")¹⁶ his poetry reveals a sensitivity toward the suffering of others founded in love. Anita remembers how her husband would enter an altered state, plunge himself into solitude for days, and then emerge with a complete work nearly ready for publication. Perhaps his life suggests that the deepest mental solitude is necessary in order to write the greatest gestures toward understanding those contradictions of violence and love that define our collective humanity.

The privilege of speaking with Anita about her husband is to glimpse not only lives marked by pain and injustice, but by love and a common commitment to a collective human struggle for a better world. Anita's militancy and Ángel's defense of the Cuban Revolution—she is very clear that despite any misgivings or intellectual critique, her husband remained faithful to the Revolutionary project and committed to its ideals—intertwine two intensely dramatic national histories in Latin America's bloody recent past. Her husband is gone and her own life now steeped in the memory of utopian dreams and the struggles to get by in post-dictatorship, neoliberal Chile. Yet speaking to her, she still comes back to a core of love and compassion that anchors their love, his poetry and their life's work. They not only grounded their relationship in their memories of pain and their solid commitment to creating a more just world, they bonded over their shared passions for poetry and music. She taught him play the guitar and they would put his poems to music—and have a lot of fun doing it, she recalls. She would play the piano for him when he was depressed and they talked of collaborating

¹⁶See Márques's essay ("El gran salto hacia afuera") in Spanish in *El escogido* (op. cit.); translation into English by Kristin Dykstra appears in *Jacket* 38 (late 2009): <http://jacketmagazine.com/38/escobar-about.shtml>.



on a volume of poetry, a project left unfinished. Anita explains to me that to speak of their life together (“nuestra vida”) requires a double understanding of “our”: their personal life shared as a couple and their life as part of something greater: “un conjunto de hombres y mujeres que fuimos parte de la Resistencia en Latinoamérica y queremos siempre preservar la memoria” (“we were a whole group of men and women who were part of the Resistance in Latin America and who wish to always preserve that memory”).¹⁷ Anita now offers music classes for children in the evenings through a local community organization, thereby in her own way carrying on the torch of hope that little by little a better world will be possible. And Ángel’s poetry continues to offer his readers a glimpse of the world as seen through the eyes of someone deeply sensitive to the profound incoherence of its injustices.



Anita Jiménez

¹⁷From personal correspondence with Anita.

