

Between Love and Hate

On November 5, 1985, a comando from the "M-19" guerrilla group stormed and took possession of the Palace of Justice in Bogota, Colombia. This group of people was pressuring the government of Belisario Betancur for not complying to accords signed with the guerrillas. They had demanded the publication of a manifesto of peace as well as the acts of the official commission of verification of the treaty. The guerrilla group also asked that the negotiations of the Colombian Government with the International Monetary Fund be made known. The Government replied with a siege that lasted more than 29 hours. This was broken when the army stormed the Palace, firing arms and shedding blood without worrying about the safety of the magistrates (including the head of the Supreme Court, Alfonso Reyes Echandia) who were being held as hostages. Among the dead was Afonso Jacquim, whose body was never found. His extraordinary militancy was the inspiration used by Colombian writer Ana Maria Jaramillo, for the main character in her first novel: **Las Horas Secretas** (The Secret Hours).

If, as Julia Kristeva says, "all stories end up by talking about love", this book is no exception. Although the scenario is a country dominated by violence and political confusion, the theme is one of passionate love that, in the act of trying to reach its own condition, must find a balance between love and hate. The characters lack names but can be easily placed within Latin American reality. The female

protagonist is an office worker without a past or present who falls in love at the drop of a hat with the romantic and wild guerrilla who divides his time between women and the political struggle.

Ana Maria Jaramillo tells her story with a flowing naturalness of someone who is talking about everyday happenings. Her direct and soothing tone places her apart from the glorification that comes out of pamphlets. The intensity of the prose saves her from involuntary parody. In this way she simplifies a theme so well known that it is difficult to deal with without becoming extremely solemn or grandiloquent. She also faithfully portrays certain idiomatic twists of the Caribbean area. Ana Maria Jaramillo is able to capture certain traits of a spirited guerrilla group with very original theoretical conceptions that impell the reader to make a deeper analysis of this group. The intention of the

author is not so much to dissect an organism, but to represent it through an unforgettable character. Books such as **Historia de una Traicion** (A Story of Treason) by Laura Restrepo or **Las Guerras de la Paz** (The Wars of Peace) by Olga Behar cover the same historical event (the accords for the pacification of the guerrilla movement and the takeover of the Palace of Justice) from a journalistic point of view that tries to clarify what actually happened. **Las Horas Secretas** uses the intimate story of a relationship threatened by a life situation to talk about Colombia's recent history.

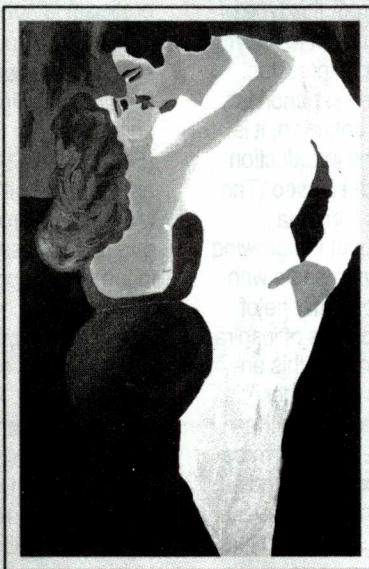
Such writers as Julio Cortazar in the **Libro de Manuel** (The book of Manuel) or Manuel Puig in **El Beso de la Mujer Araña** (The Kiss of the Spider Woman) may well have come close to describing the Latin American guerrilla movement. But they have not done it from a feminist point of view

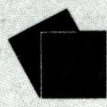
and have barely touched on the sentimental aspect of the life of militant leaders and the anguish that permeates their relationships as couples. In her short novel, Ana Maria Jaramillo represents a guerrilla fighter full of defects: ambitious, boisterous, deceptive and contradictory even in his most sincere convictions. But he is deeply human, seen through the eyes of the woman who loved him. She has no other choice but that of resignation or rebellion. She chooses to speak and her story is changed into an act of rebellion. "His scream will have to be heard and many will be frightened: the wind will be the wandering and brave lullaby that carries his breath." His death has more weight than that of others. The only way to lift this weight from our shoulders is to transform it into words that spring forth in incessant and unruly spirits until they find their natural course in memory.

Las Horas Secretas is not a book of testimonies nor does it have ideological bases or propose strategies for guerrilla groups to seize power. It does, however, coincide with the simple proposal, a product of common sense, that "M-19's" commander, Alvarao Fayad used to say. "If our continent writes the way it writes, if it sings and dances as it does, why can't it socially organize itself as it is?" In the 73 pages and 10 drawings (vignettes by Juan José Gurrola) this novel shows us an original search. It is a new way of making politics - with the joy of one who dances, the strength of one who sings and the fury and intensity of one who loves above all other things.

Las Horas Secretas
(The Secret Hours)
Ana María Jaramillo
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Ana María Jaramillo Las horas secretas



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