

Editors' Note

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This year, 2020 marks the centennial year of Afro-Colombian writer Manuel Zapata Olivella's birth in Santa Cruz of Lorica, Córdoba on March 17, 1920. Zapata Olivella is the quintessential African Diaspora writer who fought against the violence, oppression, and invisibility of African descendants in the diaspora as referenced in his epic saga, *Changó, el gran putas* (1983), and especially in Colombia, a country with a long history of invisibility of its black descendants on the Pacific Coast. Zapata Olivella's *lucha* echoes that not only of the past, but reverberates in the present as we deal with the continued aftermath of the diasporic enslavement of African descendants and its global legacy. It is no coincidence that 2020 is also the year of the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement in the wake of the continued historic oppression of black lives globally. Black Lives Matters not only protests the contemporary extra-judicial killing of Black men and women at the hands of police and white vigilantes in the United States, but also the diasporic ones in the global south such as João Pedro Matos Pinto (Brazil), Giovanni López (México), and Anderson Arboleda (Colombia), to name a few.

Founded in 2013 in response to the acquittal of Trayvon Martin's murderer, Black Lives Matter has become a global hashtag (#BlackLivesMatter) to combat the systemic abuse of black citizens along with racism, discrimination, and social injustice. The movement resurfaced as a result of the unjust killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery in 2020. In many ways, this issue is also a tribute to remember the victimization, discrimination, and oppression of Black bodies globally. These themes of systemic oppression will be dominant at the next ALARA conference, which was postponed to August 2021 due to the health and safety concerns caused by the COVID-19 global pandemic. Next year will be the celebration of another historic event, dear to many who have been a part of ALARA since its founding, the 25th anniversary of the first ALARA conference that began in 1996 by Marvin A. Lewis and Lawrence Prescott and a host of others. At ALARA 2021, we will continue to celebrate the legacy of Manuel Zapata Olivella and other Afro-Latin American literary trailblazers who make our work possible.

This issue pays homage to Manuel Zapata Olivella and commences with three literary tributes to the author: "Homenaje a Manuel Zapata Olivella" by Yvonne Captain

Hidalgo; "La grandeza del pensamiento de Manuel Zapata Olivella" by William Mina Aragón; and "Manuel Zapata Olivella: de vagabundo a combatiente por la libertad y la igualdad en la afrodiáspora" by George Palacios. Each of these literary critics has published extensively on Afro-Colombia and the works of Zapata Olivella. Captain Hidalgo's *The Culture of Fiction in the Works of Manuel Zapata Olivella* (University of Missouri Press, 1993) "analyzes the work of contemporary Colombian novelist Olivella, focusing on his continuing humanization of the socially or economically dispossessed as his style and ideology evolved from 1947 to the 1980s." William Mina Aragón is a celebrated national and international literary critic of African Diaspora and Afro-Colombian literature and culture having penned critiques such as *La imaginación creadora afrodiaspórica* (Universidad del Cauca 2014) and *Manuel Zapata Olivella: Humanista Afrodiaspórico* (Universidad del Cauca 2014), to name a few. George Palacios is author of the forthcoming and much anticipated manuscript, *Manuel Zapata Olivella (1920-2004) pensador político, radical y hereje de la diáspora africana en las Américas* (Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana).

PALARA 24 also includes reprinted articles from previous PALARA issues that aimed to continue the legacy of Zapata Olivella's works. They include "Of Cocks and Boxers: [Black] Masculinity and National Belonging in Manuel Zapata Olivella's *Chambacú, corral de negros*" (2009) by Ligia S. Aldana, "La creación de una cultura nacional negra en *Nochebuena negra* de Juan Pablo Sojo y en *Chambacú, corral de negros* de Manuel Zapata Olivella" (2001) by Antonio D. Tillis, and two articles by author Manuel Zapata Olivella, published respectively in 1998 and 2000, "Hemingway, el cazador de la muerte: Kenya en la novela de un afrocolombiano" and "Omnipresencia Africana en la civilización universal." These articles represent a continuation of the foundational literary critical pieces on author Manuel Zapata Olivella that can only be found in PALARA.

The issue culminates with original articles and a book review that span the Spanish-speaking African diaspora: Spain, Cuba, Colombia, and Perú. Miguel A. Valerio's "Black Dancers and Musicians Performing Afro-Christian Identity in Early Modern Spain and Portugal", argues that

“afrodescendants adapted their African cosmologies and festive customs in the diaspora, rather than totally assimilate to Iberian culture.” Elizabeth Vargas’ “A Post-Occidental Ontology of Desire and Subjective Return in Gregorio Martínez’s *Crónica de músicos y diablos*” (1991) provides a reading of the late afro-Peruvian author Gregorio Martínez’s relatively unknown work *Crónica de músicos y diablos*. In her reading of *Crónica*, Vargas “reconsiders the surviving colonial co-relation between race and labor, which in the novel promotes on-going divisions between subjective and material existence.”

Paulette Ramsay’s “Constructions of Cultural Identity in the Poetry of the Afro-Colombian Ángela Castro Garcés’ *Ramillete pacífico*” (2013) argues that Ángela Castro Garcés “explores her history and various aspects of her distinctive cultural heritage to firmly construct and preserve what she embraces as her own unique cultural identity.”

Darrelstan Ferguson’s reading of *Plácido* in “Mestizaje/ Hybridity (Mesti-briduity) as Struggle, Contest and Subversion in *Plácido* (1982) by Gerardo Fullea León” returns the reader to the Hispanic Caribbean and provides an additional literary critique of the play (*Plácido*) which reconstructs the life and death of poet Gabriel de la Concepción del Valdés. Further, Ferguson illustrates that “Plácido’s execution *La Escalera*, was a most perverse show of white hegemony—a testament to the toxicity of the colonial hybrid space.”

Brandon Blakeslee’s review of Erika Denise Edwards’ *Hiding in Plain Sight: Black Women, the Law, and the Making*

of a White Argentine Republic reveals “that it is not that black Argentinians passively disappeared but rather they actively sought to and eventually did attain whiteness” and that “African descendants ‘ascended’ to whiteness by forming partnerships with civic and ecclesiastical authorities.”

The editors would like to welcome our new managing editor, Tyra Lewis, who has been a longstanding member of ALARA since 2004. Lewis received a Bachelor of Arts in English Literature and minor in Black Studies from Boston College and a Master of Arts in Spanish and Spanish American literature from the University of Missouri. As managing editor, Ms. Lewis will assist the editors with copyediting, receipt of articles, and other managerial tasks to ensure a timely publication of the digitized journal. Welcome to the team Tyra!

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