

como en aproximaciones comparativas entre África y Latinoamérica.

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WILLIAM MINA ARAGÓN, ED. *Manuel Zapata Olivella. Un legado intercultural: Perspectiva intelectual, literaria y política de un afrocolombiano cosmopolita*. Bogotá: Ediciones Desde Abajo, 2017. 580 pp.

Dr. William Mina Aragón has edited a hefty tome related to the legacy of Manuel Zapata Olivella (1920-2004). If ever there were a major unsung talent, Zapata is that person, and his works are deserving of major, extended analysis. Precisely, a major goal of the book is to recognize Zapata's intellectual and artistic contribution to world knowledge. In this sense, the collection of essays succeeds.

There is something for everybody within the 580 pages that comprise the volume. The Zapata novice seeking to gain a first glimpse of both the public and private man can learn about his thoughts, his writings, some aspects of his personal life as well as the scholarship that precedes the current book under review. The scholar steeped in the majority of his writings and who was fortunate to know him personally can also learn from the book because some of the chapters move the dialogue about him further along. For example, as someone who is intimately familiar with his works, I was very appreciative of the chapters by Harold Mosquera Rivas and Cristina Rodríguez Cabral that taught me more about the historical figure Manuel Saturio Valencia Mena. This historic figure served as the basis for the novel *El fusilamiento del diablo* – one of Zapata's last writings before his death – and the essays about Saturio aid in providing depth to the Afro-Colombian's treatment of such an ignored historical figure.

There are thirty-five entries in the book, including dedicatory poems, the introduction and essays. As promised in the lengthy title, the subjects of the essays include his intellectual, cultural, and political import as a man of letters and as an activist. Throughout the book one finds chapters insisting on his parity with and sometimes his status as a precursor to other great thinkers and writers, especially as they pertain to the African Diaspora. Crucial to any book that purports to write about literary talents, there is an examination of his artistic style as well as the thematic arc of his literary works. Indeed, the lengthiest segment of them all is the section "Novela, sociedad y poder" ("Novel, society, and power") in which several of his novels receive treatment – both as works of art in their own right and as societal commentary. Not surprisingly, the lion's share of the

chapters focus on his narrative masterpiece *Changó, el gran putas*. This is true regardless of which section of the book is treated. From art form to issues of human rights, part of the genius of the novel is its ability to engage on so many levels.

What comes next? Now that this important study is in print, where do we – as scholars of the African Diaspora – go from here? Scholarship on Zapata need not be limited to the Diaspora. Nevertheless, were it not for research focusing on such, the absence about his worth within his own country, would render this great man of letters no more than a footnote in the annals of Colombian history. Hence, Diaspora Studies is in a unique position to bring him to ever-wider audiences. Originally, the Afro-Colombian's works were known within Afro-Hispanic, later Afro-Latin Studies. Now that the idea of Diaspora Studies is becoming firmly rooted, when one thinks of the Afro-Latin component of the African Diaspora, it is not possible to conduct serious research without knowing about him. To that end, Rodríguez Cabral poses important questions for the scholarly world: why is the vast body of work by Manuel Zapata Olivella excluded from the canon of great writers of Latin America – most notably the “boom” writers that brought such acclaim to the region? Most importantly, she asks what we as professors are doing to end such exclusion and injustice. Fortunately, Rodríguez Cabral provides some of the answers in concrete details, suggesting how one can read Zapata's works along with some of the more canonized works of Latin American literature. More of the solution lies in the work that scholars like Darío Henao Restrepo conducted here in his archaeological dig of scholarship, zeroing in on the specific catalyst that was U.S. literary criticism on Zapata, but inching the dialogue further by analyzing the Afro-Colombian's works and thoughts alongside those of other Diaspora greats. Might the next step be a push in more universities in Latin America, including a drive for a curriculum on Africa and its Diaspora? Assigning credit where it is due, the Colombian government and its institutions of higher learning are part of the push to move the dialogue on Afro-Colombia forward, including on Manuel Zapata Olivella. Now, with his works more readily accessible, it is a natural development for Zapata to enter the classroom – both within his country and throughout Latin America, indeed the world. Students and their professors, regardless of their ethnic self-identity need to know about the scholarly discipline of the African Diaspora, and Manuel Zapata Olivella would be central in that dialogue. Will we make that happen?

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