Vanessa K. Valdés, *Diasporic Blackness: The Life and Times of Arturo Alfonso Schomburg*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2017. xi + 190 pp. (Cloth US\$80.00)

Diasporic Blackness is a noteworthy addition to the growing body of scholarship on Arturo Alfonso “Arthur” Schomburg, the Afro-Latino bibliographer, historian, writer, and activist. This figure has attracted significant attention due in part to provocative ambiguities in racial and ethnic identification. Early scholarship on Schomburg contended that he became irreversibly aware of his black subjecthood upon being interpellated as a black racial subaltern in the United States, and this led him to gradually *dis*-identify as a Puerto Rican and as a Latino. Later, other scholars countered this claim by highlighting the ways in which Schomburg maintained an interest in Latinx history, culture, and politics throughout his life.

Vanessa Valdés builds on the prior works that sought to disprove the notion that Schomburg gradually shed his Hispanophone identity. The book’s main contribution lies in its reappraisal of Schomburg as a pioneer of Afro-Latinidad as an identity and as a politics. It does this through a longer and more detailed reexamination of the available evidence. The author convincingly demonstrates that rather than prioritizing black nationalism or internationalism above all else, Schomburg persevered in seeking ways of reconciling black diasporic belonging with Latinx pan-ethnic identification and solidarity. One unique aspect of the work is the way Valdés scrutinizes not only Schomburg’s writings but also his endeavors as a collector, archivist, orator, masonic leader, and public figure. The book’s first chapter establishes the depth of influence that several liberal activist intellectuals from the Hispanophone Caribbean had on him. Valdés persuasively demonstrates that the famed black bibliophile drew important lessons from these champions of Latin Caribbean liberalism and anticolonialism. Perhaps Chapter 1 could have contained a more balanced exploration of how and why Schomburg distanced himself from the projects espoused by these figures as he simultaneously became disillusioned with how they premised national harmony on empty, paternalistic celebrations of racial fraternity that foreclosed black anti-racism. Valdés marks this distinction (for example on p. 48), but the proportion of text devoted to unpacking it is minor compared to the content that highlights the positive impact these figures—who were mostly white—had on Schomburg. An exception to this is the section on Rafael Serra, which reflects on some of the lessons that Schomburg may have gleaned from his black Cuban comrade’s troubled attempts at reconciling black Cuban antiracism with Cuban nationalism.

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The book's second chapter provides an instructive reading of Schomburg's role as a "race man" in his various undertakings as a leader and key member of a black masonic lodge, and of several black American scholarly organizations. Chapter 3 examines some of Schomburg's biographical sketches of key black figures from the Spanish-speaking world that were probably unknown to the black American intelligentsia of that time. In both of these chapters, Valdés foregrounds the subtle ways in which Schomburg sought to broaden black Americans' perspective of the black diaspora's history and culture in a way that incorporated non-Anglophone black subjects, particularly from the Hispanophone world. Chapter 4 provides additional evidence of Schomburg's efforts toward expanding the public's global understanding of black history, culture, and politics by way of his role as a collector and archivist. Finally, Chapter 5 offers a visual analysis of Schomburg's performance of self in the few photographs that we have of him. Valdés postulates that his "furtive" gaze—which almost never looks directly at the camera—is representative of his "illegibility" as a "deliberate act" (p. 131).

Although *Diasporic Blackness* is an enlightening contribution, it also raises important questions that deserve further unraveling. First, if Schomburg never disavowed his Latinidad, what do we make of the fact that he seemed to be largely silent on the progression of U.S. colonialism/imperialism in the Hispanic Caribbean region? Did he draw connections between U.S. imperialism and U.S. anti-black racism like some of the black Puerto Rican and Cuban intellectuals writing from their respective islands whose careers he tracked? Does the fact that he rarely weighed in on Puerto Rico's colonial condition post-1898—or even Cuba's neocolonialism under the Platt Amendment—complicate the book's central premise? In the last period of his life, was Schomburg only interested in the history and cultural contributions of black Latinxs, or did he connect with their contemporaneous struggles? Valdés's book further elucidates some of the lessons that we can learn about Afro-Latinidad from Schomburg's life and work. However, generative debates about how to read his complex archive—and more broadly, how to further theorize Afro-Latinidad—will necessarily continue.

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