Ce programme international est mené par une équipe franco-brésilienne de chercheurs en humanités, sciences sociales, arts et littérature. Il vise à la réalisation d'une plateforme numérique d'histoire culturelle transatlantique, éditée en quatre langues, pour analyser les dynamiques de l'espace atlantique et comprendre son rôle dans le processus de mondialisation contemporain. À travers une série d'essais consacrés aux relations culturelles entre l'Europe, l'Afrique et les Amériques, il met en œuvre une histoire connectée de l'espace atlantique depuis le XVIIIe siècle.

Arturo Alfonso Schomburg

Viviana Gelado - Fluminense Federal University

- Afrique - Caraïbes - Amérique du Nord
- La consolidation des cultures de masse

Born in Cangrejos, Puerto Rico, in 1874, Schomburg became close to the group of studies coordinated by the liberal thinker José Julián Acosta. The leitmotiv of the group's discussions was “Negros have no History”.

According to David Armitage, Atlantic history is, like the ocean which gives it a name, a fluid territory, in continuous movement and lacking frontiers.[1] This fluidity is also projected, according to him, on a temporal framework. Having emerged as a defined field of study at the end of the twentieth century, its ambit of reference was initially that of the first modernity (c. 1492-1815), before the age of revolutions. However, in formulating its conceptions, this subfield assumed diverse modalities - Circum-Atlantic (transnational), Cis-Atlantic (national or regional) and Trans-Atlantic (international) -, as well as expanding the temporal framework of reference of its objects to beyond that first modernity. In parallel, also postulated, amongst other problems, was its 'genealogy' - related to the context of the Cold War and the centrality that the Atlantic played in the concept of a "Western civilization [...] owed more to NATO than it did to Plato," as well as its 'anatomy' - from which are excluded "the history of the slave trade and slavery, and of Africa, Africans, and of race more generally [...]"[2]

Seen in this way, the Atlantic appears as a problematic space well suited to the consideration of the trajectory of an Afro-diasporic man in later modernity, a migrant in the United States who proposed to form a collection on the basis of which the historiographic report not only could incorporate spaces, 'anatomies,' and cultures left aside by the canonic historiography (before the emergence of Atlantic history); but also to promote the constitution of transatlantic networks which even today allow the frontiers on which the Afro-diasporic collectives were conceived to be seen as problematic, opposing the North to the South Atlantic: initially, to Latin America and later, to Africa.

We propose below a transatlantic history which, starting from one of the sides of this North Atlantic, is initially configured as a Cis-Atlantic history which is transformed, thanks to the migration on an individual, Arturo Alfonso Schomburg, into a Circum-Atlantic history which aims, through the agency of collection (especially of bibliographic sources), to cooperate in the design of a truly international Afro-diasporic historiography - promoting comparative work, in conditions of equality with the already established reports - of the spaces and subjects left aside by them.

Arturo Alfonso Schomburg by James Latimer Allen in the 1920s

Source : Schomburg Center, NYPL

Migrations

Arturo Alfonso Schomburg was born in San Juan in Puerto Rico, on 24 January 1874, a year after the abolition of slavery on the island. According to the baptism records, registered in the parish of St Francis of Assis, he was the son of María Josefa Schomburg and grandson of Susana Schomburg; the former, according to her son, had been born free in 1837, in St. Croix, at the time still part of the Danish Antilles (now the Virgin Islands). Arturo Alfonso spent his childhood in Cangrejos, a neighborhood historically characterized as a place of settlement for *quilombola* populations and migrants, coming from Caribbean archipelagoes, as well as the countryside of Puerto Rico, later incorporated to the metropolitan area of San Juan. In this place of circulation and contact for various Caribbean communities, his first language was Spanish. His basic education was in San Juan and he spent part of his adolescence of Virgin Islands. Back in Puerto Rico, he worked in the tobacco industry and was a disciple of José Julián Acosta in the 'Instituto de Segunda Enseñanza.'

In 1891 he migrated to New York. There he worked as an administrative employee (initially in an advocacy office and then in a security company, in the area of Wall Street) and went to English classes in the Central Evening High School (in which Martí taught Spanish). He became part of the Puerto Rico Section of the Cuban Revolutionary Party, formed of intellectuals and workers, especially typographers and tobacco workers, with the propose of the independence of the final Spanish colonies in the Americas. He was secretary of the *Las dos Antillas club*, presided by Martí and like the PRC, formed by workers, intellectuals, exiles, and emigres from the Hispanic Caribbean (Schomburg Papers; Schomburg, 1931 and 1933).[3]

From this time dates Schomburg's discomfort in relation to *criollista* nationalism - the 'cordial' version of the ideologies of *mestiçagem* and racial whitening, which would progressively gain support in Latin America between the end of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth - and the obsolete semantic value of the

categories in use which he would deal with in the short essay "Creole/Criollo" in 1927.[4]

48 OPPORTUNITY FEBRUARY, 1933

My Trip to Cuba in Quest of Negro Books

By ARTHUR A. SCHOMBURG

DIEGO COLON, the son of the famous navigator known to us as Columbus, was governor of Hispaniola when he appointed Captain Diego Velasquez in 1511 to embark forthwith an expedition to colonize the island of Juana, now known as Cuba. With him on the same mission was Father Bartolome de Las Casas, Hernan Cortez and some three hundred men. These intrepid men landed not far from Santiago de Cuba, where during the year 1521 the first slaves were introduced. However, Africans were introduced with the first expedition. These were those who knew the Spanish language and had been born and reared in the province of Andalucia, especially from the cities of Sevilla and Cadiz where to this day the street known as "Cuesta de Negros" still survives.

The art and literature of the Negro in the new world is not confined to the United States as Mr. Schomburg, the distinguished bibliophile demonstrates.
—The Editor.

Cuba is endeared to the memory of Estevanico the guide that will be remembered as the real discoverer of the Seven Cities of Cibola, in what is now known as Arizona. Estevanico was born in Amazor, North Africa, lived in Spain and thence was taken to Cuba where we find him on the Florida expedition that met disaster with only four saved. His next enterprise was with Marcos de Niza the missionary friar, whose exploits have been lucidly explained by Captain Jaramilo. Herman Cortez the conqueror of the Aztecs had quite a number of Negroes in his military expedition. One of the curious incidents of this memorable conquest is the fact that Juan Garirdo, a Negro was the first who planted and harvested wheat in America and Juan Cortez another Negro, a comic actor or clown had come to Mexico from Cuba, making them unique characters in that early epoch.

The first entry of slaves in Cuba can be shown by documents in the Archives of the Indies, subsequent reports on African slaves covers a vast period of exceedingly interesting data of their enormous service rendered to the development of the Americas during discovery and colonization.

Doctor Juan Jerez Villarreal, the historian member of the Club Atenas, is happy in reflective eloquence, when in the president's beautiful office he speaks of Manuel Velasquez, colored, a graduate from the University of Alcala de Henares, Spain, founded by Cardenal Ximenes who held adverse views to Las Casas on the question of slavery. Velasquez was a personal friend of Charles V. to whom he frequently wrote from Santiago de Cuba protesting against the treatment to which the natives had to submit. He is attributed with having opened the first school in the island. Other schools were opened by Lorenzo Mendez and Mariano Moya, lieutenants in the battalion of colored men of Habana. There was also a friar, a mulatto namel Tellez, who taught Latin in the convent of the Dominican order. The first Negro librarian was born at Bayamo in 1758. He was Manuel Socorro Rodriguez and held the office at Santa Fe de Bogota, in Central America. The earliest Negro women doing something unusual in the field of semi-professional activity are Teodora and Micaela Gines, bandolin players in the orchestra that rendered music in the churches of Santiago de Cuba during the year 1580.

The representative colored men of Habana have come together in a very laudable undertaking, the establishment of a club called Atenas. The Cuban government has given paternal solicitude to this establishment. A survey of the membership roll shows many men in governmental affairs. Among these is found the Honorable Juan Gualberto Gomez, the grand old man of Cuba, member of the Spanish Abolition Society now in his eighty-third year, actively engaged in writing his memoirs. Not so long ago President Machado placed on his breast the most cherished, the highest decoration—Carlos Manuel de Cespedes—the Republic can bestow on her sons. The services rendered by this patriot are beyond words for me to give my meed of praise. Under the notorious Spanish regime he was twice banished to imprisonment in those infamous African penal institutions for his rebellious activities in behalf of his country.

The Club Atenas publishes an official bul-

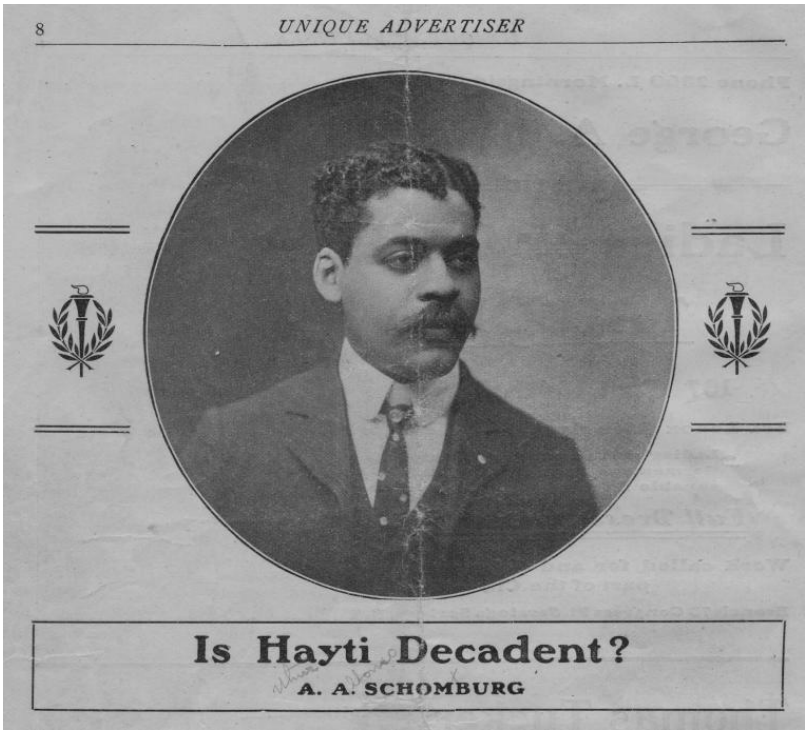
A. A. Schomburg, “My trip to Cuba in quest of negro books”, *Opportunity*, 11, 1933.

Source : Schomburg Center - Research & Reference, (Sc Per (Opportunity) v. 11 (1933)), NYPL

With the signing of the Treaty of Paris on 10 December 1898, which brought the Spanish-American War to an end and the recolonization of Puerto Rico, Schomburg's new 'migration' began from Hispano-Antillean to *West Indian*. In terms of sociability this migration signified for Schomburg his joining the Prince Hall masonic lodge, the oldest Afro-Caribbean lodge in the United States, founded in the eighteenth century. But before this date, around 1895, he had already started his collection of documents, manuscripts, and bibliographic and hemerographic publications, acquired over decades with the salary of a employee in the correspondence section of the Bankers Trust, a position he achieved due to his dominion in various languages (Spanish, English, and French) which allowed him, in parallel, to have intense and widespread exchanges in search of information about material for his collection, as well as the search of probable existence of important afro-ancestors in transatlantic history. In this sense, Schomburg was concerned with researching and afterwards publishing his discoveries about the African ancestors of central characters in the history of art or European politics, such as Alexandre Dumas, Pushkin, or Alexandre de Medici, first Duke of Florence.[5]

However, the aim of his first published essay is also the one which defines in a more specific manner the criteria which gives meaning to the collector's work: Haiti and its Revolution. In effect, in addition to the significant nature and number of documents on/about it which Schomburg could acquire, this revolution would constitute what we could call the paradigm which guided both the design of the collection and above all the

purposes for which Schomburg always wanted to use it. In this sense, the title of his first published essay - "Is Hayti decadent?"[6] - addresses to his contemporaries of the present the question of the colonial past (and status). The text came out of, in this sense paradoxically, a trip which Schomburg made, as a member of a team organized in the United States to assess the possibilities of ore exploration in the Dominican Republic.



A. A. Schomburg, “Is Hayti decadent?”. *Unique Advertiser*, 1904.

Source : Schomburg Center, NYPL

Escavation and archive

Along with the ore exploration and excavation actions, Schomburg anticipates in this text the use of archaeological tropes which will reappear in his better known essay "The negro digs up his past," to show the function, didactic rather than polemic, which he attributed to his archive and history[7]. In this area, the records of the official US discourse (which assessed the commercial potential of the land it would invade, in fact, 10 years later) combined with the journalistic campaign that had already begun around another basic potential: self-determination. Schomburg uses these assumptions and returns them in the form of the rhetorical interrogation in the title. His text thus refracts the target of official and unofficial discourse of imperial interests without openly contradicting them, but exposing, based on the same arguments used by him, possible alternatives for achieving republican promises, respecting the right to self-determination.

With this purpose, Schomburg draws on local history - a) that of the nation arising out of a slave revolt which, concomitantly, unlike any other nation on the continent, declared independence and abolished slavery; b) certain modulations of civic poetry that emerged in the period immediately after the independence wars on the continent, with a didactic function, showing how to replace the epic of war with the epic of agriculture; and finally c) the contemporary technical solution: Afro-Americans trained in Booker T. Washington's *Tuskegee Institute* to collaborate in the practical resolution of the fall in productivity of Haitian agriculture and, in parallel, to show that Afro-diasporic cooperation could be more effective and equitable for both parties, to the extent one party's right to self-determination was recognized, while the technical skills of the other were valorized.[8]

The agricultural school on wheels, “movable school”, 1906

Source : Encyclopedia of Alabama & Library of Congress

The Jesup agricultural wagon, 1906

Source : Encyclopedia of Alabama & Library of Congress

Tuskegee Institute, 1918

Source : Library of Congress

Schomburg's proposal defines a position: on the one hand, in the discursive universe, the practice of modulations in relation to the polemic; and on the other hand, in the historic perspective, through the attention to alternative, collective forms of reciprocity and the horizontality of production and reception (agriculture, but also the library), thought beyond national 'imagined communities' and in a clear orientation of the re-reading of the past from the perspective of the present.

Afrodiasporic cooperation

In the framework of this Afro-diasporic action and cooperation, Schomburg would also meet a new mentor in the period: John Edward Bruce ('Bruce Grit') (1856-1924), born a slave in Maryland, a journalist and activist, with whom he founded in 1911 the *Negro Society for Historical Research*. These are years in which, without removing attention

from the Caribbean crossroads, he comes to have more intense public action, this time with Afro-American and non-Hispanic Afro-Caribbean communities. In relation to the first aspect, what is significant is the publication of the essays "Placid, a Cuban martyr" - about the romantic poet and artisan, a free mulatto, shot in the investigation of the supposed '*de la escalera*' conspiracy,' whose aim was to copy the Haitian Revolution in Cuba; and "General Evaristo Estenoz" - about the 1912 Racial War, in which the Republic of Cuba ordered its army to persecute and kill the leaders and sympathizers of the PIC (Independent Party of Color, the first political party created with racial criteria in the Americas). Valid for both characters is the argument against homogenizing and totalitarian nationalism. Here, citing Sebastián Morales, Schomburg would say that Plácido was a "Colored Cuban [...] with more genius and heroism than fatherland." [9]

In relation to the second aspect, his more intense public action with Afro-American associations, it is worth citing an important programmatic essay by Schomburg, based on a talk given in a Summer seminar for teachers from New York state: *Racial integrity: a plea for the establishment of a chair of Negro history in our schools, colleges, etc.* Published in one of the bibliographic series of *Negro Society...* and reproduced, 20 years later, in the best known anthology edited by the British writer and activist Nancy Cunard, *Negro*, from 1934, the text presents for the first time a sort of non-exhaustive inventory of the collection.

2.33
100K

RACIAL INTEGRITY

A Plea for the Establishment of a Chair of Negro History in our Schools and Colleges, etc.

by
ARTHUR A. SCHOMBURG,
Secretary of the Negro Society for Historical Research,
Yonkers, N.Y.

Read before the Teachers' Summer class
at Cheney Institute, July 1913.

A. Schomburg, *Racial integrity: a plea for the stablishment of a chair of Negro history in our schools and colleges, etc.*, 1913.

Source : Schomburg Center – Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division (Sc Rare 973.07-S (Schomburg, A. Racial integrity)), NYPL

In this essay, whose title initially leads to think that the author addresses an abstract moral reflection, the subtitle soon clarifies the pragmatic objectives of the proposal. In keeping with the counterpoint established between title and subtitle, the body of the essay inverts the habitual argumentative economy in the West and, forming the core of the polemic, deliberately silences the so-called 'universal' historiography - in which the history of Africa and Afro-descendants, when it appears, takes the form of a 'footnote' -, and enlists what could be understood as a 'city of letters' of the African diaspora, thereby constituting a new canonical series.

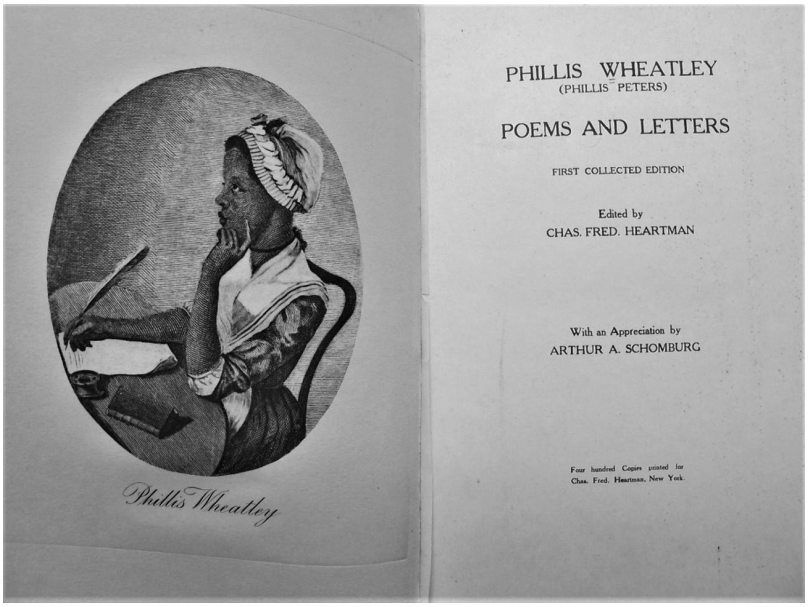
In effect, in this essay Schomburg lists works written by Africans and their diasporas in various fields of the arts and sciences, without obliterating contradictions or breaches of expectation relating to the perspective assumed (about slavery, for instance) by some of the cited authors. In poetry he cites Phillis Wheatley (whose work he would reedit and preface in 1915), Juan Latino (poet and Latinist, with a Chair in the University of Granada, about whom he would do research in Spanish archives in 1926), Paul Laurence Dunbar (whose manuscripts would later form part of his collection). In philosophy, he cites the Guinean Anthony William Amo. In the narrative, amongst others, the testimonies of Gustavus Vassa and Frederick Douglass, Pushkin's tales, (the elder) Dumas' novels, the Caribbean anti-slavery narrative. In theology, Alexander Crummell, as well as Jacobus Capitein who, born a slave in Ghana, studied in Leyden, was ordained as a minister in the Dutch Reformed Church and wrote a treatise, *De vocatione ethnicorum*, in which he defended the principle of non-contradiction between the practice of Christianity and the right to have slaves. In the history of music and painting, he cites the composer Ignatius Sancho. In the African historiography, Ludoph; as well as contributions also made in the history of medicine and law. In many cases, he makes clear the transatlantic connections of this production, whether through the displacement (often forced, in relation to slaves) of the authors, or the place of publication (often posthumous) of their works.

Reaching the end of the essay, after spending a paragraph about Haitian production, Schomburg outlines that he is only dealing with 'black authors' - although he lists afterwards various studies from other authors in the areas of the human sciences, dedicated to Africa and its diasporas - to show 'by a few examples of the past available and useful material upon which we can base our future structure. [...] we sadly need a chair of Negro history [...]'. [10]

At the end of the text, Schomburg introduced two polemical affirmations. In the first case, he attacks the argument of racial supremacy - defended by J. C. Calhoun, a Southern politician from the first half of the nineteenth century - based of the ignorance by Africans of classical languages. Looking at this 'argument,' Schomburg remembers that many slaves in the Americas knew how to read and write in Arabic, while their owners not only did not know the classical languages, but were unable to correctly conjugate verbs in their own maternal languages. In relation to this, it is interesting to note that the arguments about aspects of the diversity among languages, their registers and use, will appear with frequency in the essays and above all in Schomburg's correspondence. While, on the one hand, their greater or lesser linguistic fluency collaborates in tightening connections with members of various Afro-Caribbean migrant communities and in achieving material for its collection, coming from American, African, and European booksellers, publishers, antiquarians, etc.; on the other, the fact of assuming English as a language of public intervention will make evident again the mostly self-taught nature of his education. Notable in this sense is the posture of Locke, who refers to the 'flamboyant English' of Schomburg as resulting from his Hispanic education.[11] Assuming an analogous posture, academic partners attributed to Schomburg a supporting role in their research, translated into the fact that they used materials from his collection (prior to its acquisition by the New York Public Library) but did not leave a record of this loan in the resulting publications.

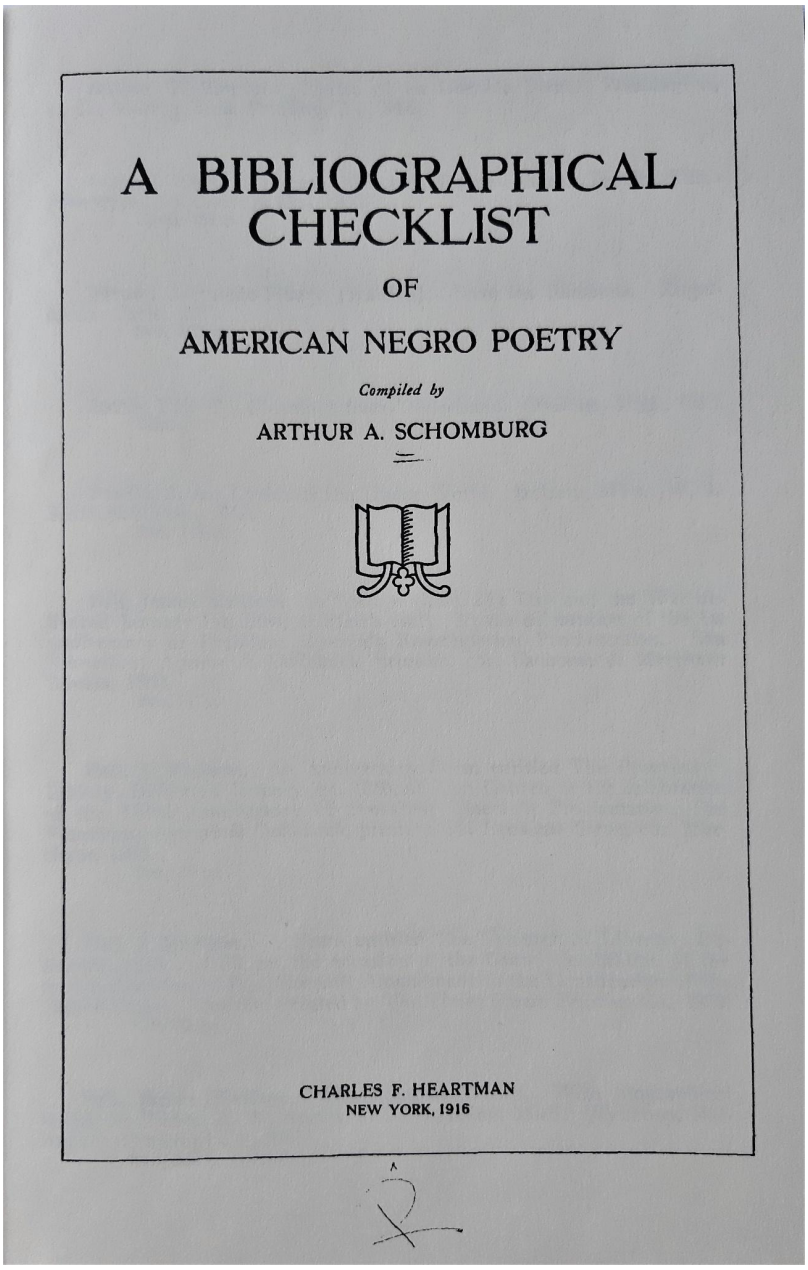
In the second case, Schomburg states that the agency of the African diaspora could have emerged both from the university environment (as Du Bois wanted with his 'talented tenth'[12]), or from the 'ranks of the people.' With this statement, Schomburg questions the necessary nature of academic education for clarification in relation to goals, as well as to occupy a position of leadership in political and cultural activism; reconnecting with his juvenile political experience, based on horizontal relations. In the choice of some of his objects of study, the combined nature of the exercise of manual or artisan and intellectual or political/cultural activities is not by chance. This horizontality can be seen in the use of analogous forms of treatment given to his correspondents: collectors, antiquarians, booksellers, poets, broadcasters, intellectuals and academics from various areas, librarians, directors of prestigious cultural institutions (museums,

archives, libraries), activists, state presidents, journalists, fine artists, editors etc.



Cover of Phillis Wheatley, *Poems and letters*, first collected edition, with an appreciation by Arthur A. Schomburg, 1915.

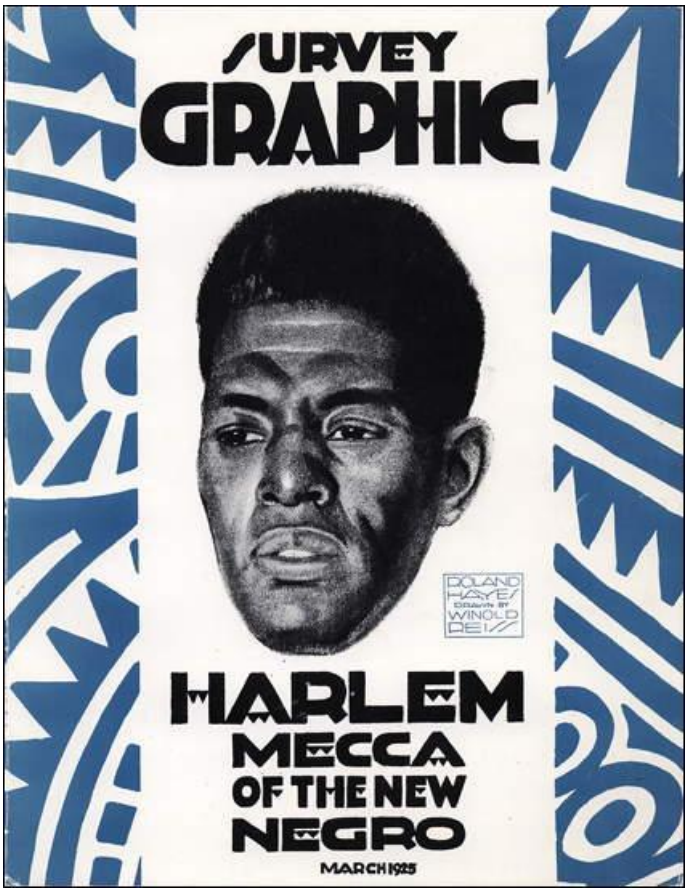
Source : Schomburg Center – Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division (Sc Rare 811.07-H (Heartman, C. F. Phillis Wheatley), NYPL


A BIBLIOGRAPHICAL CHECKLIST
OF
AMERICAN NEGRO POETRY
Compiled by
ARTHUR A. SCHOMBURG
CHARLES F. HEARTMAN
NEW YORK, 1916

A. Schomburg (comp.), *A bibliographical checklist of American negro poetry*, 1916.

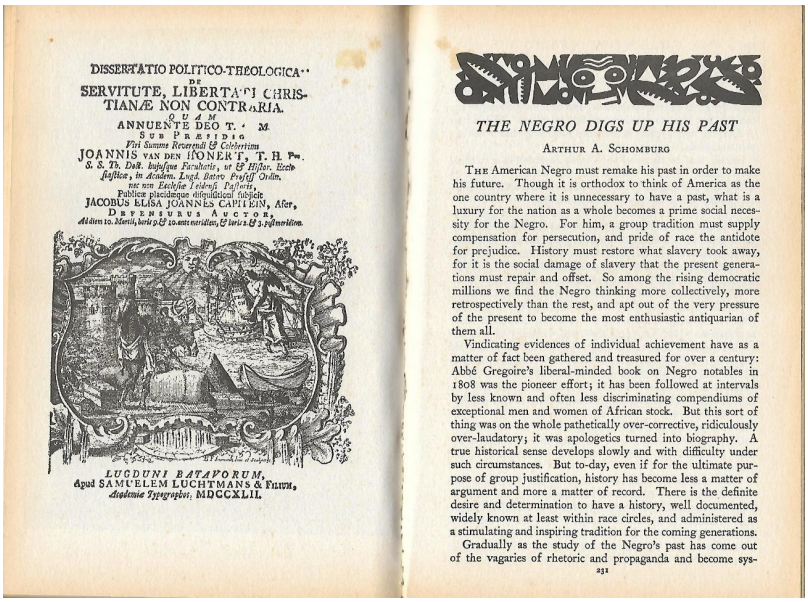
Source : Schomburg Center – Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division (Sc Rare 016.811-S (Schomburg, A. Bibliographical checklist)), NYPL

In the following decade, Schomburg republished and prefaced the volume of *Poems and Letters* by Phillis Wheatley[13]; and published various essays: one about Sebastián Gómez[14] (1916a), a painter and Murillo's slave; another about "Negro composers and musicians of the World"[15] (to which added years later others about Afro-Caribbean composers and the one dedicated to Carlos Gomes); and a third one, with historical contents, about the participation of Haitian soldiers in the wars of independence of the United States and Colombia[16]. He also prepared the first bibliographic list of Afro-American poetry[17] - *A bibliographical checklist of American Negro Poetry*. In parallel he became a member of the *American Negro Academy* (Washington) and his president from 1920 to 1929; as well as founding, together with Carter G. Woodson, the *Association for the Study of Negro life and history* (Chicago) and editing his *Journal of Negro history*.



Survey Graphic, mar. 1925.

Source : Schomburg Center – Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, Sc Rare 917.47-S (Survey Graphic. Harlem), NYPL



DISSERTATIO POLITICO-THEOLOGICA
DE
SERVITUTE, LIBERTATI CHRISTIANÆ NON CONTRARIA.
QUAM
ANNUENTE DEO T. M.
SUB PRÆSIDIO
Viri Summe Reverendi & Celeberrimi
JOANNIS VAN DEN HONERT, T. H. Pro.
S. S. Th. Doct. hujusque Facultatis, ut & Histor. Ecclesiasticæ, in Academ. Lugd. Batav. Professor Ordin.
nec non Ecclesiæ Leidensi Pastoris,
Publicæ placidæque disquisitioni subjicit
JACOBUS ELISA JOANNES CAPITEIN, Afer,
DEFENSURUS AUCTOR,
Ad diem 10. Martii, horis 9. & 10. ante meridiem, & horis 2. & 3. post meridiem.

LUGDUNI BATAVORUM,
Apud SAMUELEM LUCHTMANS & FILIUM,
Academiæ Typographos. MDCCXLII.

THE NEGRO DIGS UP HIS PAST

ARTHUR A. SCHOMBURG

THE American Negro must remake his past in order to make his future. Though it is orthodox to think of America as the one country where it is unnecessary to have a past, what is a luxury for the nation as a whole becomes a prime social necessity for the Negro. For him, a group tradition must supply compensation for persecution, and pride of race the antidote for prejudice. History must restore what slavery took away, for it is the social damage of slavery that the present generations must repair and offset. So among the rising democratic millions we find the Negro thinking more collectively, more retrospectively than the rest, and apt out of the very pressure of the present to become the most enthusiastic antiquarian of them all.

Vindicating evidences of individual achievement have as a matter of fact been gathered and treasured for over a century: Abbé Gregoire's liberal-minded book on Negro notables in 1808 was the pioneer effort; it has been followed at intervals by less known and often less discriminating compendiums of exceptional men and women of African stock. But this sort of thing was on the whole pathetically over-corrective, ridiculously over-laudatory; it was apologetics turned into biography. A true historical sense develops slowly and with difficulty under such circumstances. But to-day, even if for the ultimate purpose of group justification, history has become less a matter of argument and more a matter of record. There is the definite desire and determination to have a history, well documented, widely known at least within race circles, and administered as a stimulating and inspiring tradition for the coming generations.

Gradually as the study of the Negro's past has come out of the vagaries of rhetoric and propaganda and become sys-

231

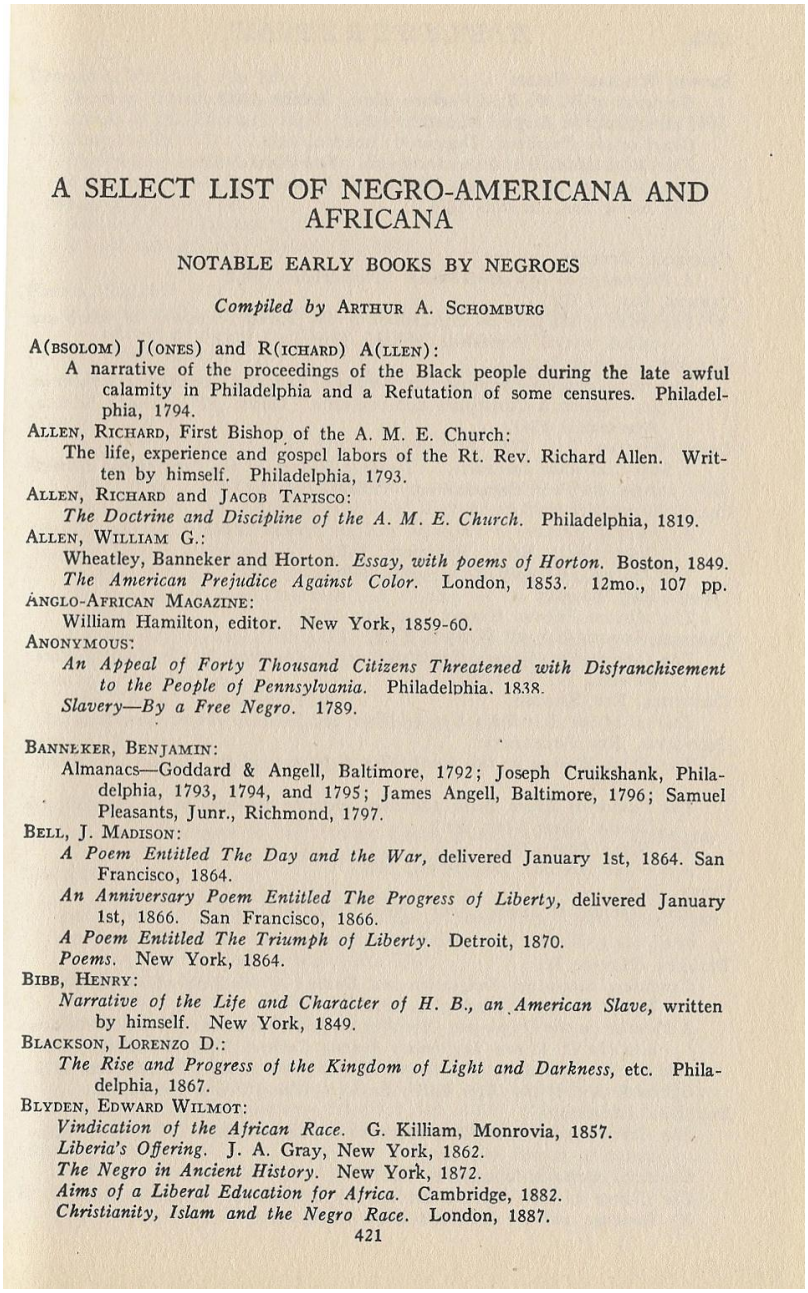
A. A. Schomburg, "The negro digs up his past". *The New Negro*, ed. Alain Locke, 1925, p.230-231.

Source : Photo Viviana Gelado

Atlantic History

His best known essay, "The Negro digs up his past," is part of the special issue of the social research journal *Survey Graphic* dedicated to Harlem as the "Mecca of the new Negro," on 25 March 1925, whose opening text is the classic "Enter the New Negro" by Alain Locke. This issue is still read today as the manifesto of the "New Negro" movement - the name preferred by Locke, instead of Harlem Renaissance -, constituting in parallel as a laboratory for the book *The New Negro*, edited by the same Locke

months later. Schomburg's essay is part of both publications. In the first case, it appears in the second section "The Negro expresses himself," together with poems by, amongst others, Countee Cullen, Angelina Grimke, Jean Toomer, Langston Hughes, and the Jamaican Claude McKay, as well as the essays by W. E. B. du Bois, J. A. Rogers, and Albert C. Barnes about African arts and their presence in the United States, and about contemporary Afro-American popular music (especially *jazz*). This second part, the central one in the issue of *Survey Graphic*, was framed by two others: the first one, about Harlem as "the greatest black community in the world" - with articles by amongst others, the Jamaican W. A. Domingo and the painter and engraver Winold Reiss, who had spent time studying in Mexico in 1920 and was responsible also for the graphic design of the issue - , and the third one, dedicated to 'racial contacts' and which included collaborations of Walter F. White and Melville Herskovits.



A SELECT LIST OF NEGRO-AMERICANA AND AFRICANA

NOTABLE EARLY BOOKS BY NEGROES

Compiled by ARTHUR A. SCHOMBURG

A(BSOLOM) J(ONES) and R(ICHARD) A(LLEN):
A narrative of the proceedings of the Black people during the late awful calamity in Philadelphia and a Refutation of some censures. Philadelphia, 1794.

ALLEN, RICHARD, First Bishop of the A. M. E. Church:
The life, experience and gospel labors of the Rt. Rev. Richard Allen. Written by himself. Philadelphia, 1793.

ALLEN, RICHARD and JACOB TAPISCO:
The Doctrine and Discipline of the A. M. E. Church. Philadelphia, 1819.

ALLEN, WILLIAM G.:
Wheatley, Banneker and Horton. *Essay, with poems of Horton.* Boston, 1849.
The American Prejudice Against Color. London, 1853. 12mo., 107 pp.

ANGLO-AFRICAN MAGAZINE:
William Hamilton, editor. New York, 1859-60.

ANONYMOUS:
An Appeal of Forty Thousand Citizens Threatened with Disfranchisement to the People of Pennsylvania. Philadelphia. 1838.
Slavery—By a Free Negro. 1789.

BANNEKER, BENJAMIN:
Almanacs—Goddard & Angell, Baltimore, 1792; Joseph Cruikshank, Philadelphia, 1793, 1794, and 1795; James Angell, Baltimore, 1796; Samuel Pleasants, Junr., Richmond, 1797.

BELL, J. MADISON:
A Poem Entitled The Day and the War, delivered January 1st, 1864. San Francisco, 1864.
An Anniversary Poem Entitled The Progress of Liberty, delivered January 1st, 1866. San Francisco, 1866.
A Poem Entitled The Triumph of Liberty. Detroit, 1870.
Poems. New York, 1864.

BIBB, HENRY:
Narrative of the Life and Character of H. B., an American Slave, written by himself. New York, 1849.

BLACKSON, LORENZO D.:
The Rise and Progress of the Kingdom of Light and Darkness, etc. Philadelphia, 1867.

BLYDEN, EDWARD WILMOT:
Vindication of the African Race. G. Killiam, Monrovia, 1857.
Liberia's Offering. J. A. Gray, New York, 1862.
The Negro in Ancient History. New York, 1872.
Aims of a Liberal Education for Africa. Cambridge, 1882.
Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race. London, 1887.

421

A. A. Schomburg, "A select list of negro-americana and africana". *The New Negro,* ed. Alain Locke, 1925, p. 421.

Source : Photo Viviana Gelado

In a context of the local formulation of a discourse and expressive actions of one of the aspects of Pan-Africanism,[18] it should be noted that, amongst the younger collaborators, various were supporters of Garveyism (notably Afro-Caribbean people) and/or leftwing political ideas. In turn, Schomburg, who was never officially connected with any of these movements and who said he abominated communism, collaborated in various ways (including financially) with some of them.[19]

In this context, the collection edited by Alain Locke in the 1925 book *The New Negro* reveals most ambitious propositions than the issue of *Survey Graphic* which preceded it. In this, as well as the essay "The Negro digs up his past," Schomburg collaborates with a 'select bibliography' of Afro-American and African production, in which he lists books from his private collection, including (and expanding the scope of what the title promised) the poems of the Afro-Grenadine Juan Latino, the Cuban Juan Francisco Manzano, *Réflexions politiques...* by the Haitian Baron de Vastey, etc. The subtitle of the bibliographic compilation, "notable early books by Negroes," functions, on the one hand, as the reaffirmation of the unjustifiable nature of mediation in relation to the self-representation of the negro (in line with the title of the section in which there appears initially "The Negro digs up his past" in *Survey Graphic*: "The negro speaks/talks for himself"); and the other, operates as a basal counterpoint (because it is documented) in the construction of this 'New Negro' in the present and in his projection of the future. The beginning of the essay does not leave any doubt about these purposes:

"The American Negro must remake his past in order to make his future. [...] History must restore what slavery took away, for it is the social damage of slavery that the present generations must repair and offset."

In keeping with the archeological metaphor of the title of the essay, the 'New Negro' is 'new' because he can get out of mediatization, because he can self-define and self-represent himself, as a result of a prior operation: the excavation of/in the past. Consistent with this, Schomburg spared no effort to create conditions of possibilities and achievement for the collection during decades. The documentary record (literature, history, graphic and fine arts, philosophy, etc.) thus functions as a manifesto for the following:

"First, that the Negro has been throughout the centuries of controversy an active collaborator, and often a pioneer, in the struggle for his own freedom and advancement. This is true to a degree which makes it the more surprising that it has not been recognized earlier.

Second, that by virtue of their being regarded as something 'exceptional,' even by friends and well-wishers, Negroes of attainment and genius have been unfairly disassociated from the group, and group credit lost accordingly.

Third, that the remote racial origins of the Negro, far from being what the race and the world have been given to understand, offer a record of creditable group achievement when scientifically viewed, and more important still, that they are of vital general interest because of their bearing upon the beginnings and early development of culture."

Initially, it should be highlighted that what resonated in the contemporary context of the publication of this essay are developments of the find of Tutankhamun's tomb in 1922 and its repercussions for the redefinition of the report of 'universal' history, both in the scientific environment and in moderately informed public opinion. An event that would be read as a questioning of European and American 'primitivism.'

In the perspective of transatlantic history,[20] which interested Schomburg, 'the powder of history,' revealed by the archaeological excavation (of the past), can be effectively replaced by 'the arena of polemics' (in present). Here, the predominant orientation of this archival practice, as well as the most apparent tone of this writings, reveals a greater concern with (present and future) didacticism than with polemics, without however discarding it.

Among the more notable elements that can be mentioned in the above paragraphs is the affirmation of the agency of the African diaspora in the struggles for its emancipation (in a controversial polemic with national historians who glorified the supposedly magnanimous nature of the respective elites); and, in parallel, the mention of the scandal which for 'Western reason' would have implied the consideration of this (agency = Haitian Revolution) as an obvious and obfuscating event at the same time.[21]

Also a consequence of this is the emphasis on the necessarily collective (and horizontal) nature of the agency. This assumes a questioning of canonic historiographic reports, tending to totalitarian monumentalization and the exclusion of minorities. In the place of national canonic reports, the attention focused on central figures of African ascendancy already incorporated in these canons: Pushkin in Russia, Alexandre Dumas in France, Alessandro de Medici in the cradle of the Renaissance, the poet and the humanist Juan Latino in sixteenth century Spain; the painters Sebastián Gómez and

Juan de Pareja, respectively slaves of Murillo and Velázquez, in Spain of the Austrians; José Campeche in Puerto Rico; the musicians from the Brindis de Salas family and José White in Cuba, as well as the importance of these musical traditions in the production of Gottschalk, in New Orleans.

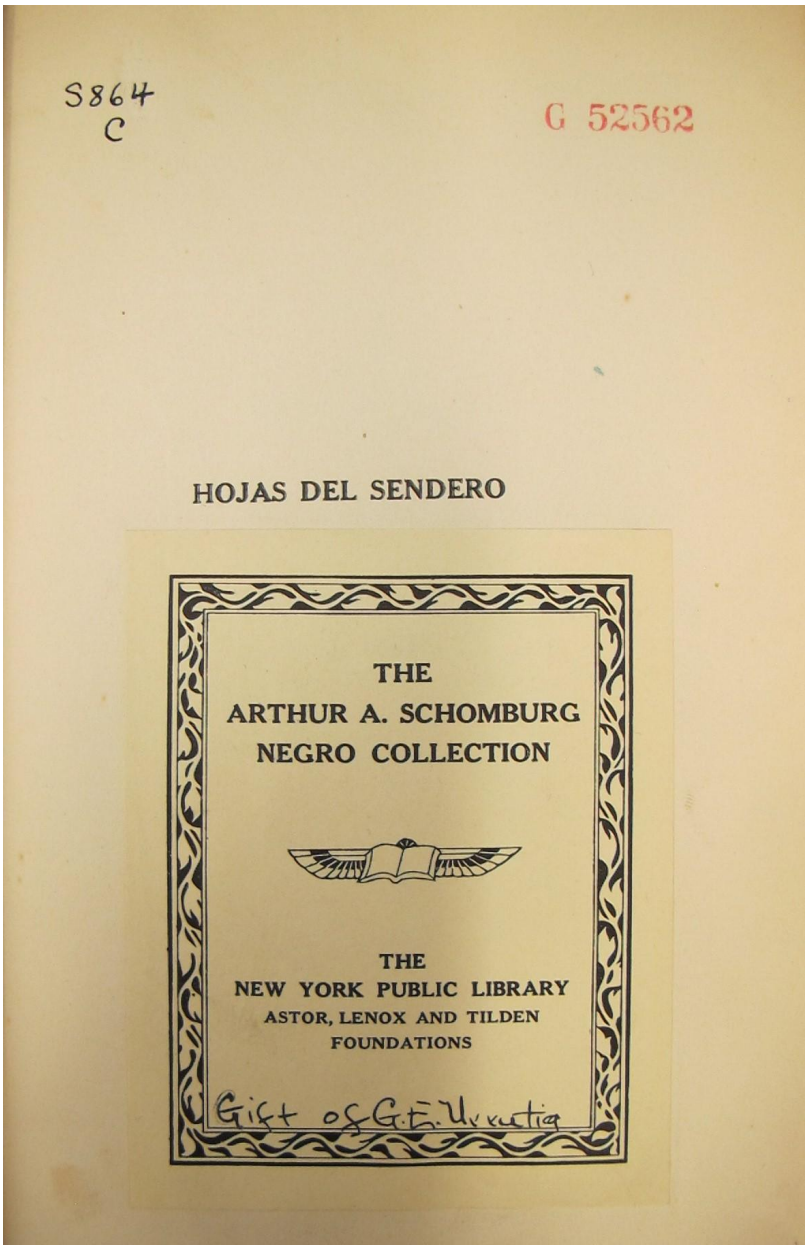
In the place of these national canonical reports, centered on an individual hero or an elite, Schomburg adopts a historiographic perspective which privileges interactions, collective agency, brief and fragmentary forms. A prose which consigns, opines, intervenes, reframes ("General Antonio Maceo," "Henri Christophe, King of Haiti"[22]), and polemicizes (about the self-determination of Puerto Rico; about the right to equality in the republican context and the 1912 Racial War in Cuba in "General Evaristo Estenoz"), in the place of assuming the consecrating academic pose of his own voice for the object in question.

Schomburg practices brief discursive forms (notes, statements, essays, reports, etc.) and intervention (oral, in talks; writing, in pamphlets, periodicals, *magazines,* etc.). He publishes and edits cheap and widely circulating material, since the collective character also has to be horizontal, both in the production and reception. He uses lettered practices which question the 'exceptional' nature attributed paradoxically by modern Western reason to individual production, detrimental to the search for collective, heterogenous self-determination.

In the place of monumentalizing reports is the interest in the legacy of anonymous persons, as well as the members of the black brotherhood of Seville, or those who participated in the construction of the Haitian Citadel of Laferrière, or those who saw the lands of the New World together with Columbus and, as his legacy for the future, those who freely can 'discover their past' in the collection that he began and sold in 1926, for a symbolic value, to the New York Public Library, based in Harlem.

135th street brunch, New York Public Library, 1916-1939.

Source : New York Public Library



The Arthur A. Schomburg Negro Collection *ex libris*, New York Public Library.

Source : Schomburg Center – Research & Reference, Sc 864-C (Clavijo Tisseur, A. Hojas del sendero), NYPL

In line with these principles, Arturo A. Schomburg, an employee of the correspondence sector of an insurance company, acquired with his salary documents, printed material, lithographs, art objects, musical recordings, manuscripts of poets, etc., to compose with them the oxymoron described by Foucault: an archive which interrogates "the system of its enunciability"[23] since his principal objective is to question the assumptions of all archives and to promote agency.

In this sense, Schomburg unequivocally understands the value of primary sources for the foundation of a new history and also for the transformation of the agency of memory in the power of history. It is interesting to note that, formally outside the academic field and absent from Puerto Rico for many years, Schomburg's project establishes lines of contact with the debates about the conditions of production of a new history in both environments. In the initial scenario which Schomburg evokes as motivating his agency occurs in the counterpoint between the exclusion of blacks from the historiographic report and the period he frequented the Puerto Rico history study group coordinated by José Julián Acosta[24] in '*Instituto de Segunda Enseñanza*,' in San Juan, in the second half of the 1880s[25]. In effect, Schomburg recalls his motivation in terms of the scholarly argument which justified his historiographical exclusion: "the blacks have no history."[26] The usual argument at the time, judging by the recurrence with which it is cited /remembered by Afro intellectuals (but not just) in the Americas. Having established a line of continuity with the agency of his *master* in relation to national history, assumes

an analogous and, at the same time diverse, strategy, dedicating himself to the investigation and meeting of documentary records (manuscripts and print materials, but also photographs, or information about musical plays and fine art works), which contest the absence of historiographical discourse supposedly based on the lack of sources, and exposes its ideological nature of deliberate silence in the construction of 'national history.'

In another sense, in an indirect way, the agency of Schomburg's collection postulates problems for the contemporary writing of a national history presented as new, but remains in solidarity with the 'cultural mythology' of the elite (expressed in *Insularismo* (1934) by Antonio S. Pedreira and in *Prontuario histórico de Puerto Rico* (1943) by Tomás Blanco); but also in the future, until 1970, for a historiography which continued neglecting the primary sources and excluding or presented as passive characters in the story workers and minorities.[27]

Francisco Oller, *Teacher Rafael Cordero's school*, c.1890, oil on canvas, 39 x 62½ (99.1 x 158.8 cm), Ateneo Puertorriqueño, San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Source : Wikimedia

Haiti, "*an assemblage comes into play*"

This silence is particularly inadmissible in 1938, the year of Schomburg's death, when C. L. R. James published *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*. Written, like Schomburg's work, from a para-academic place of enunciation, this work takes as an object one of the most relevant events in the Caribbean and transatlantic history of Afro-diasporic minorities, an event of which they were protagonists. For this reason, this event served, in turn, as a guide for the design for the collection.

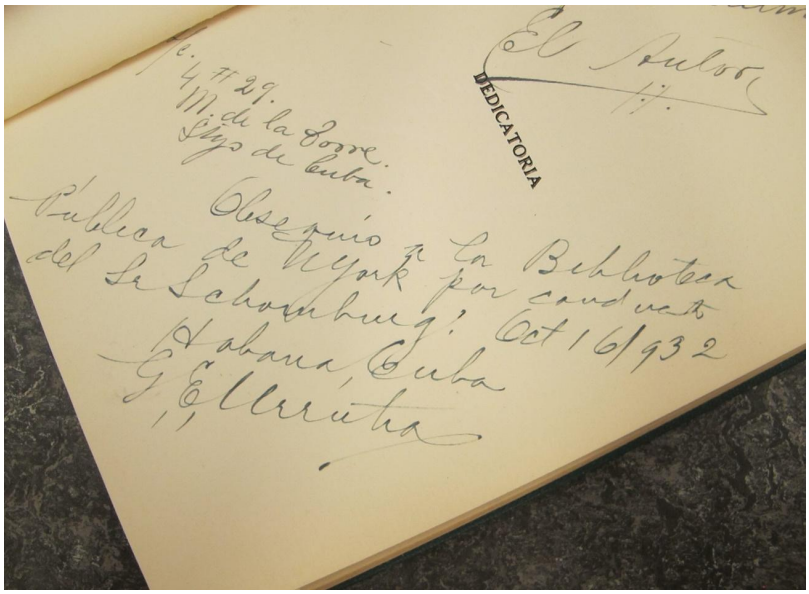
In the international sphere, it is worth noting that since the end of the 1920s, *École des Annales* had been causing an important transformation in the conception of history, assuming an open attitude in relation to other social science disciplines, encouraging research of an interdisciplinary nature about new objects - demographic flows, exchanges, customs - and renewing, as a consequence, the repertoire of questions and methods. History stops being primarily that of monuments and national heroes and will come to be interested in events and individuals[28] from other geographies or from some of those until then silenced, as well as for 'minor' objects, in a comparative perspective. In parallel, the (literary and historiographic) narrative would question the protocols of nineteenth century discursive genres, privileging fragmentation and brief forms as the basis of a framework on which it wound be possible to re-found a comparative narrative in less unequal terms.[29] In this sense, Arturo A. Schomburg's collection functions as an agent which causes a reformulation of the basis on which the archive is constructed and interpreted, incorporating sources which turn untrue arguments favorable to the exclusion of Afro-diasporic subjects from the account.

135th Street, Schomburg Room, New York Public Library. Arturo A. Schomburg, in the back to the right, c.1926.

Source : New York Public Library

Even more significant is the fact that the people which caused this radical change in the conditions of production of the historiographic account came from spaces marginal to those in which the formulation of methods was operated - C. R. L. James -, as well as the design of previous collections and archives - A. A. Schomburg. In other words, the problem of method - as Deleuze and Guattari point out in relation to the expression in literature of Kafka - does not arise in terms of an abstract universal, but in the praxis of formation (and later public institutionalization) of the collection, as well, and in solidarity with it, in the writing praxis which leads to the fragmentation of the monumentalizing discourse and thus exposes the fictional nature of its 'universal' status. The use of personal correspondence as the closest form (in comparison with the institutional) of critical dialogue towards the collection, the archive, and historiographical discourse; the preference for journalism, in terms not only of circulation (more democratic and direct than the academic book), but also of protocols of production of a discourse (both with regard to these genres and the linguistic registers used); the recurrence to situations mediated by orality in non-academic or para-academic contexts (the Summer seminar for public school teachers); the tone of speech and the impostation of the voice in the oratory performance (solicitation/exhortation - *a plea* - in the place of the imperative) constitute means which help in the excavation to obtain sources and consequent corrosion of homogenizing and teleological reports.

This corrosion operates through diverse means. One of them, as we have seen, is the fragmentation of narrative forms. Another is the consignation of a place of collective enunciation of reports. In this sense, and although they use the first person singular, neither Schomburg nor C. R. L. James prepare their accounts from the perspective of an individual author; to the contrary, they speak in the name of an Afro-diasporic agency and it is in this sense that Schomburg's discourse is also political.



Gustavo E. Urrutia dedication to Schomburg, for the occasion of the gift of Hojas del sendero book, by Arturo Clavijo-Tisseur, to the New York Public Library, 1932.

Source : Schomburg Center – Research & Reference, Sc 864-C (Clavijo Tisseur, A. Hojas del sendero), NYPL. Picture by VG

In yet another approach, the use of language constitutes a medium which expresses *par excellence* the minor place from which the Afro-diasporic collective speaks; a language which exposes, in its limitations and in the precariousness of its acquisition - especially in the case of Schomburg -, its nature as an imposed language part of a vast modern imperial enterprise (in the Americas) and contemporaneous (in Africa). In parallel is the 'exotic' mode in which this agency is expressed - Schomburg's 'flamboyant' English - which best explains the extraterritorial nature of this invasive language. In this sense, while the Afro-Cuban Gustavo Urrutia resents Schomburg's loss of fluency in Spanish,[30] his writing in English, in parallel, keeps him permeable to orality,[31] privileging rhythmic procedures and intensification, though also showing the absence, especially, of elements of subordination and connection, both intra and extra-phrasal. What in the context of orality can be derived from resources present in the context, in writing exposes the extraterritorial and oppressive nature of the language, as well as the multilingualism of the orator. However, these "linguistic Third World zones by which a language can escape, [...] an assemblage comes into play[32]" are also what make possible the intervention of devices which alter the conditions of production (method, discursive genres, and expressive means) of the writing of 'universal' history; which cannot but be affected by demands coming from dispersion collectivism, deterritorialization of minorities in the framework of their consubstantial mobility and heterogeneity. Thus history will probably be more transatlantic the less it is supposedly 'universal.'

---

1. A previous version of this article appeared in Viviana Gelado, "Arturo A. Schomburg: um arquivo para ir além da cortina da escravidão", in Viviana Gelado, María Verônica Secreto (orgs.), Afrolatinoamérica: Estudos Comparados (Rio de Janeiro: Mauad, 2016), 119-136.

2. David Armitage, Three concepts of Atlantic History, *in* David Armitage and Michael Braddick (ed.), *The British Atlantic World, 1500-1800* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002), 14.

3. Arthur A. Schomburg, "General Antonio Maceo", *The Crisis*, 38 (1931), 155-156, 174, 176; Arthur A. Schomburg, "My Trip to Cuba in Quest of Negro Books", *Opportunity* 11 (1933), 48-50.

4. Arthur A. Schomburg, "Creole-Criollo", *The Light* 4, (1927), 6-7.

5. Arthur A. Schomburg, "Racial integrity: a Plea for the Establishment of a Chair of Negro History in Our Schools, Colleges, etc.", *Negro Society for Historical Research* (1913).

6. Arthur A. Schomburg, "Is Hayti decadent?", *Unique Advertiser* 4 (1904): 8-11.

7. Arthur A. Shomburg, "The Negro Digs Up His Past", *Survey Graphic* 53 (1925): 670-672.

8. In relation to the transnationalization of the model of Booker T. Washington's schools in the Hispanic Caribbean, see: Jossianna Arroyo, Writing Secrecy in Caribbean Freemasonry, (Nova York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013); Frank Andre Guridy, Forging diaspora: Afro-Cubans and African Americans in a world of empire and Jim Crow (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2010).

9. Arthur A. Schomburg, "Placid, a Cuban Martyr", *The New Century* (1909), 3.

10. Arthur A. Schomburg, "Racial integrity: a Plea for the Establishment of a Chair of Negro History in Our Schools, Colleges, etc.", *Negro Society for Historical Research* (1913), 17.

11. The editor of Schomburg's collaborations, Locke referred to his work as a "a labor of love - for Schomburg is a loyal old friend who is not to blame for his flamboyant English because he was born in Puerto Rico and educated in Spanish." See Elinor des Verney Sinette, *Arthur Alfonso Schomburg: black bibliophile & collector. A biography* (Detroit: NYPL & Wayne State UP, 1989), 13.

12. In relation to this, see: Kevin Meehan, *People Get Ready: African American and Caribbean Cultural Exchange* (Jackson: Univ. of Mississippi, 2013), 52-75.

13. Arthur A. Schomburg, "Introduction", *in* Phillis Wheatley, *Poems and Letters.* (Nova York: C. F. Heartman, 1915.).

14. Arthur A. Schomburg, "Sebastián Gómez", *The Crisis*, 11 (1916): 136-137.

15. Arthur A. Schomburg, "Negro composers and musicians of the world", *Champion Magazine* 1 (1917): 407-410.

16. Arthur A. Schomburg, "Military services rendered by the Haitians in the North and South American wars of Independence: *A. M. E. review* 37 (1921): 199-204.

17. Arthur A. Schomburg, *A bibliographical checklist of American Negro poetry*. (Nova York: Charles F. Heartman, 1916).

18. . Arthur A. Schomburg, "The Negro digs up his past...", *op. cit.*: 670.

19. *Ibid.*

20. Amongst others which we will not analyze here, there are various references in Schomburg's writings which demonstrate his interest in Abyssinia, as well as in the invasion of Ethiopia by Italy and the armed conflict that followed. In relation to this, see: "African exploration" *in* Nancy Cunard (ed.), *Negro, an anthology, 1931-1933*(London: Wishart & Co., 1934), 603-609.

21. Arthur A. Schomburg, *The Crisis* 38 (1931): 155-156, 174, 176; *Looking forward* 2, (1935): 12, 13 , 20.

22. Arthur A. Schomburg, *The Crisis* 4 (1912): 143-144..

23. Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of knowledge and The Discourse on language*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith, (New York, Pantheon Books, 1972), 129.

24. José Julián Acosta (1825-1891), abolitionist, liberal, journalist, with a degree in Science. Together with Román Baldorioty de Castro and Alejandro Tapia y Rivera, he was a member of the Society for Collecting Historic Documents (1846-1852), a civil entity concerned with obtaining documents about Puerto Rico existing in European archives, which later served for the formation of the *Historic Library of Puerto Rico* (1854). As children, Acosta and Tapia were students of Rafael Cordero (1790-1868), a free black, and artisan tobacco maker, who for decades, starting in 1810, had a 'first letters' school for children with little money. In relation to this, see: Vanessa K. Valdés, *Diasporic blackness: the life and times of Arturo Alfonso Schomburg*. (Albany: SUNY Press, 2017), 45-50.

25. Arturo A. Schomburg, "In quest of Juan de Pareja. Colored painters of Spain", *The Crisis* 34/5: 153-154, 174.

26. Schomburg returns to this argument in: José Campeche, 1752-1809, a Puerto Rican negro painter", *Mission fields at home* 6: 106-108; "Negroes in Sevilla", *Opportunity* 6: 70-71, 93.

27. In relation to this, see: Díaz Quiñones, Arcadio. "Recordando el Futuro Imaginario: la Escritura Histórica en la Década del Treinta", *Sin nombre* XIV, n°3 (1984): 16-35.

28. For a brief history of the statute, functions and questions that the genre of biography raises for the writing of history, and especially in relation to the *Annales* at the end of the 1980s, see: Giovanni Levi. "Les Usages de la Biographie", *Annales* 44, n°6 (1989): 1325-1336.

29. In relation to this, see: María Verónica Secreto, "Tradução e História comparada na América", *in* Viviana Gelado e Rodrigo Labriola (orgs.), *Tradução, arquivos, políticas* (Rio de Janeiro: 7Letras, 2019), 11-24.

30. In relation to this, see: Gustavo E. Urrutia, "Imperialismo afrocubano", *Diario de la Marina*, Havana, 1ero Marzo 1936.

31. It is worth nothing here the strategic importance which rhetoric and oratory have for political agency. Significant in this sense is the publication of anthologies of '*black oratory*' since the nineteenth century: from Douglass, Jacobs and Truth to Angela Davis and Cornell West, passing through du Bois, Hurston, and Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, to mention just a few names.

32. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan, (Minnesota UP, 1986) 27.

Bibliographie

Voir sur Zotero

Armitage, David. “Três conceitos de história atlântica.” *História Unisinos* 18, no. 2 (2014): 206–17.

Arroyo, Jossianna. *Writing Secrecy in Caribbean Freemasonry*. Nova York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

Boahen, Albert Adu. *História geral da África, VII: África sob dominação colonial, 1880-1935*. Brasília: UNESCO-Secad/MEC, 2010.

Díaz Quiñones, Arcadio. “Recordando El Futuro Imaginario: La Escritura Histórica En La Década Del Treinta.” *Sin Nombre XIV*, no. 3 (1984): 16–35.

Gelado, Viviana, and Rodrigo Labriola. *Tradução, arquivos, políticas*. Rio de Janeiro: 7Letras, 2019.

Giusti, Juan. *Arturo Schomburg, Historiador, Bibliógrafo Puertorriqueño En Nueva York, Descubridor Del Legado Negroide*. San Juan: La voz del Centro, 2008.

Guridy, Frank Andre. *Forging Diaspora: Afro-Cubans and African Americans in a World of Empire and Jim Crow*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010.

Hoffnung-Garskof, Jesse. “The Migrations of Arturo Schomburg: On Being Antillano, Negro, and Puerto Rican in New York 1891-1938.” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 21, no. 1 (2001): 3–49.

James, Cyril, and Robert Lionel. *Os Jacobinos Negros: Toussaint L’Ouverture e a Revolução Em São Domingos*. São Paulo: Boitempo, 2000.

Levi, Giovanni. “Les usages de la biographie.” *Annales* 44, no. 6 (1989): 1325–36.

Locke, Alain LeRoy, ed. *The New Negro: Voices of the Harlem Renaissance*. Nova York: Touchstone, 1997.

Mazrui, Ali Al’Amin, and Christophe Wondji, eds. *História Geral da África, VIII: África desde 1935*. Brasília: UNESCO-Secad/MEC, 2010.

Meehan, Kevin. *People Get Ready: African American and Caribbean Cultural Exchange*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2009.

Ortiz, Victoria. *Arturo A. Schomburg: Un Ensayo Biográfico*. Nova York: New York Public Library, 1986.

Piñeiro de Rivera, Flor. *Arturo Schomburg, un puertorriqueño descubre el legado histórico del negro: sus escritos anotados y apéndices*. San Juan de Puerto Rico: Centro de Estudios Avanzados de Puerto Rico y el Caribe, 1989.

Sinnette, Elinor Des Verney. *Arthur Alfonso Schomburg, Black Bibliophile & Collector:*

A Biography. Detroit: NYPL & Wayne State UP, 1989.
Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1995.
Urrutia, Gustavo E. “Imperialismo Afrocubano.” *Diario de La Marina*. March 1, 1936.
Valdés, Vanessa K. *Diasporic Blackness: The Life and Times of Arturo Alfonso Schomburg*. Albany: SUNY Press, 2017.
Walker, Sheila S, ed. *African Roots/American Cultures: Africa in the Creation of the Americas*. Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001.

Auteur

- Viviana Gelado - Fluminense Federal University

  Professor of Latin American literatures. PhD from Campinas State University. Post-doctoral studies at Princeton University. She was visiting professor/researcher at the UNAM (Mexico), University of Puerto Rico-Río Piedras, Casa de las Américas (Cuba), Northwestern University (USA) and University Pompeu Fabra (Spain).