Elena A. Schneider, *The Occupation of Havana: War, Trade, and Slavery in the Atlantic World*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019. xii + 335 pp. (Cloth US\$39.95)

The siege, fall, and occupation of Havana after a combined British naval and army assault in August 1762 is of signal importance because of its many repercussions for Cuba and the Atlantic World. Numerous accounts of the event have been written; the overwhelming majority have been in Spanish. English treatments largely consist of first-person accounts published to commemorate the bicentennial of the capture in 1962. Amazingly, there is no academic work written in English, so Elena A. Schneider's synthesis fills an important gap. Yet this book does much more. First, it contextualizes the watershed moment in a larger geographic scope and sets it in a longer chronological cycle than past analyses. Second, it confronts head-on many debates surrounding the causes and consequences of the event. Schneider centers her analysis on merchants (Spanish, Cuban, and British) and persons of African descent, both free and enslaved. Highlighting these two groups complements other studies that examine the plantation elites, the Spanish and Cuban military forces, and the economic interests in the *Real Compañía de Comercio de la Habana* and its successor, the *Compañía Gaditana de Negros*.

The first of the book's three parts argues that although the capture was the culmination of centuries of British strategy to dominate the New World, it was only in the eighteenth century that such actions bore fruit. Schneider contributes to the argument that more Africans were imported into Cuba via the trans-Caribbean trade with other Caribbean islands than previously believed. She adds to the literature on smuggling by the British South Seas Company by revealing the numerous illicit networks into which Cubans were fully integrated, and she skillfully conveys the euphoria exhibited by the population as they participated in the contraband trade. The close of the War of Jenkins Ear (1739–48) ended their illegal financial bonanza, so Cubans decided “to expand regional trade under their own auspices” (p. 95), which resulted in the creation of the *Real Compañía*. Part Two is a moment-by-moment narrative of the siege and occupation, which has been done before but never in English nor in such minute detail. Unlike other studies, however, Schneider skillfully juxtaposes the British and the Spanish experiences during the combat. A spectacular collection of beautiful color images complements the argument of this section.

Part Three deals with the aftermath and consequences of the occupation. Schneider joins other scholars in maintaining that the loss was less than effective in transforming the Cuban plantation economy. Rather, it was Spain's determination never to permit a similar catastrophe to happen again that led

to massive militarization and commercial reform. Schneider personalizes the narrative of how the Spanish king, Charles III, kept the promises made in his name and rewarded the troops of African descent, some with their freedom and some with gold medals given personally by the king's hand at a ceremony in Madrid. Schneider demonstrates that the loyalty of the African-descended troops was vitally important in maintaining an effective defense of the island. Her argument is consistent with a recent trend that emphasizes widespread loyalty on the part of colonial subjects as opposed to the resistance/rebellion paradigms of previous studies. On the other hand, her arguments about the continued importance of the British merchants after 1763 are less convincing. The monarch during the period covered in the first portion of the book, Ferdinand VI, was notably tolerant of British influence; after all, the responsibilities granted to the Royal Havana company in 1740 made reliance on British merchants almost inevitable. Conversely, his half-brother, Charles III, who succeeded him to the throne in 1759 was vehemently anti-British. Given Charles III's legendary animosity, it is difficult to reconcile the argument that the British merchants wielded considerable influence after 1763. Most, in fact, were expelled in 1765 and spent years trying to recover the value of the merchandise that had been confiscated when they left.

Elena Schneider has synthesized many disparate strands of information and combined them with extensive research, producing a comprehensive analysis of a watershed in eighteenth-century Cuban history. It is a long overdue and welcome addition to the literature.

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