vendepatria (sell-outs) to the Yankees. Likewise, his interviews of current car owners give no clue as to whether their opinions of the Castro regime are any different from that of other Cubans who do not possess this luxury. Women get short-shrift in this book, except in bawdy tales of prostitutes riding in taxis with their foreign clients. I do concur with Schweid, however, in his prediction that when relations between the U.S. and Cuba are someday normalized, automobiles will once again be shipped down from Florida, and driving American cars may play a decisive part in the political outlook of a new generation of Cubans who most likely will have forgotten Fidel Castro.

Julio César Pino *Kent State University*

MATT D. CHILDS***: The 1812 Aponte Rebellion in Cuba and the Struggle against Atlantic Slavery***. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006.

The rise of African slavery in Cuba is largely a nineteenth-century story. Following the Haitian Revolution, which resulted in the collapse of the world's largest sugar-producing zone, Cuban planters were quick to capture European demand for the sweet crop. Economic opportunities were paralleled by the rising strategic importance of Cuba to Spain after the British occupation of Havana during the Seven Years War and the ensuing reshuffling of European empires in the Atlantic. With large-scale sugar production, Cuba became a major destination for African slaves, precisely at the time when the legitimacy of the slave trade was coming under international assault. It was within this international context that Cuban slavery took shape, at the same time that it experienced patterns of development similar to other New World slave societies.

In this book, Childs looks at the Aponte Rebellion of 1812, an act of slave resistance fuelled by motivations to eradicate slavery from below, a-la Haiti. The Aponte Rebellion shook Cuban authorities to the core and it has captured the national imagination ever since. Childs illustrates the multiple circumstances that engendered Cuban slavery and the slaves' response manifested in the rebellion. The book is organized by circles of historical circumstances going from the broad international and Caribbean background to a more narrow microscopic view of the slaves at the regional and local levels. Built on a holistic argument, the book presents a web of contexts, whereby the experience of slavery was shaped by global forces and local conditions, but equally important, by the actions of the slaves themselves. Structure and agency are interwoven into a narrative of the early phase of African slavery in Cuba culminating in the Aponte Rebellion.

On the one hand, events such as the Seven Years War, the Bourbon Reforms and the Haitian Revolution, played a role in the formation of African slavery in Cuba and shaped its peculiar features. On the other hand, conditions on the plantation, slaves' urban-rural ties, the space accorded to slaves and ex-slaves within a racially organized society, and their African cultural origins, not only helped the rebellion materialize but also had an impact on the overall nature of slavery and race relations on the island.

As a matter of fact, with the exception of chapter four, which is a narrative of the planning and breakout of violence in early 1812, there is little in the book that deals directly with the events of the Aponte rebellion. This is partly because the rebellion never really took off, having been crushed before it gathered momentum. In three of the four locations, the conspiracy was exposed early on, if not simply invented by hysterical authorities. Thus it remains unclear, as Childs admits, whether there was any concerted effort for a revolutionary transformation of Cuba.

Most of the chapters focus on its background, largely using the Aponte rebellion as a lens to examine the broad characteristics of Cuban slavery. The plot of each chapter centers around a key figure who was executed for his role in the rebellion, with each figure representing a social type engendered by the emergence of African slavery on the island. For example, the slave muleteer Tiburcio Peñalver, protagonist of chapter two, illustrates non-plantation bondage, as well as the expansion of sugar plantations and their commercial links to the city, which also made possible ties between rural and urban slaves. Chapter four starts with the free mulatto Estanislao Aguilar and discusses the question of solidarity among slaves and free persons of color, though inconclusively. Jacques Barbier, arriving in Cuba from Haiti, serves to highlight the interconnectedness of slave systems across the Caribbean. While this structure is engaging as a literary ploy, switching from a rebellious figure as a social type to the broader issues of slavery in Cuban society creates a larger shortcoming. It is not always clear whether Childs intends to discuss Cuban slavery using the Aponte Rebellion as a case study or intends to analyze the Aponte Rebellion by contextualizing it in the literature on slavery and Atlantic history.

The book's principal contribution lies in its emphasis on the African background of slaves and in its portrayal of the Atlantic connections that formed the backdrop for the Aponte Rebellion. On the first point, Childs makes a welcome addition to the scholarly literature that goes beyond legal and racial status and stresses the social significance of the slaves' African origins. He illustrates how slave identities, preserved and elaborated in Cuba, depended on their African origins in multiple ways. Cabildos de nación, an institution granting social space to people of African descent, were organized along African ethnicities, which

were expressed through meetings, festivities and social services. Along with the ethnic-based cabildos, militia membership formed another important space for people of African descent. Childs shows how these two institutions contributed to the planning and organization of the Aponte Rebellion. However, his argument that ethnic identity based on African origins did not contradict slave or black unity is unconvincing. From the scarce evidence available it seems that the rebellion could take place despite ethnic and class friction, not thanks to it. Although cabildos de nación created circumstances conducive for rebellion and cooperation among people of African descent, their ethnic identity in itself may have hampered a more inclusive black front against their oppression.

African origins also had an impact on the articulation of the ideology that fueled the rebellion. As seen through rumors and myths employed by rebels, they maintained the idea of emancipation granted by a Kongo king, as well as a host of figures, ranging from the Spanish king to Haitian independence leaders. The reference to Kongo was evidently linked to the place of origin of many slaves.

Concerning the Atlantic context in which Childs situates the rebellion, he stresses the impact of events in the Atlantic, mostly the Haitian Revolution but also the overall slave unrest throughout the New World that contributed to the demise of slavery. One of the most fascinating points of the book is showing how intensive interconnectedness of the Caribbean region made possible a remarkable flow of communication accessible to slaves. Slaves and free persons of color migrated before and after the revolution in Cuba, bringing with them their life experience from French Saint Domingue. Black Haitian soldiers visited Cuba, forming ties with local slaves and free persons of color. Rumors, as much as solid information, engendered the ideology and expectations of slaves and ex-slaves who took part in the anti-slavery struggle. Beyond the repercussions of events in Haiti, leaders of the rebellion had access to information about events across the Atlantic, which they exploited for ideological purposes and strategy planning.

The book is grounded in thorough research from a large number of archives in Cuba and Spain. However, in many instances, simply because of the paucity of the extant records, Childs had to resort to speculation. The use of judicial records generated by the post-rebellion trials places another burden on the analysis with the well-known question of their reliability and representativeness, though Childs is always cautious not to read too much into the documents. Throughout the book, he thoughtfully relies on the relevant literature on slavery in the Atlantic world. His arguments on plantation slavery, rebellion, cabildos de nación, militia organization, and a host of other topics, especially when evidence is scant, make use of comparable studies of Brazilian and Caribbean slavery. This raises the question of the conceptual tension between comparative history and entangled

history in an Atlantic context. While the two modes of historical analysis are not necessarily mutually exclusive, the emphasis on various levels of context points in the direction of an entangled history, whereby events and processes across the Atlantic are interconnected. But if comparisons are revealed as useful to explicate the background of Cuban slavery in general and the Aponte Rebellion in particular, they also cast doubt upon the crucial importance of some of those contexts. In other words, it remains an open question whether, say, Spain's involvement in Haiti, black militia organization or Cuban racial hierarchy, conditioned the rebellion or were simply part of the historical setting, dramatic yet inconsequential.

Nevertheless, framed in an engaging narrative, the detailed examination of the slaves' African origins and Atlantic experience, revealing mobility and connections across the Caribbean and within Cuba, makes this book a welcome contribution to the study of African slavery in the New World. It merits special attention from anyone interested in the interplay between the global and the local in Atlantic history.

Hillel Eyal *Tel Aviv University*

ELÍAS J. PALTI***: El Tiempo de la Política: El siglo XIX reconsiderado*****.** Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI Editores, 2007.

La historiografía latinoamericana abunda en "reconsideraciones", especialmente a medida que se acercan los bicentenarios de las independencias. Así como en el Centenario se evaluó si América había logrado parecerse a Europa o los Estados Unidos, concluyendo por lo general que habíamos fracasado, este segundo centenario convoca nuevamente a gobiernos y especialistas para evaluar las supuestas "esencias identitarias" latinoamericanas en función del éxito alcanzado respecto, por lo general, de asimilarse a "los otros", los desarrollados.

El libro de Elías J. Palti es una excepción. Su reconsideración toma absoluto sentido no en función de una efeméride, sino de la evolución de la historiografía latinoamericana. Se inserta en una reflexión mucho más profunda que aquella de las efemérides: piensa a América Latina y su posibilidad de pensarse a sí misma desde la evolución que ha tenido la historia intelectual, especialmente aquella que corresponde al siglo XIX.

La reflexión de Palti surge desde su afirmación del siglo fundacional de las repúblicas latinoamericanas como "el tiempo de la política", lo cual da el título al libro. Entiende por este tiempo aquél en que deben fundarse, desde la política, las nuevas legitimidades. Así se entronca con lo que ha constituido la temática