Carla Gardina Pestana, *The English Conquest of Jamaica: Oliver Cromwell's Bid for Empire*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2017. xii + 362 pp. (Cloth US\$ 35.00)

Carla Pestana's impressive study of the expedition Oliver Cromwell sent to the West Indies in 1655 reconsiders it as a transition in English colonial policymaking, a venture aiming to attack an existing Spanish colony and then take it over rather than a raid or an attempt to establish a new colony in an unsettled territory. The expedition captured Jamaica, but only after being repulsed when it tried to repeat one of Sir Francis Drake's exploits and seize Hispaniola. Within two months of Jamaica's Spanish governor signing harsh surrender terms and being shipped off, to die en route to Campeche, the expedition's joint commanders, Admiral William Penn and General Robert Venables, both departed. The force remaining in Jamaica went from being the tip of the spear to a sideshow after the Design's planned limited assault on Spain's Empire "Beyond the Line" provoked a declaration of war by Spain. Cromwell and his councilors' attention increasingly focused on sustaining a naval blockade in the eastern Atlantic and then a land campaign in Flanders—all to be funded without the treasure the Western Design was intended to deliver.

The dispirited troops left in Jamaica faced a guerrilla campaign undertaken by some of the island's Spanish settlers who had ignored their governor's surrender and subsequently opened an alliance with some of their former slaves. Despite all the assumptions in England that enslaved Africans would rush to embrace their English liberators, ex-slaves took the opportunity to establish their own communities, some of which then allied with the Spanish stay-behind group. Together they kept the English settlements penned up on the central and eastern sections of the coastal plain and remained ready to guide any Spanish troops sent to oust the English. Spanish relief forces, initially recruited from the Jamaican refugees and levies from other Spanish islands and then a larger force from Mexico, landed in 1657 and again in 1658, but were defeated both times. The Spanish Crown then chose to concentrate its scarce resources on getting the Plate Fleet back from Havana to fund its European wars, rather than sanctioning the outbound fleet's escorts to detour and attack Jamaica. Meanwhile the English force was obliged to plant food crops to avoid starving. Occasional shipments from England and New England were insufficient, even after fevers sliced their numbers. The English staved off defeat and after locating the African Jamaican settlement led by Juan de Bolas in 1660, agreed on terms. With these new allies' assistance an English patrol overran the Spanish group's camp and while some escaped, the terms of the campaign

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had changed. The remaining Spaniards sought refuge in Cuba. The surviving English remained in Jamaica and after King Charles II's Restoration, Jamaica was the only Cromwellian conquest he chose to retain. Later generations of planters told themselves that their ancestors were really Royalist sympathizers sent away by Cromwell, but King Charles inherited a group of Cromwellian officers as the core of Jamaica's future plantocracy.

Pestana's clearly written account steers through a complicated narrative to consider the society the Western Design established in Jamaica. She consulted manuscript collections on both sides of the Atlantic and undertook a thorough trawl of the diverse secondary literatures in English and Spanish. This is invaluable as, aside from S.A.G. Taylor's *The Western Design* (published by the Jamaica Historical Society in 1965), which drew on his remarkable knowledge of the island's topography to illuminate the published sources he could consult in Jamaican libraries, and Sir Charles Firth's edition, in 1900, of General Venables's self-justificatory *Narrative*, there have been no substantial modern accounts. Pestana delivers a fresh view. In developing her case readers may regret that she runs so quickly over themes she discussed at greater length in her persuasive article arguing that the buccaneers invited to Jamaica in the late 1650s were recruited as hunters to feed the English from the island's feral cattle, rather than as precursors for future maritime predators, or her analysis of the mutiny after the collapse of the Cromwellian regime in England left its senior officer with no legal authority to continue policies favoring army officers despite the growing civilian population. Instead, her book stands back to place Cromwell's colonial experiment and the unforeseen society that then developed in Jamaica into the broader trajectory of the development of European states' engagement with Spain's imperial claims and with colonial settlement. This delivers a valuable reassessment. It deserves a wide readership.

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