Trevor Burnard, *Jamaica in the Age of Revolution*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020. (Cloth, US\$45.00)

For nearly a century, West Indian scholars have painstakingly documented how critical the Caribbean was to the global empires of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In the last three decades, historians from outside the region have produced a flurry of articles and monographs working through the details of that argument. Trevor Burnard's new book takes a thorough account of this new scholarship to reiterate the core claims made by Eric Williams, C.L.R. James, and others many years ago: that the Caribbean was central to the history of early America and the early-modern world. Focusing on Jamaica from 1760 to 1788, it provides a nuanced assessment of how the planter class thought about that island, and lorded over its enslaved population.

Through nine chapters and a substantial epilogue, Burnard alternates between large surveys of Jamaican society during the period and focused episodes that had tremendous impacts on it. Along the way, he offers critiques of some recent historiographic trends. His first and fourth chapters consider the degree to which planters were actually afraid of enslaved workers. The argument that fear drove White rule in Jamaica is practically axiomatic in the field, but Burnard cautions against such an interpretation. According to him, planters recorded tremendous confidence in their diaries and publications, and their adherence to a political philosophy that was part Hobbesian and part Machiavellian made fear a mechanism of control, rather than a reaction. The suppression of Tacky's Revolt in 1761, he claims, reduced any anxiety that island rulers might have had about enslaved insurrection a decade later when North America's colonies rebelled. Yet, it is hard to imagine why White Jamaicans would have felt so assured, considering how dependent they had been on the British military to put down the 1761 revolt.

Burnard argues, instead, that White Jamaicans were far more fearful of British control and influence. He carefully maps the political mindset of Edward Long, who lobbied for Britain to intervene in all but one area of Jamaican society—slavery. And he is right to advocate for a more subtle reading of the island's ruling minority, whose political philosophies are often totally ignored in historical scholarship. Chapters 6–7 explore how Whites responded to both the *Somerset* case of 1772 and the *Zong* massacre of 1781. When Lord Mansfield made his ambiguous ruling about slave law in 1772, Jamaica's economy was in one of its most prosperous periods. In Burnard's estimation, White colonial affluence, combined with growing loyalism and a miscalculation about emerging metropolitan attitudes toward slaveowners, moderated any fear that might have come from the ruling. That inability to assess British pub-

lic opinion backfired spectacularly a decade later when planters—struggling from the effects of the American Revolution and a destructive hurricane—eagerly bought up Africans unloaded from the *Zong*, whose crew had murdered nearly twelve dozen captives, setting the stage for a swell of abolitionism in the metropole.

These political mistakes form the crux of the book's final two chapters. Invoking the "Williams thesis" of economic decline, Burnard contends that while the American Revolution did hurt Jamaican plantations' fortunes, this was only temporary. Instead, White colonists' inability to navigate the growing support in Britain for ending the slave trade and imposing slavery reform, put them on the back foot in all negotiations going forward. Moreover, the loss of slaveholding North American allies in Westminster meant that their voices would never rise to their former volume. Burnard couples this discussion with a consideration of the so-called "new history of capitalism," which he contends has overvalued the importance of slavery to global economic history.

Scholars of early America will find much in this book with which to engage. It takes on some of the larger historiographic arguments currently dominating the field, and also synthesizes a tremendous amount of information about the economic and political history of eighteenth-century Jamaica. But it suffers from one of the main problems in Burnard's previous monograph about plantation societies—attention to enslaved people. One chapter discusses slavery directly, but it focuses principally on the institution's economic characteristics. The enslaved people that made up 90 percent of the island under consideration here feel like a static entity up against a much more dynamic White population. Burnard warns in the epilogue that slavery is often mistaken for having "a timeless quality about it" (p. 239), but he rarely connects his own historical narrative to the effects on enslaved people, or even on their changing composition and activities during this age of revolution. Likewise, it is disheartening to read his conclusions about an overvaluing of slavery, when he has presented so little about the effects of that system on the people who actually suffered under it, or those still suffering from its legacy.

Daniel Livesay

Department of History, Claremont McKenna College, Claremont CA, U.S.A.

Daniel.Livesay@claremontmckenna.edu