

position that placed the immigrants somewhere in between blacks and whites in the socio-economic spectrum. Perhaps a more detailed discussion of Italian customs and mores contrasted with those of Anglo-Canadians might better explain some of the distaste. Elsewhere she notes the complaints of neighbours regarding the Italian habit of gathering in groups outside church after mass, or regarding men standing on the sidewalk socializing, perhaps as a pretext to leer at Anglo-Canadian women.

Oral history can provide details about internal behaviour and individual actions. Iacovetta uses it well to recreate family economic strategies and networks. On important issues, such as the division of responsibilities where men support and women govern the family, she misses an opportunity to explore the nuances of southern Italian form and substance. How do women wield power in a male-centred society? Also she does not follow up on the informal support systems of women during the long strikes. In the larger context, she does not inquire whether the immigrant labourer believed that unsafe job conditions and lack of wage/hour stability was due to an absence of responsibility for the foreign work force on the part of employers or government agencies.

Despite methodological inadequacies, the study provides a richness of detail on the socio-economic process in which an ethnic work force supplies labour for a growing industry, then attempts to redefine the terms of labour. The give and take of labour demands, public/political awareness, and ethnic socio-economic networks demonstrate the interactive process of immigrant adjustment. As Iacovetta suggests, such a perspective moves beyond the "dichotomy between the heroic view of immigrants and the victimization thesis". The price tag included "considerable emotional and physical cost".

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Michael Craton and Gail Saunders — *Islanders in the Stream: A History of the Bahamian People. Volume One: From Aboriginal Times to the End of Slavery*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992. Pp. xxiii, 455.

In *Islanders in the Stream: A History of the Bahamian People*, Michael Craton and Gail Saunders set out to combine the traditional concept of a comprehensive national history with the much more recent idea of a people-centred or even populist social history. In large measure they succeed.

Perhaps the greatest challenge inherent in trying to craft a thoughtful social history for a broad time period lies in the search for a theme or focus. Writing the history of women, workers, or other "ordinary people" (p. xi), as Craton and Saunders attempt to do, almost always incorporates an effort to unify or at least codify the experience of these multitudes with some particular thesis or idea. Craton and Saunders, however, set for themselves the task of unifying or codifying the experience not of one multitude — slaves or seamen or free people of colour — but of many: Lucayan elites, Lucayan commoners, seventeenth-century religious refu-

gees, seventeenth-century drifters, eighteenth-century African slaves, nineteenth-century Creole slaves, migrant Loyalist planters, and British colonial settlers, to name several. To their great credit, the authors do in fact present several effective themes which hold together the very large story that *Islanders in the Stream* seeks to tell.

They introduce the Bahamas as a unique geographic environment: an archipelago located on the fringe of both North America and the Caribbean basin, incorporating more sea than land and offering a wide variation of climate and soil quality, none particularly conducive to large-scale agriculture. Craton and Saunders argue that the successive waves of immigrants who populated the Bahamas all significantly modified their lives and expectations to conform to these peculiarities. They especially emphasize this point with respect to the Loyalist settlers who arrived from the United States mainland at the turn of the nineteenth century. Prior historiography has focused on the idea that, with their large numbers of slaves and their commitment to plantation agriculture, these Loyalist migrants reshaped the Bahamas to a great extent in the image of the plantation colonies they had left behind. Craton and Saunders do not contradict this point so much as shift its emphasis. While Loyalists did enormously expand both the number of slaves and plantations, the authors point out that these plantations soon abandoned the idea of export-oriented monoculture and became instead models of diversity and flexibility. Bahamian plantations had no dominant crop and virtually no sugar, in stark contrast to their more fertile Caribbean neighbours. They grew cotton and some other products for export, but devoted much land and labour to provision crops for both subsistence and local sale. They fished heavily to augment subsistence, salvaged wreckage for supplemental income, and increasingly turned to the harvest of salt as their most lucrative commercial pursuit.

Craton and Saunders propose that such a patchwork economy of expediency characterized the Bahamas through the whole period covered by this first volume. As a consequence, the colony developed a more varied and looser social organization than other slave plantation societies — a comparison that remains implicit throughout.

Based on the relatively slim evidence of archaeology and Hispanic travelogues, the authors conclude that the Lucayan peoples who came to the Bahamas developed communities more maritime and less agricultural than Arawaks elsewhere, and subsisted with a “sparser” (p. 35) range of material goods than found in islands of greater mineral wealth. These scattered subsistence communities retained the class framework of other Lucayan societies. A minority class of *caciques* (headmen) along with their retainers exacted both material and ritual tribute from the commoner majority and led the community in both political and religious life. Their meagre way of life, however, neither demanded nor produced any elaboration of this framework — nothing comparable to the more populous and complex Lucayan societies of Cuba or Hispaniola.

Similarly, Craton and Saunders argue that the variegated development of Bahamian slave society fostered a more flexible articulation of relationships between Europeans and Africans and between slave and free. The authors do not diminish

either the inequality or violence that characterized this slave society as any other. Rather, they explore the peculiarities of the Bahamian experience and the unique social patterns they produced. For example, Bahamian slavery had its roots in a pre-Loyalist society which incorporated not only mariners and part-time agriculturalists, but also sundry adventurers. These untidy beginnings left a legacy of notable race mixture, particularly in certain islands, and also generated significant, if often tenuous, groups of free people of colour. Meanwhile, the Loyalist migration, in addition to bringing aggressive planters and large numbers of slaves, also brought assertive free blacks who both energized and complicated the existing black community, both slave and free. Finally, in the era of emancipation, agricultural failure, crop diversification, and the growth of the salt industry all characterized the continuing unique path of the Bahamas in comparison to its Caribbean neighbours. In summary, Craton and Saunders conclude that in many, though not all instances, the more varied world of the Bahamas yielded a relatively better experience for slaves than the world of the sugar islands.

In addition to the related themes of flexibility, uniqueness, and variety, these authors put forth the notion of borderline lawlessness as a perhaps inevitable characteristic of such a variable and maritime society. The wrecking or salvage industry which persisted from the earliest European settlement through the nineteenth century best exemplified such a tendency. No doubt *Islanders in the Stream* will further pursue this idea in its second volume, which will move from roughly 1840 to the present — an era in which the U.S. Civil War, U.S. prohibition, and North American drug consumption all fuelled new illegal sea economies involving weapons, alcohol, and narcotics.

The first volume thus succeeds in presenting a convincing social history which both recounts and interprets the first two-and-a-half centuries of Bahamian society. At times, the work displays almost an over-commitment to the so-called "New Social History" (p. xx), particularly in the use of statistics and most especially in its discussion of slave demography. Early on, Craton and Saunders declare their intention to make use of the cliometric analysis that has so enriched slave studies. Few would question that modern statistical techniques have produced such enrichment. However, many of the more detailed statistics seem best relegated to footnotes, allowing the text to paint a narrative picture based on the data, rather than encumbering readers with numbers. In the present case, the chapter on slave population has a heavy demographic tone and becomes almost an interruption in an otherwise very readable work.

Craton and Saunders do employ a strategy of presenting a handful of separate anecdotal chapters to accompany the more deliberately analytical ones. These storylike chapters, scattered throughout the work, address subjects as varied as the era of piracy, the social world of Loyalist elite, and the day-to-day workings of a single slave plantation. Such sections provide some of the richest and most exciting material of the entire study. Yet, whatever the strengths of these individual chapters, it seems possible that the authors could have incorporated a greater percentage of this material into the more self-conscious social analysis. Such incorporation might have created a somewhat more fluid volume by continuously combining both

statistics and rigorous argument with engaging anecdotal narrative. Ironically, the final chapter on "Slave Resistance and the End of Slavery" achieves this ideal balance better than any other part of the text, mixing analysis with anecdote in a style that augurs well if it foretells the second volume of this much-needed work.

Islanders in the Stream provides a comprehensive history of the Bahamas on a scale which has hitherto not existed. It engages the periphery of Caribbean slave society in a fashion that cannot help but enrich an historiography that has tended to concentrate on the sugar-cultivating heart of the Caribbean world. Furthermore, in an age when so many works offer rich description and analysis of small parts of society, this book demonstrates that big stories can still be told without sacrificing any of the new vision or new techniques in the hands of contemporary historians.

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Paula J. Byrne — *Criminal Law and Colonial Subject: New South Wales, 1810–1830*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993. Pp. xiv, 301.

Historians of crime and criminal justice have looked forward to the publication of this book, expecting a major contribution to a still scanty Australian literature on the subject. In particular, this promises to be a useful companion to David Neal's recent and excellent *The Rule of Law in a Penal Colony: Law and Power in Early New South Wales*, which examines legal ideology and structures; Byrne studies the operation of the law "on the ground". That promise is only partly fulfilled. There are a lot of good things in this book, but the reader needs to hunt around for them and to be very patient in the process.

The title suggests a study of crime, the criminal law, and criminal justice, and a good deal of information is presented on these issues. For example, there is a useful analysis of the role of criminal law in regulating the employment contract in a society where so many employees were convicts, assigned to government work or private employers and lacking even the limited freedoms of workers in other societies. The cases that showed up in magistrate's courts largely involved theft from employers, absences from work, and neglect of work in various forms. Byrne is able to demonstrate that "the convict servant's day, work and production were the centre of the attention of the courts" (p. 38); she also shows by using the court records that convicts as well as government and employers were able to "negotiate" the terms and conditions of labour. There are also good sections or chapters on the social context of theft, domestic violence, rape, and bushranging — the phenomenon of criminal gangs operating in the rural areas. The chapter on policing presents an intriguing argument: that policing in the colony was organized for, and conceived as, the policing of a convict society, and that the resulting perceptions and structures were extended to the free population. There were not two systems of policing, but one. This argument draws some support from the level of resistance to police, but I was not in the end convinced by it, for the conflicts between