

MICHAEL CRATON, with the assistance of GARRY GREENLAND. — *Searching for the Invisible Man: Slaves and Plantation Life in Jamaica*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978. Pp. xxiii, 439.

Employing a unique combination of surviving documents, Michael Craton offers a micro-history of life on the Jamaican plantation of Worthy Park over a period of two centuries. Craton's computerized data on individual slaves and wage labourers allow for extraordinarily detailed forays into its social structure. Tables and figures, breaking down the population by age, sex, colour, origin and occupation, are accompanied by helpful maps and illustrations. Craton provides important comments on fertility, mortality and disease at Worthy Park, and properly places them in a broader comparative framework. On the economic side the *Invisible Man* not only furnishes us with a detailed profit series from 1783 to 1838, but, by comparison with data from the post-apprenticeship period, attempts a reasoned analysis of relative costs of labour at Worthy Park before and after slavery.

In a broader context, Craton's working assumption is that the significance of his plantation study depends on its relative typicality vis-a-vis Jamaica as a whole. Regarding Worthy Park itself, in the *longue durée*, his major conclusion is that it has always tended towards the social homeostasis entailed in the relatively static labour requirements of a plantation economy. His prologue intones the theme, *plus ça change*, and his coda is entitled "the Seamless Cloth."

Both his premise of "typicality" for Jamaica, and "seamless" model of development lead Craton to bypass some important analytic opportunities, and to miss some of the implications of his evidence.

Craton's model seems to hinder his appreciation of the often dramatic and permanent changes in the life of Worthy Park in the sixty years after 1783, and especially following emancipation. In dealing with the transition to free labour, Craton focuses on the initially relatively high rate of male retention, while inferentially attempting to discount the less than 50 percent female retention rate from 1838-42. Yet the minimum 50 percent reduction of women's expenditure of time and energy on the plantation in the decade after emancipation was surely more important in the life of the community than the momentary relative stability of male personnel (including part-timers) emphasized by Craton. Nor is any comparison drawn with similar working behaviour of black women after the American Civil War (as in the works of Gutman, and of Ransom and Sutch). Put another way, and in Craton's own long-term seamless perspective, two-thirds of the decrease in the women's share of the labour force at Worthy Park from the mid-1830s to the 1970s came in the first decade. Craton's own title for the post-emancipation section, "The Sons of Slavery," is in itself amply revealing of his frame of reference.

There is a more crucial lacuna in Craton's measurement of the transition. The new situation of labour simply cannot be gauged principally through the detection of ex-slave names in the wage rosters. In his prologue (p. 23), Craton notes that "even a cursory look at the landholdings" shows that there was ample room for ex-slaves beyond the sugar fields. This cursory view is unfortunately the last. More ample room for cultivation must have meant more ample leeway for choice and bargaining. Given the existence of new opportunities there is no reason why Craton should find it paradoxical that those who had been given the most workable land were most likely to be labelled as unreliable and disloyal by the planters. Nor is there more reason why Craton should look for the cause of accelerating "old slave" desertion in the early 1840s in the collapsing price of sugar in London in the later 1840s. Without as detailed a look at land as at wage records, attempts to draw a balance sheet between continuity and change for the sons, as for the

daughters, of slavery, or to explain the work choices of newly peasant-proletarians at Worthy Park, are premature.

The premise of Worthy Park's "typicality" for Jamaica as a whole is also questionable at critical periods. The first comparative intercolonial figure in *Invisible Man* (p. 75) shows that the Worthy Park's sex ratio resembled that of Barbados more than that of Jamaica after 1815. Given the extraordinarily low ratio of males to females how well can Craton's remarks on the sexual deprivation of black men apply to Worthy Park toward the end of slavery, and how much can his sex data be used as a proxy variable for increased racial tension, in absence of other strong evidence? Instead of implying that sexual tensions made Worthy Park more like the rest of simmering Jamaica ca. 1830, Craton might well have asked whether the Worthy Park's atypically low male/female ratio may actually have helped to reduce social tensions at that critical moment.

The urge to "typicality" also dogs Craton's views on economic change. In his prologue Craton seems ready to abandon his former adherence to Eric Williams' timing of West Indian decline. However, he later begins his picture of Worthy Park demography after 1783 in the context of declining Jamaican profits from the 1780s. Regardless of his accuracy about the whole colony from the 1780s (no estimates are provided), the Worthy Park figures fly in the face of his characterization of Jamaica. They show both average gross profits and profits per field slave rising steadily from the first data year given (1783), until after the end of the slave trade. Thus either the Jamaican decline does not date from the 1780s, or we have a striking example of Worthy Park's extraordinary position. As for the period following abolition of the slave trade in 1807, the tendency to make Worthy Park as congruent as possible with Jamaica leads the author to conclude, despite his own findings elsewhere, that in the very last years of slavery "even production per field hand had begun to decline again" (p. 172). The atypicality of Worthy Park's sustained production between 1807-1832 is also overlooked by using the quite exceptional year 1812 as the base, rather than multi-year averages.

In view of the obviously lavish expenditure of resources on this handsomely produced volume it is a pity that it has no index, even for proper names, and that the standards of proofreading are sometimes lax. For example, in the study's crucial tables on births and deaths (nos. 23-9) the fertility and mortality rate columns are obviously mislabeled as percentiles. If not, during slavery days, the fertile women at Worthy Park often gave birth to more than one child per year, and in 1794, 105 percent of the slaves at Worthy Park died. Later tables, listing rates per *thousand* are presumably the true indicators.

Even with these reservations, the *Invisible Man* has opened new doors to the study of West Indian plantation slavery. It certainly rewards scrupulous reading. Craton deserves a full measure of recognition for having made his documents, so abundant and yet so meagre, yield a story with depth and continuity.

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André LACHANCE. — *La Justice criminelle du Roi au Canada au XVIII^e siècle*. Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1978. Pp. xvi, 187.

In 1966 André Lachance produced *Le Bourreau au Canada sous le régime français*. It is a delightful, little book that goes beyond the subject of the public