Judy Raymond, *The Colour of Shadows: Images of Caribbean Slavery*. Miami FL: Caribbean Studies Press, 2016. vi + 193 pp. (Paper US\$24.50)

Historians of Caribbean slavery invariably incorporate contemporary art merely as captioned illustrations. Judy Raymond breaks new ground, combining a biography of Richard Perkins Bridgens with a history of Caribbean slavery using Bridgens's drawings as the primary source. In 1823, following an imperial directive, the government of Trinidad launched the experiment commonly known as amelioration, which lasted until 1834. Bridgens arrived in the colony in 1826 and lived as a resident planter up to 1831. By and large, *In the Colour of Shadows* is a reinterpretation of the social history of amelioration through contemporary art.

Although the framework of the book is historical and biographical, Raymond occasionally abandons the historian's strict reliance on evidence and gives full reign to poetic imagination and novelistic liberty in order to endow the enslaved people with greater humanity and restore the vitality of their material environment. This makes the work more appealing to a diverse audience. To wit: Raymond makes "tropical nights" the central drama of slavery. While "the planter's fears skittered through the night," it was time for the enslaved "to take their freedom and revenge," both occurring against the backdrop of a revelry of nature: "the darkness loud with crickets, the deep-throated barking of frogs, the wind rustling and rattling through the cane and the bush" (pp. 61–62). Using Bridgens's drawings as a springboard, Raymond surveys every aspect of the life of the enslaved, including their cuisine; pathology and medical treatment; religion and beliefs; leisure and entrepreneurship. She also vividly explores the lived monotony and subhuman conditions of the enslaved, from the making of sugar "around the clock" (p. 53) to "the sleep of exhaustion, stretched out on mattresses of dried cane leaves spread over beds of planks or heaped on a beaten earthen floor" (p. 62). In Chapter 9, she measures Bridgens's uniqueness and historical contribution by comparing his work with other contemporary painters of Caribbean slavery, such as Agostino Brunias, George Robertson, Isaac Belisario, Michel Jean Cazabon (Trinidad's most famous postslavery painter), and European painters of peasant life, particularly Pieter Bruegel.

The book pivots on the thesis that Bridgens maintained "artistic integrity" in drawing enslaved African characters: rising above the racial prejudices of his class, his art "reveals no misgivings about the conditions they worked under or the way they were treated" (p. 142). Raymond strongly disagrees with modern critics such as Gillian Forrester and Radiclari Clytus, who utterly reject Brid-

gens's paintings as "racist caricatures" (p. 3). Setting aside the "mild satire" in Bridgens's drawing "Sunday Morning in Town," she argues that his portraiture of enslaved Africans "was not to romanticise their everyday lives" or defend the system of slavery. Despite her indictment of Bridgens for another racially tainted sketch, "Negro Dance," she contends that for a white man, civil servant, and planter, Bridgens's artistic integrity "makes his work unique" (p. 87).

Doubtlessly, Raymond's primary objective is to vouch for the historical value of Bridgens's images of slavery, not to be an apologist for his political orientation. The main challenge to her thesis, however, comes from acknowledging that Bridgens had "a vested economic interest in the scenes he drew and the system they represented" (p. 134) and, more importantly, that his "work" included textual commentaries. Raymond admits that Bridgens embraced repugnant opinions of eighteenth-century scientific racists such as Pieter Camper, even to the extent of modifying "at least one drawing to match this idea" of innate African inferiority. While one might readily concede, "one swallow does not a summer make"; Bridgens ubiquitously embellished his textual descriptions of Africans with contemporary racist epithets. This makes for an interesting paradox that keeps readers alert for Raymond's resolution.

At the risk of vindicating Bridgens's critics, Raymond indicts him for describing African curls with an "air of condescension" (p. 74). Again, she admits that Bridgens overtly descended into the realm of contemporary racism "in one of the most racist passages in his book" (p. 88). Like a parent chastising a wayward child she passionately denounces the artist: "Blinded by racist theory about 'animal spirits,' Bridgens does not grasp why these dances and dancing were so important to enslaved people" (pp. 86–87). Unlike her equivocation on Bridgens's attitude toward Africans, she pulls no punches in affirming the artist's racism toward the indigenous peoples whom the elites "barely regarded as human." Without considering the record of dehumanization of the "Amerindians" for over 200 years, Bridgens accepted that their condition was a consequence of "innate character flaws of laziness, apathy, and lack of moral fibre" (p. 121).

To the end, the paradox in pitting Bridgens's artistic integrity against his unmitigated racist writings remains unreconciled. Nevertheless, Raymond's book is a valuable addition to the scholarship on Caribbean slavery and an excellent biography of a colonial artist written from an Atlantic-world perspective.

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