Curiosities, Commodities, and Transplanted Bodies in Hans Sloane's "Natural History of Jamaica"

Author(s): Kay Dian Kriz

Source: *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Jan., 2000, Vol. 57, No. 1 (Jan., 2000), pp. 35-78

Published by: Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture

Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/2674358

Curiosities, Commodities, and Transplanted Bodies in Hans Sloane's "Natural History of Jamaica"

Kay Dian Kriz

IN September 1687, Hans Sloane embarked from Plymouth on a ship bound for Jamaica, where he would serve as personal physician to the newly appointed governor of the island, Christopher Monck, second duke of Albemarle. Looking after the health of an aristocrat famous for his dissolute behavior had its risks in an area known to be a tropical hell, for in the seventeenth century the mortality rate of English people in Jamaica was notoriously high.[1] Sloane survived the adventure but his shipmate, the duke, died ten months after their arrival. Neither the duke's corpse nor his widow and his physician could return to England immediately, because the country was "gloriously" reforming itself by expelling one king, the francophile James II, and inviting another, William of Orange, to take his place on the throne, an event that led to renewed hostilities between British and French fleets on the high seas. Five months after Albemarle's death, Sloane and the duchess began the

Kay Dian Kriz is an associate professor in the Department of History of Art and Architecture, Brown University. Research on this project was generously funded by a Salomon Faculty Research Award from Brown University and a Huntington/National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship. Many thanks to Jessica Dandona, my research assistant, and to the following people who read and commented on earlier versions of this article: Rose Marie San Juan, James Secord, Evie Lincoln, Claire Buck, and Joseph Roach. I am especially grateful to Richard Rath and the anonymous readers of this article for their close and critical reading of the manuscript. Finally, I would like to thank Roxann Wheeler and Amy Meyers for sharing their knowledge of early American and British natural history in the course of many wonderful conversations over the past two and a half years.

[1] Richard S. Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies 1624–1713* (Chapel Hill, 1972), 153. Dunn states that while an estimated 12,000 Englishmen came to Jamaica in the first 6 years (1655–1661) of its settlement, by the end of that time the colony's population was only 3,470. Tropical fevers and starvation accounted for most of the deaths. Although the mortality rate had improved by the time Sloane came to Jamaica, the island still had the reputation of being a tropical hell. See, for example, the most widely read account of the island by the satirist Edward Ward (who probably never visited the island), *A Trip to Jamaica: With a True Character of the People and Island,* 3d ed. (London, 1698). Ward describes Jamaica as "the Dunghill of the Universe, the Refuse of the whole Creation . . . as Sickly as an Hospital, as Dangerous as the Plague, as Hot as Hell, and as Wicked as the Devil" (p. 14).

William and Mary Quarterly, 3d Series, Volume LVII, Number 1, January 2000

sea voyage to accompany the duke's body back to England.[2] They ventured anxiously, unable to verify who was king or to determine if England was at war with France until their ship was in sight of Lands End. When Sloane asked the master of a boat they overtook near the entrance to the English Channel for an account of public affairs, he was told "that King *William* was well at *Whitehall,* and King *James* in *France,* that there was War with *France,* and that the Channell was full of Privateers, who had taken many Prizes." The entourage prudently landed at Plymouth rather than risk attack in the Channel. With obvious relief, Sloane concluded his account of the voyage by remarking that "her Grace the Dutchess of *Albemarle* Landed with most of us . . . and came up thanks be to God, with Safety by Land to *London.*"[3]

The particulars of this journey come from the travel tale that Sir Hans Sloane uses to frame the natural history sections of his lavishly illustrated *Voyage to the Islands Madera, Barbados, Nieves, S. Christophers and Jamaica, with the Natural History of the Herbs and Trees, Four-footed Beasts, Fishes, Birds, Insects, Reptiles, etc. of the Last of those Islands.*[4] Both the voyage and the publication that resulted from it were profoundly affected by the movements of English rulers, dead and alive, across the Atlantic Ocean and the English Channel. Such movements to displace and replace monarchs and their official representatives were crucially involved in perpetuating the power of that entity known as "Great Britain," both at its center and at its (all too permeable) colonial perimeter.[5] Although it has become a commonplace to regard the events of 1688–1689 as ushering in a new age of political stability, Britons living then did not have the benefit of hindsight. As Sloane's anxious account of the return voyage suggests, the nature and stability of the state that would emerge from this new relation-

[2] The logbook of the *Assistance* confirms that it was carrying the duke's body as well as conveying the duchess and Sloane back to England, although later, in mid-ocean, the entire party was transferred to another ship in the convoy. *Assistance* logbook, cited in Estelle Frances Ward, *Christopher Monck, Duke of Albemarle* (London, 1915), 330.

[3] Sloane, *A Voyage to the Islands Madera, Barbados, Nieves, S. Christophers and Jamaica, with the Natural History of the Herbs and Trees, Four-footed Beasts, Fishes, Birds, Insects, Reptiles, Etc. of the Last of those Islands,* 2 vols. (London, 1707, 1725), 2:348. Throughout this article, I refer to Sloane's text as the "Natural History of Jamaica," the title of the second section, which is my principal subject. I have preserved its 18th-century spelling, capitalization, and emphasis.

[4] Sloane's account of the trip to Jamaica falls just before the descriptive text of the Natural History in volume 1 and just after that section in volume 2. The British Library owns a copy of Sloane's "Natural History of Jamaica" bound in 4 volumes, but most copies (including the physician's own) appear to have been bound in two.

[5] Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (New York, 1996), 39. My thinking about the formation of communal memory and history via the complex interactions and representations of the dead and those who attempt to replace them has been greatly enriched by this provocative study.

ship of king, parliament, and people were not obvious, less so since Britain was once again thrust into war with France.

Other dangers confronted the physician in the course of his Jamaican adventure beyond those posed by dissolute aristocrats, disaffected Jacobites, and French privateers. These threats surface in the introduction to volume 2, where Sloane states that the remote parts of the island contain many interesting curiosities but have no lodgings "and are often full of Serpents and other venomous Creatures. . . . The same Places remote from Settlements are very often full of run away Negros, who lye in Ambush to kill the Whites who come within their reach."[6] Runaway slaves had long been seen as a threat to the economic and social well-being of the British sugar colonies. According to Sloane, they (along with serpents and other venomous creatures) also impeded the physician's activities as a natural historian, for in the presence of such dangers, "the Observations to be made must be very much short of that accuracy, which those void of such Circumstances attending them may have."[7]

In the face of such diverse threats to the British presence at home, on the high seas, and in the Caribbean wilderness, Sloane's "Natural History of Jamaica" can be seen as an attempt not only to catalogue the "natural order" of plants and animals but also to order and contain the diverse array of humans inhabiting the outer limits of an empire that was in flux. Although the story Sloane tells may take the form of a "natural history," it is really a "supernatural history"—a ghost story in which buried treasures and curious objects conjure up visions of the living, the banished, and the dead. These particular people and objects, I argue, prove remarkably resistant to a reordering of knowledge that attempts to stabilize and naturalize a network of power relationships through particular forms of classification and visual representation.

Like the texts that accompany them, the visual images in natural histories serve a variety of functions that depend on the circumstances of their production and also on the particular conditions of their reception—that is, who was viewing them, when, and in what specific situations. No single analysis will produce a definitive reading of a particular natural history text or set of images. Here I explore one aspect of the complex and highly fluid process by which multiple meanings are produced through visual representation: specifically, how certain images in Sloane's text become important sites for the staging of the conflict around the fixing and unfixing of power relations.[8] With one exception,

[6] Sloane, "Natural History of Jamaica," 2:xviii.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Although Sloane's text is frequently cited by historians of natural history, medicine, and West Indian slavery, it awaits a full-scale critical analysis. The most recent and most thorough account can be found in Arthur MacGregor, ed., *Sir Hans Sloane: Collector, Scientist, Antiquary, Founding Father of the British Museum* (London, 1994).

the engraved plates in his "Natural History of Jamaica" do not picture human beings, which is not surprising, since "man" became an object of natural history only later in the eighteenth century.[9] It seems all the more important, therefore, to understand how images of artifacts, of plants, and of animals helped articulate new and fraught relationships under construction in the Atlantic world.[10]

The inability of a printed natural history such as Sloane's securely to define, and thus to contain, the objects it pictures and describes runs counter to our modern, common-sense assumption that printing enables ideas to be fixed and communicated reliably through the publication of a single text, circulating in multiple copies. As Adrian Johns convincingly demonstrates, in the early modern period, "far from the meaning of a book being fixed by the printing press . . . [it is] something arrived at constructively, different communities pursuing interpretative conventions specific to their time and place."[11] Sloane's "Natural History of Jamaica" is precisely this kind of unstable printed object—produced by many individuals and read, very likely in piecemeal fashion, by readers with widely different interests and capacities for engaging with the written and visual material on offer. The physical manifestation of this instability can be seen in the various ways that plates are inserted into the volumes, which were customarily sold unbound. In one of the copies I examined, for example, all of the illustrations are grouped together, while in the other five, they are split into two groups (this placement is discussed below). These subtle shifts in physical placement can affect the way that individual plates and the set as a whole are interpreted.

As Johns has shown, despite this lack of fixity, institutions and individuals did attempt to mobilize printing as a way to confer authority by confirming particular forms of knowledge.[12] To enhance their professional authority and social status, physicians in seventeenth-century Europe used the medium of print to gain the respect of an international community of literati.[13] For a physician to establish himself as a liberal

[9] Nicholas Hudson notes that it was in the early 18th century that "man" began to be included in studies of living systems. See his "From 'Nation' to 'Race': The Origin of Racial Classification in Eighteenth-Century Thought," *Eighteenth-Century Studies,* 29 (1996), 251.

[10] Amy R. W. Meyers also takes up this issue of colonial exchange as represented through natural history images in "Picturing a World in Flux: Mark Catesby's Response to Environmental Interchange and Colonial Expansion," in *Empire's Nature: Mark Catesby's New World Vision,* ed. Meyers and Margaret Beck Pritchard (Chapel Hill, 1999), 228–61.

[11] Johns, "Natural History as Print Culture," in *Cultures of Natural History,* ed. N. Jardine, J. A. Secord, and E. C. Spary (Cambridge, 1996), 106–07.

[12] Johns explores at length the complex processes by which printing comes to be credited with ensuring the fixity of knowledge and scientific authority in *The Nature of the Book: Print and Knowledge in the Making* (Chicago and London, 1998).

[13] For the forging of a polite "republic of letters" through printing and writing, see Anne Goldgar, *Impolite Learning: Conduct and Community in the Republic of Letters*

gentleman meant to publicize the intellectual aspects of his field (for example, the close observation, description, and cataloguing of plants with potential medicinal value) and to distance himself from hands-on medical treatment. It is not surprising, then, that the only known portrait of Sloane that directly refers to his Jamaican sojourn shows him as an author, not in his official capacity as ducal physician (nor as an entrepreneur who was involved in marketing chocolate back in London, or even as an absentee West Indian landowner and slaveholder—a position he attained in 1695 when he married a Jamaican heiress with substantial property on the island).[14] The portrait (Figure I), painted by Stephen Slaughter in 1736, shows Sloane seated and holding a watercolor drawing or color engraving of the leaves of a lace bark tree that served as the basis for plate 168 in volume 2 of his "Natural History of Jamaica."[15] If "bountiful Jamaican nature" is particularized in the image of the lace bark, it is also generalized and classicized: in a niche behind the sitter is a statue of Diana of Ephesus, a Roman goddess associated with Nature and fecundity. Such a visual reference elevates not only "nature" but also the physician-scholar, whose knowledge of classical culture and learning is crucial in confirming his authority as a liberal scholar-gentleman.

Like this portrait, the significance of Sloane's "Natural History of Jamaica," for its author and its public, depends on the specific historical context in which it is read. Although the book chronicles the physician's activities in Jamaica in the 1680s, considerable time passed before the first volume was published; another eighteen years elapsed before the second volume appeared. The historical circumstances of its publication, therefore, were somewhat different from those of its inception in the 1680s. Since those early years, Sloane's professional fortunes altered considerably and for the better—by 1693 he was secretary of the Royal

1680–1730 (New Haven, 1995), 12–26. Goldgar cites a letter written to Sloane in 1733 by Jacob Wetstein and William Smith, on behalf of two young French scholars who needed a copy of his "Natural History of Jamaica" but could not afford the going price of 5 guineas. The authors of the letter stated that the young men, who were compiling a medical dictionary, were "not yet known in the Republick of Letters, but . . . are in the way of acquiring soon, esteem and reputation in it."; quoted in Goldgar, *Impolite Learning,* 22.

[14] Sloane married Elizabeth Langley, the widow of the wealthy planter Fulke Rose. She inherited her father's Jamaican estates and a third of the income from her late husband's extensive property; MacGregor, *Sir Hans Sloane,* 13. For Sloane's involvement in selling chocolate, see ibid., 15.

[15] The image Sloane holds in the portrait directly refers to the "Natural History," for it prominently includes the figure numbers that appear in the plate. It is not clear whether this is supposed to represent a print or a drawing. Preparatory watercolor drawings of plant specimens usually did not include figure numbers, yet this particular image differs markedly from the engraving of the lace bark that appears in the "Natural History" (the latter includes details of the bark and the plant in flower).

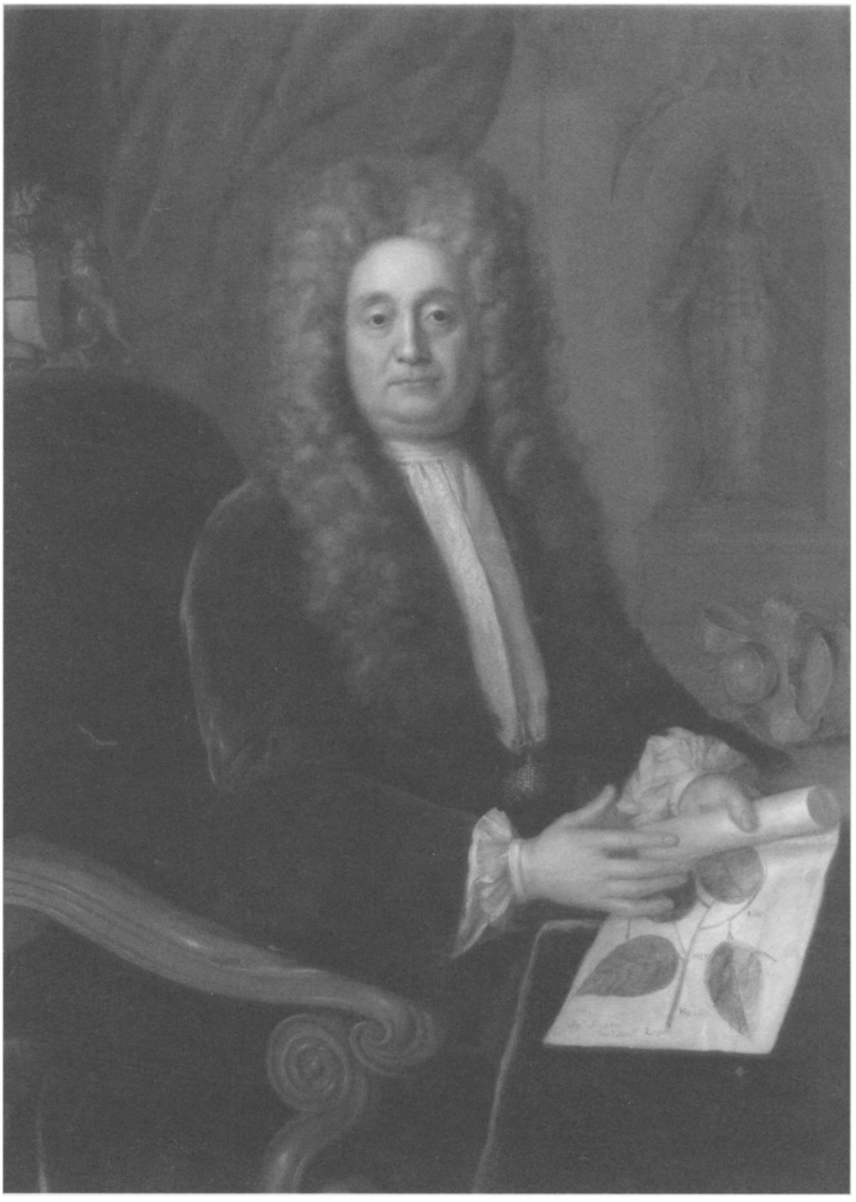

FIGURE I

Stephen Slaughter, *Portrait of Sir Hans Sloane,* 1736, oil on canvas. Photograph by courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery, London.

Society, and in 1712 he became Physician Extraordinary to Queen Anne, continuing in that position under King George I. He was created a baronet in 1716, an honor rare among medical men at that time.[16] The work thus served to confirm the professional status of a physician already highly esteemed by his peers.

Physicians' efforts to maintain their professional authority took on a heightened urgency in the early 1700s, for they were engaged in a (losing) battle with apothecaries over who was qualified to mandate the proper use of drugs. In 1704 the House of Lords ruled against physicians by allowing apothecaries the right to prescribe medications.[17] The physicians did not give up the fight, however. According to a contemporary account from 1720, Sloane attempted to discredit the Company of Apothecaries by claiming he would bring before the House of Lords "five hundred drugs that all the Apothecarys in town should not know one of."[18] Among its many functions, then, the "Natural History of Jamaica" can be seen as an intervention in this debate, for surely many of the rare drugs the physician referred to derived from the Jamaican plants pictured within its covers. Indeed, as Sloane notes in the preface to volume 1, his interest in the medicinal properties of plants initially spurred his botanical studies and his desire to travel to Jamaica. Not only did he endeavor to describe new or poorly identified species, but, as the descriptive catalogue that directly precedes the illustrations amply demonstrates, he was also keen to determine the positive and negative effects of Jamaican plants on the human inhabitants of a tropical environment.[19] This focus on the interaction between plants and people in the descriptive catalogue testifies to the physician's overarching concern to produce a "natural history" of human life in Jamaica and is further affirmed in the long introduction to volume 1, which includes an extended discussion of the customs and morals of Jamaica's inhabitants and concludes with brief medical histories of the more than one hundred individuals he treated there.

It would be a mistake, however, to see this publishing enterprise only as an attempt to gain the upper hand in the battle between physicians and apothecaries or even to gain the esteem of literati in England, America, and Europe. Another obvious public for the work was the more localized British community of virtuosi that made up the membership of

[16] MacGregor, *Sir Hans Sloane,* 15.

[17] Harold Cook, *The Decline of the Old Medical Regime in Stuart London* (Ithaca, 1986), 246–49.

[18] MacGregor, *Sir Hans Sloane,* 89 n. 6.

[19] In the preface (unpaged) to volume 1 Sloane writes that his voyage to Jamaica "seem'd likewise to promise to be useful to me, as a Physician; many of the Antient and best Physicians having travell'd to the Places whence their Drugs were brought, to inform themselves concerning them."

the Royal Society. Sloane served as secretary of the Society from 1693 to 1713 and president from 1732 to 1741 and also was deeply involved in the publication of its Philosophical Transactions at the time that his "Natural History of Jamaica" was being published and circulated. This organization was dominated by titled and untitled gentlemen, courtiers, politicians, physicians, and the like, and it also included a small contingent of merchants.[20]

One of the most active of these merchants was the apothecary and tea dealer John Houghton, who published a weekly London newspaper, *A Collection for Improvement of Husbandry and Trade,* from 1692 to 1703.[21] Supplementing regular lists of shipping in and out of the Port of London were feature articles designed to promote various types of commercial ventures. In the issue for December 20, 1695, Houghton remarks on the large proportion of ships in the Port of London involved in trade with the West Indies and goes on to observe: "In order to improve this *West-Indian* Trade, I believe it would be well worth while to have it some body's Business to make a good Natural History as well as can be, and to study how every thing therer [sic] may be improved, and what useful known matters grow in other Countries, that in Probability might grow there, and also to settle the *Guinea-Trade* for *Blacks,* which are the usefullest Merchandize can be carried thither, except *White-Men.*"[22] The publishing of West Indian natural history and "settling" the African slave trade are promoted here in the same breath, as closely associated activities that have a direct bearing on the commercial fortunes of the nation. In this intertwining of the commercial with the scientific, Houghton's newspaper and Sloane's eclectic natural history can be seen as attempts to engage and to confirm the authority of very different types of readers: not only the liberal gentleman, schooled in the Latin classics, but also the British man of commerce, whose economic mastery of the Caribbean islands depended on a pragmatic understanding of material that was diverse in form as well as content.[23] In Sloane's illustrated folios, both the written text and the engraved images of plants, animals, and artifacts are constitutive of the dominant discourse on this new colonial space and

[20] For a breakdown by profession of Royal Society members see Michael Hunter, *The Royal Society and Its Fellows 1660–1770: The Morphology of an Early Scientific Institution,* 2d ed. (Chalfont St. Giles, Eng., 1994), 26.

[21] On Houghton's (largely unsuccessful) efforts to increase the number of merchants in the Royal Society see ibid., 43, 59–60.

[22] Houghton, ed., *A Collection for Improvement of Husbandry and Trade,* Dec. 20, 1695.

[23] On the production of the "commercial gaze" through travel writings and other trade-oriented publications such as Houghton's, see Margaret Hunt, "Racism, Imperialism, and the Traveler's Gaze in Eighteenth-Century England," *Journal of British Studies,* 32 (1993), 333–57.

are inextricably linked. Knowledge of the West Indies is predicated on the ability to read various types of pictorial texts in conjunction with diverse written texts that are largely in English but include crucial Latin insertions.[24]

Many earlier accounts of the West Indies, such as Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo's *De la Natural Historia de las Indias* (1526) and Charles de Rochefort's *Histoire Naturelle et Morale des Iles Antilles de l'Amérique* (1665), also combined in an eclectic fashion descriptions and images of Caribbean flora and fauna with a broader commentary on the social life of the islands. Sloane's was the first major publication to combine a voyage-type commentary with a natural history catalogue in which plants and animals are identified by pre-Linnaean Latin tags that were often lengthy; these specimens are further described in English with extensive citations of other texts and illustrated with 274 detailed engravings.[25] Most of the plants are depicted full scale and derive from tracings of living or dried specimens.[26]

Like all such illustrated books, the "Natural History of Jamaica" involved scores of people—among them planters, African slaves, and Amerindians who provided Sloane with plant and animal specimens.[27] Sloane hired a local amateur artist, the Reverend Garrett Moore, to travel around Jamaica with him and make on-the-spot sketches and also drawings based on collected specimens. Back in England, the Dutch artist Everhard Kick executed additional drawings and tracings from dried specimens. At least two engravers were involved in producing the plates:

[24] Paula Findlen observes that in the late 17th century there was a very limited market for scholarly natural histories that were in Latin and lavishly illustrated. Expensive to produce, these works served the interests of scholars more than their patrons; Findlen, "Courting Nature," in *Cultures of Natural History,* ed. Jardine, Secord, and Spary, 73. Sloane published an unillustrated Latin catalogue of Jamaican plants (*Catalogus Plantarum*) in London in 1696. Setting the later natural history in English and framing it with the account of the voyage, augmented with plates containing curious human artifacts, all can be seen as calculated to expand the readership for the book beyond this circumscribed circle of cognoscenti.

[25] In the introduction to volume 2 Sloane attempted to refute the criticism that many of his illustrations and descriptions of flora had been already reproduced by Leonard Plukenet (Leonardi Plukenetij) in his two-volume *Phytographia* (London, 1691). Sloane claimed Plukenet had sought descriptions of plants from Sloane for this work and published those descriptions without citing him (2:xvi). The *Phytographia* includes plants from the Caribbean, Africa, and other foreign sites. Compared to Sloane's travel narrative cum natural history, Plukenet's work is narrower in scope, confining its attention to describing (in Latin) and illustrating plant specimens.

[26] The plants acquired by Sloane in Jamaica were pasted into 8 volumes that are now part of the massive Sloane Herbarium, housed in the Botanical Library at the Natural History Museum in South Kensington. One can easily make out indentations around those specimens that were traced in order to make drawings for the engravings.

[27] Sloane, "Natural History of Jamaica," 1:preface (unpaginated).

the Englishman John Savage and the highly regarded Flemish engraver Michael Van der Gucht. The project also required the services of unnamed printers and binders and, of course, Sloane, who directed all aspects of his publication, which is evident from the close coordination of plates and text.

In the introduction to volume 2 the physician alludes to the collaborative nature of the publication, replying to charges by critics of volume 1 that his illustrations are not exact. He explains that many of the images were made from dried plants and that "the Person who fastened them into the Books, he who design'd them afterwards, and the Engravers have committed several Mistakes. I had observ'd Books of Natural History and Voyages to be so fill'd with Figures of Natural Productions made from relations by word of Mouth and Memory, that I was perhaps too nice in not correcting what was amiss, my Reason being, that if there were any Slips of that kind in the Prints, they were easily to be mended, by perusing their Descriptions."[28] The author acknowledges the errors committed by these various individuals, but then offers a way of reading the text closely with the images as a corrective to these mistakes. The relationship between visual images and other forms of representation is complicated, for while Sloane implies that his written descriptions possess more authority than the engravings, his insistence on making life-size engravings from the tracings of actual plants grows out of his dissatisfaction with images produced from "relations by word of Mouth and Memory." Memory and descriptions passed by word of mouth cannot be dismissed quite so easily, however. The writing of history, natural or otherwise, is nothing if not the reworking of various individual and communal memories, transmitted orally and via the written word and visual image. In Sloane's "Natural History of Jamaica" these memories, drawn from numerous times and places, inform the texts that accompany the images, animating the human artifacts and reanimating the plants and animals that are laid out with such apparent neutrality.[29]

In his study of circum-Atlantic performance, Joseph Roach demonstrates that this type of re-embodiment, or "surrogation," to use his term, is a key mechanism for the reproduction of Atlantic culture, identity, and collective social memory. Surrogation is a complex process that occurs when crucial members of a society depart (through death or other means) and replacements are sought to fill the remaining vacancies.

[28] Ibid., 2:viii.

[29] The conventions that govern natural history illustration are neither "natural" nor objective (that is, divorced from the particular interests of the individual or community mobilizing these conventions). These conventions determine the way a plant, animal, or artifact is transformed into a specimen, positioned on a page, traced or drawn, and translated into incised marks on a metal plate.

Roach argues that such a process is rarely successful in exactly replicating the loss, because the substitute will either fail to fulfill expectations or exceed them.[30] Roach's chief concern is with the written narratives, images, and performances that such attempts at replacement generate; these varied forms of representation are constitutive of communal memories, which are then mobilized in the production of histories such as Sloane's.

This way of connecting the production of collective memory and history to the destruction and replacement of physical bodies can be usefully applied to the production of a West Indian natural history, which depends so heavily on the destruction of living plants and animals, their transformation into inert specimens, and their eventual "replacement" by textual descriptions and full-scale engravings. Furthermore, European colonization of the Caribbean involved a brutal series of human displacements and replacements, which led to the forging of memories and histories that depended on active forgetting. Such attempts at erasure did not go uncontested. As Michel de Certeau has argued, the trace of what was excluded "resurfaces, it troubles, it turns the present's feeling of being 'at home' into an illusion."[31] In the Caribbean, such doomed efforts invariably were attempts to deal with various forms of violence—especially the violence involved in the enslavement and forced transportation of thousands of Africans from their homelands to the British West Indian colonies.

The conflict within colonial histories such as Sloane's between the act of forgetting and the resurfacing of repressed and usually violent memories is driven not only by the guilty workings of the British collective unconscious. More important, this discursive conflict is fueled by the pressure placed on British colonizers by those whom they were attempting to subject or displace. In Jamaica, Africans and their West Indian descendants, whose individual and collective acts of resistance ranged from armed rebellion to the parodying of European culture, and Spaniards, who formerly controlled Jamaica and still were an active presence in the region, exerted this pressure.

Much excellent scholarship has already successfully contested anglocentric accounts of British West Indian history by focusing on the culture and resistance of both indigenous peoples and Africans forcibly transported to the Caribbean.[32] This analysis of Sloane's "Natural History of

[30] Roach, *Cities of the Dead,* 2.

[31] de Certeau, *Heterologies: Discourse on the Other,* trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis, 1986), 4.

[32] There is an immense bibliography of work dealing with slave life, culture, and resistance in the Americas. Philip D. Morgan provides an excellent synopsis of this history

Jamaica" complements these accounts and does not attempt to present new information about the daily lives of Indians and Africans and their ongoing resistance to the British presence.[33] Rather, I want to demonstrate how such resistance and conflict emerge to trouble what appears to be a most neutral and unproblematic (from a colonial point of view) form of representation—natural history illustration.

Throughout Sloane's "Natural History of Jamaica," conflict and violence are never far from the surface, as evidenced most clearly in the physician's dispassionate detailing of horrific slave punishments.[34] Violent narratives are a staple of New World travel literature and natural histories; what is striking about this text is the manner in which the fear of omnipresent and ubiquitous violence, emanating from the entire Jamaican ecosystem of plants, animals, and humans, surfaces as latent content in the realm of the visual. In the discussion that follows I argue that it is in the strange disjunctions among particular images and between image and text that one can glimpse the traces of human conflict and resistance, most commonly expressed as the fear of a pervasive violence that is forgotten, but not gone.

For the most part, the images that I consider are part of a group of eleven plates numbered separately from the 274 plates that comprise the Natural History proper. The placement of these eleven plates—four in volume 1, seven in volume 2—varies from copy to copy, but in all cases that I know of they precede the 274 sequentially numbered plates, testifying to their importance as images designed to capture the attention of readers. These select images include a map and landscape; the remainder depict human artifacts, exotic animals, and plants. Although the 274 plates in the Natural History sections include three images of artifacts, the majority show individual plants (see, for example, Figure II) or animals or related groups of specimens.[35] Except for the map of Jamaica, all

---

and its historiography in his essay, "British Encounters with Africans and African-Americans, circa 1600–1780," in *Strangers within the Realm: Cultural Margins of the First British Empire,* ed. Bernard Bailyn and Morgan (Chapel Hill, 1991), 157–219. In addition to the work of Richard Cullen Rath, Mavis C. Campbell, and others (cited below, notes 33, 43), a number of important recent additions to this literature demonstrating the wide range of approaches to this topic include Ira Berlin and Morgan, eds., *Cultivation and Culture: Labor and the Shaping of Slave Life in the Americas* (Charlottesville, 1993); Richard Burton, *Afro-Creole: Power, Opposition and Play in the Caribbean* (Ithaca, 1997); and Beth Fowkes Tobin, *Picturing Imperial Power: Colonial Subjects in Eighteenth-Century British Painting* (Durham, N. C., 1999).

[33] Rath uses Sloane's "Natural History" to analyze a musical transcription of African music played by slaves in Jamaica (also discussed here), which evidences signs of slave resistance in "African Music in Seventeenth-Century Jamaica: Cultural Transit and Transition," *William and Mary Quarterly,* 3d Ser., 50 (1993), 700–26.

[34] Sloane, "Natural History of Jamaica," 1:lvii.

[35] These artifacts are African instruments (plate 232, vol. 2), which is the only plate reproduced twice, appearing also as plate 3, volume 1, among the separate group clustered

FIGURE II

"*Gramen dactylon bicorne tomentolium maximum spicus numerosissimis,*" plate 15 in volume 1, Hans Sloane, *Voyage to . . . Jamaica,* 2 vols. (London, 1707, 1725). Brown University Library photograph.

of the introductory images in volume 1 combine human artifacts with natural specimens. What distinguishes these engravings from the majority of those in the Natural History section is a heightened visual interplay between disparate objects placed in the same pictorial field. Moreover, certain disjunctions between these illustrations and the written texts relating to them work against Sloane's implicit claim to maintain the domain of the visual as a neutral space of pure knowledge, uncontaminated by "memory."[36]

Such tensions and disjunctions are apparent in the first plate of specimens (Figure III) to appear after the introduction to volume 1. Occupying a prominent position early in the text, this stunning double folio sheet was clearly designed to capture the attention of the reader/viewer. On the upper half of the sheet are two views of a land crab (from above and below), echoed in form, size, and mass by two potsherds placed in the lower half. The four objects are rendered in a deep chiaroscuro that sets them off dramatically from the white background of the paper. A sense of three-dimensionality is conveyed via a multitude of finely engraved cross-hatchings and parallel lines that follow the contours of the crab's shell and pottery fragments. A consistent light source, originating above and to the right of the objects, is indicated by the highlighted areas on the shards and, even more spectacularly, by the shadows the claws cast on the exposed underside of the crab. The indication of an actual light source was not a standard device in natural history illustration at that time. Although some shading was used in contemporary illustrations to convey a sense of volume, the effect of the shadows cast on the crab is not simply to render the animal more comprehensible in three dimensions, but also to confirm that the drawing was produced at a particular moment, from an actual specimen placed on a flat surface and illuminated by a specific light. This visual encoding of the material presence of the crab and shards establishes at the outset the scientific superiority of these engravings over those images, based on memory, that the author had so strongly disparaged.[37]

---

at the beginning of the illustrations; a cotton gin (plate 190, vol. 2), discussed below; and two barnacle encrusted bottles (plate 19, vol. 1).

[36] Sloane's privileging of vision is also apparent in the preface to volume 1, where he disparages the illustrations found in West Indian natural histories by Jean-Baptiste du Tertre and de Rochefort. Referring to the latter's *Histoire Naturelle et Morale des Iles Antilles de l'Amérique* (1665) he writes: "The Figures he gives, I suppose were not drawn upon the Place, but by Memory, and are, for that Reason, not to be Regarded."

[37] Sloane may have been pointedly distinguishing his illustrations from those of Charles Plumier, the French natural historian whose *Description des Plantes de l'Amérique* (Paris, 1693) was the most highly regarded illustrated natural history of the New World to appear prior to his own. Plumier's detailed but schematized and two-dimensional illustrations were produced without shadows because, he explained, they were easier to engrave and could be more easily colored (Plumier, "Preface," ibid., unpaged).

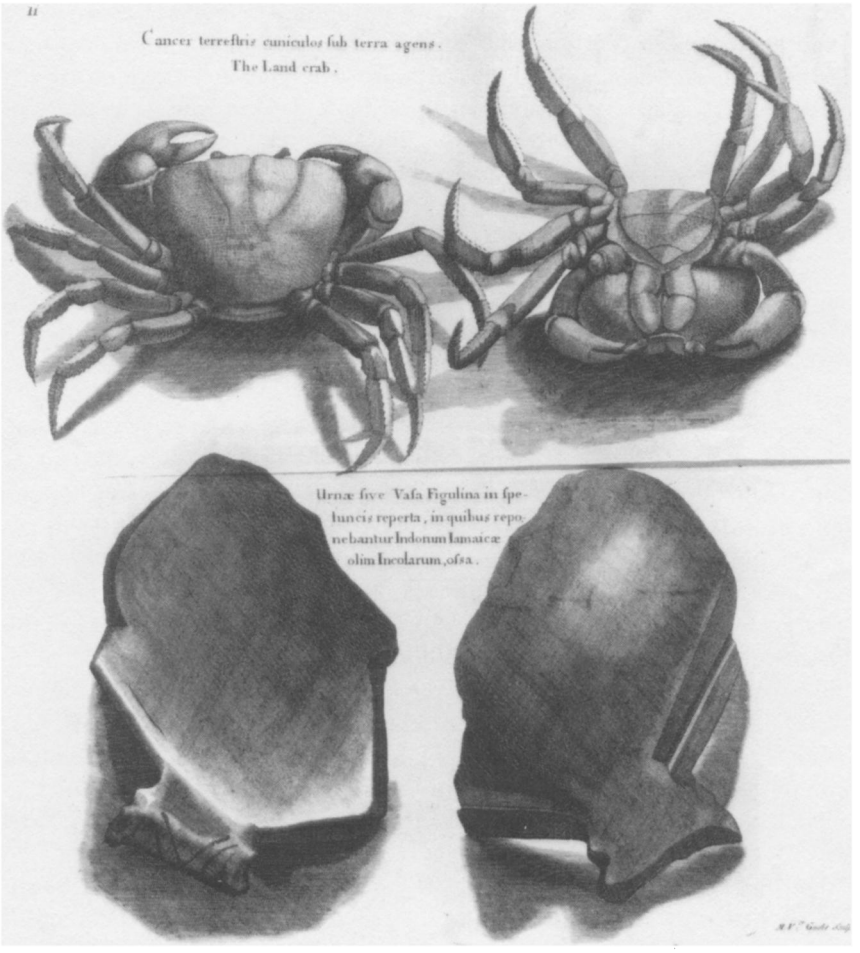

FIGURE III

"*Cancer terrestris* . . . The Land Crab" and potsherds found in a cave ("Vasa Figulina in speluncis reperta"), engraved by Michael van der Gucht, plate 2 in volume 1, Sloane, *Voyage to . . . Jamaica.* Photograph courtesy John Carter Brown Library at Brown University.

The similarity in treatment of the crab and the pottery shards (involving manipulations of both scale and form) invite the viewer to consider them "natural history" specimens that designate Jamaica a strange and often dangerous space. The land crab, Sloane observes in his

catalogue entry, looks like an ordinary European sea crab yet burrows on land like a rabbit; it is good to eat, yet under certain circumstances may be poisonous.[38] Throughout this account, the crab is both familiarized and made strange, represented as appealing and dangerous. The sense of danger is heightened by the positioning of the crab on its back: its legs are not fully splayed in an orderly fashion, as would be expected in a dead specimen, but retain a sense of tension and movement, as if the creature were still capable of attack.[39]

While the crab is identified in the illustration by its Latin tag and its common English name, the potsherds are described only in Latin as earthenware urns or pots, discovered in a cave containing the bones of an "Indian" who previously dwelled in Jamaica. In the discussion of these artifacts, Sloane relates that near the plantation of a Mr. Barnes, "a Carpenter," were "a human Body's Bones all in order, the Body having been eaten by Ants"; the skeleton lay in a cave that "was fill'd with Pots or Urns, wherein were Bones of Men and Children." Sloane describes the pots as dirty red and decorated with two parallel lines near the edge of the handles.[40] The account concludes with the comment that "the *Negroes* had remov'd most of these Pots to boil their Meat in."[41] Whereas in the Latin descriptor under the engraving Amerindians are associated with the shards, in the introduction the only identifiable bodies linked to them are those of Africans who transformed the burial urns into cooking vessels.

Thus the shards themselves could signify differently for different readers, depending how they read the images: in conjunction with that of the poisonous crabs, with the Latin descriptor, if they had the ability to read Latin, or with that segment of the introduction discussing the artifacts, or some or all of these. For Latin readers, the description of a dead Amerindian in a cave could conjure up visions of a distant Caribbean past when only native peoples populated the island, while the English text offered a more disturbing tale of carnivorous insects and Africans who remained active, ever-threatening presences. For during the decades between Sloane's Jamaican sojourn and the publication of his two-volume "Natural History of Jamaica," maroon communities made regular attacks on plantations, burning houses, killing whites, and carrying away livestock and slaves to the towns they established in the interior of the

[38] Sloane, "Natural History of Jamaica," 2:269.

[39] I thank Caroline Arscott for this perceptive observation.

[40] Sloane, "Natural History of Jamaica," 1:lxx.

[41] Ibid., 1:lxxi. Sloane does say that "in the caves where the *Indians* used to bury, the Ants would eat the whole Flesh off of the Bodies" (ibid., 1:xlviii); an alert reader could make the connection between what certainly was the same cave mentioned here and in the later discussion of the pots.

island.[42] The situation became so serious that in 1720 the governor of Jamaica hired Miskito Indians, who lived off the coast of Honduras, to fight the maroons.[43] The combined efforts of the Miskitos and two British regiments were unsuccessful, for the maroon attacks continued unabated. In 1730, the governor of Jamaica told the assembly that the frontiers (that is, areas planters were attempting to settle toward the interior) were "no longer in any Sort of Security [and] must be deserted."[44]

Despite their visual assertiveness, the potsherd images do little to stabilize these alternative yet not contradictory readings between a seemingly pacific precolonial Jamaica and one racked with conflict between planters and militant communities of former slaves. The only thing marking these objects as human are the crudely incised parallel lines that form a broken "V" on the lower edge of the piece on the left. These coarse incisions into the clay could be seen to display the technical primitiveness of their makers, especially when compared to the fine parallel and crosshatched lines of the engraving that give the objects such a sense of volume and presence.

Both Africans and Amerindians had been in Jamaica before the arrival of the English, promoting further uncertainty about who made the pots and whose bones lay beside and inside them. As the well-known narrative of the Black Legend recounts, the Spanish slaughtered most of the indigenous people living in Jamaica, Cuba, and Hispaniola in the sixteenth century when they resisted enslavement. Like other British writers on the New World, Sloane emphasizes the cruelty of the Spaniards toward Amerindians but also repeats the commonly held opinion that "Indians" were not fit for "slavish Work, and if checkt or drub'd are good for nothing."[45] Imported Africans operated as a labor force capable of filling the cavity left by the Spanish genocide of indigenous islanders, for Africans, properly disciplined, were reputed to be hard working. The disjunctions among visual image, Latin descriptor, and English text effect a slippage between Amerindians and their African surrogates that unsettles the boundary separating the living from the dead. In this instance, that boundary threatens to disappear altogether as the living appear to consume and supplant the dead through ingestion. While swarming ants consumed the skeleton in the cave and the Caribs, who were most

[42] Maroon communities were originally composed of Africans and their descendants who were enslaved by the Spanish. After the British took possession of the island, these communities continued to be augmented by runaway slaves.

[43] Campbell, *The Maroons of Jamaica, 1655–1796: A History of Resistance, Collaboration, and Betrayal* (Granby, Mass., 1988), 54.

[44] Report of Address to Assembly, *Journal of the House of Assembly, Jamaica* (1730), 2:708, cited in Orlando Patterson, *The Sociology of Slavery: An Analysis of the Origins, Development, and Structure of Negro Slave Society in Jamaica* (Rutherford, N. J., 1969), 270.

[45] Sloane, "Natural History of Jamaica," 1:xlvi.

famously characterized as cannibals, Africans here are implicated in the act of cooking meat in pots that contained the bones of their primitive predecessors.[46]

This reading of the image of the shards and crab is indebted to Michel Foucault's analysis of particular visual signs that operate via systems of resemblance and contiguity.[47] Viewers of such images are invited to draw meaningful connections among objects that resemble each other visually or coexist in the same physical space, or both. The formal resonances between animal (the crab) and artifact (the shards) imaged in the same representational space invite contemplation of the dangers present in the geographical space of the Caribbean that they both "inhabit." Supporting such an interpretation is a wide range of evidence, extending from the physical remains of a skeleton to hearsay about the edibility of crabs and the Africans' use of pots. According to Foucault, this way of drawing connections between objects that exhibit resemblance or physical proximity was passé by the late seventeenth century; in its place was an organization of knowledge based purely on observation of visible structures. Hearsay is excluded, and knowledge based on other senses is rejected in favor of pure visibility: "lines, surfaces, forms, reliefs."[48] Natural histories such as Sloane's demonstrate that the transition between these ways of reading natural signs was neither quick nor tidy, as evidenced also in well-known domestic natural histories such as those published by another fellow of the Royal Society, Robert Plot.[49] For early eighteenth-century readers, these various forms of knowledge—based on resemblance, hearsay, proximity, and pure visibility—were all potentially available in interpreting the image of the crab and potsherd. Indeed, the most sophisticated viewers/readers would be expected to understand both the scientific and the emblematic aspects of such an image, as well as to have an aesthetic appreciation for the manner and execution of the engraving.

[46] While cannibalism featured in some Anglo-European accounts of Africa in the decades around 1700, cannibals were still strongly identified as Amerindians. See Peter Hulme, *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean, 1492–1797* (London, 1986), and Philip P. Boucher, *Cannibal Encounters: Europeans and Island Caribs, 1492–1763* (Baltimore, 1992).

[47] Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York, 1994; orig. pub. 1966), 17–45, 125–65.

[48] Ibid., 132–33.

[49] Plot, *Natural History of Oxford-shire* (Oxford and London, 1677), for example, boasts a number of large plates of "stones" (fossils) that resemble various fruit, animals, and human body parts. The text does not interpret these images, but clearly they were seen to possess visual interest as curiosities that would appeal to readers drawn from the same mixed community of scholarly and nonscholarly readers that Sloane's volumes targeted.

Reading such an image is complicated by the way that written texts are mobilized in the act of interpretation. William B. Ashworth, following Foucault, argues that sixteenth-century natural histories drew specifically on the form of the emblem in producing knowledge about plants and animals.[50] Emblems consisted of a visual image, short label, and longer descriptive text. The "moral" of the emblem was not always apparent and could often be worked out only by correctly interpreting all three elements. Although postdating these emblematic natural histories by some 150 years, Sloane's text similarly depends on interpreting images in tandem with their labels and longer descriptive texts, now separated physically from the images. But as we have seen, the triangulation between potsherd image, Latin descriptor, and English text produces only an ambiguous and disturbing simulacrum of an emblematic moral that can neither speak openly of violence, nor fully repress it.

The complex narratives of violence and death that proliferate in Sloane's text are not confined to the bodies of Africans and Indians or attached only to primitive artifacts: Spanish ghosts also haunt the pages. The Spaniards' presence on the island and their dominance over the entire region in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is registered in the third plate of specimens specially placed at the beginning of volume 1. Plate 4 (Figure IV) juxtaposes a jellyfish with coins and a fragment of nail-studded wood so heavily overgrown with coral that they barely signify as artifacts. Because the descriptive label is only in Latin, nonreaders of Latin might have some difficulty identifying the encrusted coins and spar as objects of human manufacture, especially since there is no specific mention of this engraving in the text to guide them. Without referring to the illustration, Sloane relates in his introduction that he obtained the coins and spar from a Spanish galleon that sank in the Caribbean in 1659.[51] The enterprising duke of Albemarle was a major shareholder in the venture to salvage the wreck. His investment paid off, for after years of diving, thousands of pieces-of-eight were recovered, along with ingots of Mexican silver, gold plate, and precious stones. Albemarle's share of the profits amounted to between £50,000 and £60,000 in precious met-

[50] Ashworth, "Natural History and the Emblematic World View," in *Reappraisals of the Scientific Revolution,* ed. David C. Lindberg and Robert S. Westman (Cambridge, 1990), 303–32, esp. 311–18.

[51] Sloane, "Natural History of Jamaica," 1:lxxx. The physician's first account of the shipwreck and the English salvage operation appeared in a letter that he wrote on May 21, 1687, 4 months before going to Jamaica, to his friend Sir Arthur Rawdon. In the introduction to the "Natural History of Jamaica," he elaborates on this account, correcting some of the information given in the letter (such as the date and location of the wreck). The text of Sloane's letter to Rawdon is in G. R. de Beer, *Sir Hans Sloane and the British Museum* (London, 1953), 29–30.

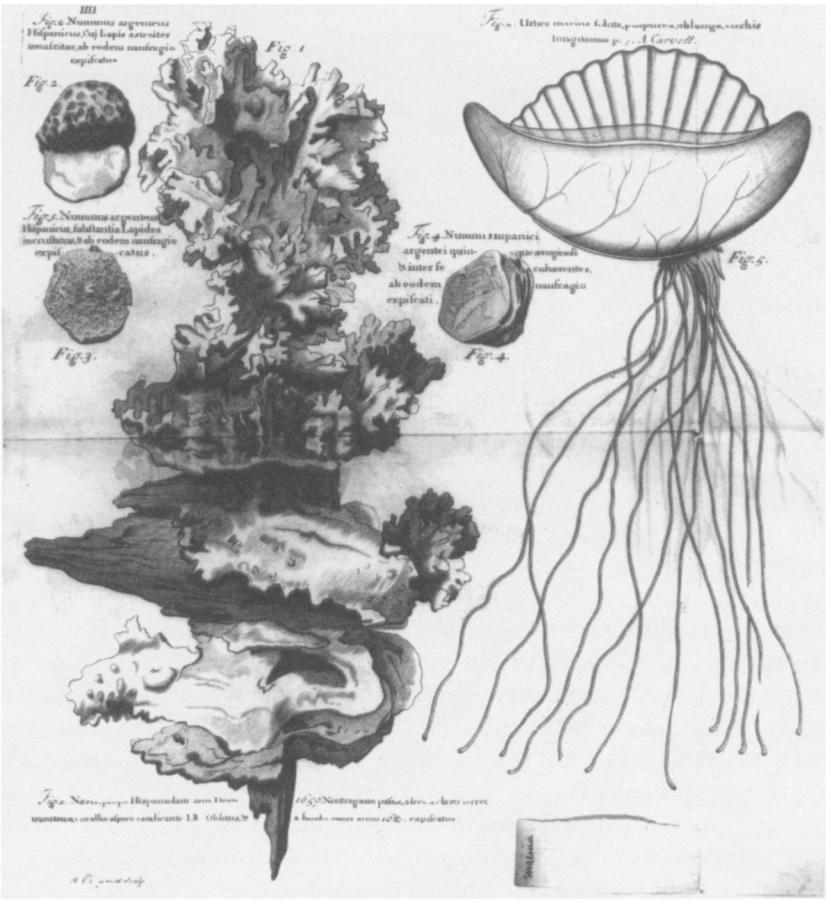

FIGURE IV

Spanish coins ("*Nummus argenteus hispanicus*"), ship's timbers ("*Navis, propre Hispaniolam* . . . 1659"), and Portuguese man-of-war ("*urtica marina soluta*"), engraved by Michael van der Gucht, plate 4 in volume 1, Sloane, *Voyage to* . . . *Jamaica.* Brown University Library photograph.

als and gems, making him the most successful treasure seeker in English history.[52]

The engraved image of the coins and spar celebrates this successful English venture as surely as the medals that were struck to commemorate

[52] At least this is the claim made by Ward in her well-documented biography of the duke, *Christopher Monck, Duke of Albemarle,* 256.

the raising of the treasure.[53] And yet, while Van der Gucht's engraving may be of Spanish treasure, it does not signify "Spanish wealth" so much as the powerful transformation that Nature can effect on these highly symbolic objects of imperial activity—minted silver taken from the mines of America and a fragment of the same type of vessel involved in the Spanish conquest of the New World.

The placement of the jellyfish on the same sheet as the coins and spar was an inspired move, for it invites viewers to read the plate emblematically in order to make various connections among these strange and disparate objects taken from the waters of the Caribbean. The translucent creature, with its elegant but poisonous tentacles, may represent the dangers of the deep—standing in for the catastrophe that transformed a Spanish galleon into a wreck. Its "sail" and body seem also to mimic the shape of a ship and of a Spanish helmet—potent emblems of the conquest.[54] Thus the composition invites the viewer to enjoy the witty visual interplay between a hybrid creature that looks like a helmet/ship and Spanish artifacts that also appear to be hybrids, neither wholly natural nor manufactured.[55]

In placing a natural specimen on the same page as an artifact, Sloane's illustrators followed conventions developed for producing illustrated catalogues of collections of artificial and natural curiosities such as those on display in Sloane's private museum. By the time volume 1 of the "Natural History of Jamaica" was published, Sloane's museum, located in his house in Great Russell Street, was already a fashionable attraction for select visitors, both foreign and domestic.[56] Sloane's collection, the largest and most famous in London, included plants, animals, and objects from his Jamaican sojourn, along with rarities from Britain and other parts of the world provided by other collectors. The inclusion of a wide range of works by "God" and by "man" promotes the notion that

[53] Two medals were struck, one honoring the king and queen, the other, the duke himself. The latter sports a profile of the duke on one side and an ill-proportioned lounging Neptune on the other. The medals are reproduced ibid., following p. 252.

[54] I am grateful to Amy Meyers for astutely pointing out to me the similarity between the sea creature and a Spanish helmet. In his description of the jellyfish, Sloane notes that sailors call it a "Portuguese-man-of-war" and cites an account from Richard Hakluyt's *Principall Navigations, Voiages and Discoveries of the English Nation* (1589–1590) in which it is referred to as a "ship of Guinea"; Sloane, "Natural History of Jamacia," 1:7.

[55] It was not firmly established at this point whether the jellyfish was a plant, an animal, or a colony of organisms, although Sloane describes it as having a "middle Nature between a Plant and an Animal" in "Natural History of Jamacia," 1:7.

[56] Wealth and social position alone did not determine who obtained permission to view Sloane's collection. In an obvious attempt to enhance his own identity as a scholar, Sloane granted access primarily to men of science, not wealthy aristocrats, to the obvious chagrin of the latter; Barbara M. Benedict, "The 'Curious Attitude' in Eighteenth-Century Britain: Observing and Owning," *Eighteenth Century Life,* 14:3 (1990), 80.

such collections represented the world in microcosm as well as suggesting that human artifacts were linked to and emulations of divine creativity.[57] Illustrated catalogues and natural histories were variously organized, sometimes separating the artifacts and natural specimens (as in Plot's *Natural History of Oxfordshire*), sometimes placing them together. Regarding the images we have been considering from Sloane's "Natural History of Jamaica," however, such a juxtaposition not only promoted the idea of mastery implicit in the possession and representation of the (Jamaican) world in microcosm; it also undermined that mastery by enhancing the sense that violence and danger emanated from all parts of that world, whether human or natural.

And yet some attempt to assuage that danger can also be seen in the second image. While the coins, jellyfish, and spar serve as reminders of the awesome power of the seas over the humans who sought to traverse them, these objects are also signs of the shifting power relations between the British and other western European states. There were many Others to the British colonizers of America: not only the Amerindian and the transplanted African, but also the "cruel" Spaniard, once dominant and now consigned to a past registered spatially in the ocean depths and later on the shelves and in the cabinets and printed catalogues of an English virtuoso's collection.[58]

In fact, Spanish coins, free of coral and salt water, actively circulated at that time as the major currency in Jamaica among the diverse communities of Europeans, Africans, and West Indian creoles who traded there.[59] Moreover, Spaniards remained an active presence in the region until the second half of the eighteenth century. Sloane refers to their ongoing and troubling presence in his introduction: "The *Spaniards* are very barbarous to all Nations in these parts where they are superior. They think they have the only right to the *West-Indies,* and it was a long time ere they would hear of any Treaty with *European* Nations."[60] The minutes of the Jamaican Council at Port Royal during the time of Sloane's sojourn testify to official concern with the Spanish as commercial com-

[57] An anonymous poem recounting a 1712 visit to Sloane's museum likens the physician to Adam and his collection to Paradise. For a discussion of this poem and excerpts from it see Katie Whitaker, "The Culture of Curiosity," in *Cultures of Natural History,* ed. Jardine, Secord, and Spary, 88–89.

[58] The coins and wooden spar were owned by Sloane.

[59] According to an account first published in 1739, Spanish coins still were the chief form of money in Jamaica—English coins were not found in circulation there; Charles Leslie, *A New History of Jamaica from the Earliest Accounts, to the Taking of Porto Bello by Vice-Admiral Vernon. In Thirteen Letters from a Gentleman to his Friend,* 2d ed. (London, 1740), 40.

[60] Sloane, "Natural History of Jamaica," 1:lxxxvii. Sloane earlier refers to the active trade between Jamaican and Spanish merchants via sloops loaded with manufactured goods and slaves, sailing between Jamaica and the Latin American coast (ibid., 1:lvi).

petitors, especially for the lucrative logwood trade.[61] Such contemporary commercial exchanges are repressed in this engraving, but not, perhaps, totally erased, for old as well as new coins embody the idea of currency, literally and figuratively, which has the potential to unsettle the dominant story this image tells of a British conquest involving many Others but only one winner.

If coral-encrusted coins attempt visually to consign the Spanish to the depths of a Caribbean past, present human activity involving the "survivors," masters and slaves, is depicted in the introduction to volume 1 in a transcription of Afro-Caribbean music (Figure V). While this transcription is a form of writing, it also operates as visual image, distinguished from the text around it, that was meaningful even for those contemporary readers who could not read music. The importance of this transcription, stretched over two pages, is underscored not only by its location in the first volume, but by the typography. The font used in the descriptive text above the music is the largest to be found throughout the entire two volumes with the sole exception of the title page.

This oddly worded text reads: "Upon one of their Festivals when a great many of the Negro Musicians were gathered together, I desired Mr. *Baptiste,* the best Musician there to take the Words they sung and set them to Musick, which follows."[62] The passage implies, rather than directly states, that Sloane and Baptiste were present at one of the slave festivals, likely held in the slave quarters of a local plantation. Using the European system of notation, Baptiste attempted to transcribe the songs of different nations in Africa: two lines of music and words are reproduced under the label "Angola," a single line (without words) designated "Papa," and an entire page given over to "Koromanti," a composition of ten lines.[63] Sloane sets the stage for the transcription by characterizing the occasion for such performances in language that, again, does not place him at the scene of a particular performance, yet implies his presence by his observations and judgments regarding the performers: "The *Negros* are much given to Venery, and although hard wrought, will at nights, or on Feast days Dance and Sing; their Songs are all bawdy, and

[61] See, for example, *Minutes of the Jamaica Council,* Sloane Mss 599: Jan. 1, 27, 1688, pp. 4v, 8. The economic importance of logwood, a major source of dyes, likely accounts for its appearance in two plates of the "Natural History of Jamaica." A flowering branch of the tree, accompanied by details of individual flowers and a seed pod, appears in plate 10 of those grouped after the introduction to volume 2. A piece of the wood taken from the tree is shown with other South American woods in a boldly executed engraving that appears as plate 231 in volume 2.

[62] Sloane, "Natural History of Jamaica," 1:l.

[63] Rath notes that this is the first extended attempt to transcribe into European notation music that appears to originate from different African nations in "African Music in Seventeenth-Century Jamaica," 711.

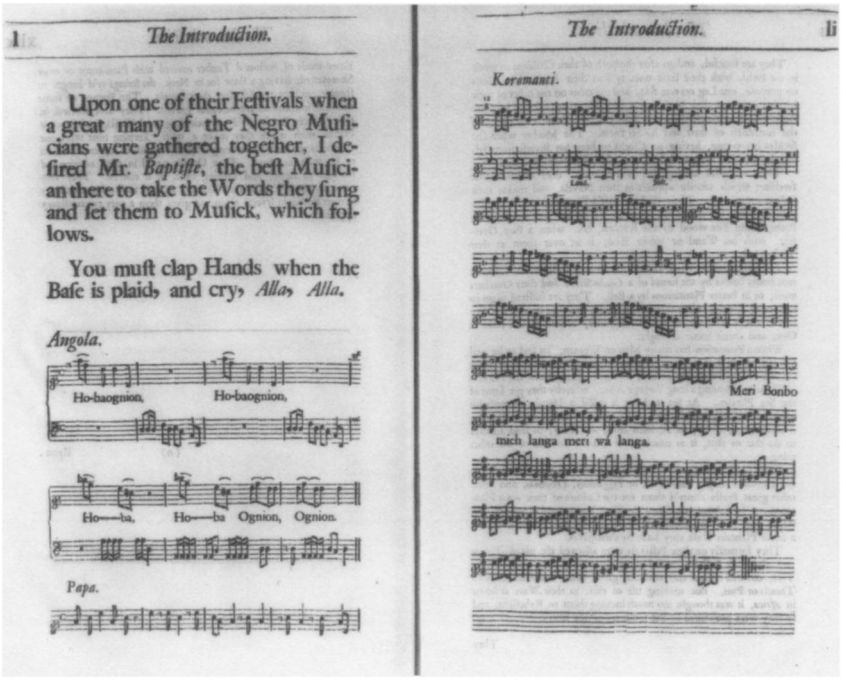

FIGURE V

"Angola," "Papa," and "Koromanti," transcriptions of three African songs in Jamaica, 1688, from Sloane, *Voyage to . . . Jamaica,* 1:l-li. Brown University Library photograph.

leading that way."[64] In such a context the printed music becomes a visual sign of the slaves' sexual energy, an energy so excessive that it is undiminished by a life of forced and brutal labor.

Sloane consistently describes the slave festival in the language of an onlooker whose presence remains curiously circumscribed. This ambiguous description stands in contrast to other passages in the introduction in which Sloane firmly locates himself in the scene, such as when he describes his encounter with a slave ship in Port Royal harbor: "I saw in this Harbour and Bay a Ship come from *Guinea,* loaded with Blacks to sell. The Ship was very nasty with so many People on Board."[65] The authorizing subject of the description of the festival, then, is that of an English eyewitness who can verify the frenetic energy and lasciviousness

[64] Sloane, "Natural History of Jamaica," 1:xlviii.
[65] Ibid.

of the slaves while maintaining his safety by physically distancing himself from the dangers and attractions of such a savage scene.

Subject peoples did, however, exert some power over the type of native culture they displayed to their masters.[66] During the slave festival described by Sloane, the slaves exercised ultimate control by choosing the songs and dances they performed for white visitors.[67] The slaves were not the only performers present on this occasion, however. Sloane and Baptiste were drawn into a performance of their ignorance, as they attempted to record a musical enactment of a slave community's pride in its African heritage, a pride that likely was mixed with contempt for their uncomprehending white masters. Nonetheless, ignorance, like knowledge, can be a form of power.[68] Maybe the physician knew precisely what to be ignorant about. Confronted by the revelry of a labor force on which Sloane, himself a slaveowner, relied for his livelihood and well-being, perhaps he chose to interpret the African music in ways that confirmed his own preconceptions of African character and morality.

The text that introduces Baptiste's musical transcription also implicates readers in its complex interplay of performances by inviting them to engage actively with the music in a manner that extends beyond registering moral disapproval of its bawdiness. The words inscribed just above the first line of music read "You must clap Hands when the Base is plaid, and cry, *Alla, Alla.*" The use of the pronoun "you" invites readers to participate in this Afro-Caribbean festival—fully to involve their bodies in clapping and crying out syllables that sound very much like invocations to a foreign god.[69] These brief directives suggest that while refinement is a central dynamic of the sugar and slave trade—the refinement of black slave labor into the white sugar crystals that were such an integral part of the social rituals of polite culture in Britain and its colonies—the desire for savage pleasures also shaped the relationship between a nation of white masters and their African slaves. But those pleasures had also been refined by the process of transcription and

[66] I am extending Nicholas Thomas's analysis of the types of objects Pacific Islanders chose to give or exchange with Europeans to include performances as well. See his provocative study, *Entangled Objects: Exchange, Material Culture and Colonialism in the Pacific* (Cambridge, Mass., 1991), 138.

[67] Rath analyzes Baptiste's musical transcription and hypothesizes that the ostensibly bawdy lyrics might camouflage a slave lament about homeless wandering ghosts in "African Music in Seventeenth-Century Jamaica," 723.

[68] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has analyzed the power of ignorance in *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley, Calif., 1990), 4–8, 77–80. I thank Claire Buck for bringing this analysis of ignorance and knowledge to my attention.

[69] I am not arguing for an Islamic origin for the words "Alla, Alla," in the music but rather suggesting that they might well call up such an allusion in the minds of Sloane's readers.

reproduction in a text designed to circulate on both sides of the Atlantic. One can only imagine what this "Negro Music" would sound like within the walls of a London town house, picked out, perhaps, on a harpsichord and chanted by English voices.

The musical instruments that the slaves are said to have played at their festivals are reproduced in a plate (Figure VI) that immediately precedes the image of the jellyfish and Spanish artifacts and is reproduced again in the Natural History section of volume 2 as plate 232. This plate presents two assemblages of objects, one human-made, the other natural. In the upper left quadrant of the sheet are three stringed wooden instruments, artfully arranged and grounded by a splash of shadow. The body of the two long-necked instruments is echoed by the enwreathed stalks of climbing vines and the neck by the thin, straight root of the *luteus* plant. These objects are rendered without shadow and directly abut the instrument closest to the viewer. Punning wordplay reinforces the visual cross-referencing of artifacts and natural specimens, since the Latin name *luteus* literally echoes the English "lutes" Sloane uses to described the instruments.[70] This visual and verbal mimicry is deceptive, for although the vines were apparently used as strings for the instruments, the Latin text explains that the roots of the *luteus* were parted into brushlike fibers and used as toothbrushes by the "Negros." Both the ingenuity and the alleged primitiveness of the slaves are thus inflected in the representation of these indigenous plants.

The arrangement of the plant specimens also mimics other sorts of objects used in rituals of slave punishment, not pleasure: ropes for binding resistant bodies and that most ubiquitous instrument of pain, the whip.[71] Sloane observes in his description of slave punishments that "for Negligence, they are usually whipt by the Overseers with Lance-wood Switches, till they be bloody, and several of the Switches broken."[72] This account closely follows the author's declaration that he could discern no religion among the "*Indians* and *Negros*": "'Tis true they have several Ceremonies, as Dances, Playing, etc. but these for the most part are so far from being Acts of Adoration of a God, that they are for the most part mixt with a great deal of Bawdry and Lewdness."[73] In the engraving, the visual interplay between the slaves' musical instruments and the arrangement of sticks and roots that, taken on its own, could connote both "lewd" slave pleasures and slave punishments, forges an unspoken

[70] Many thanks to Tom Gretton for pointing out this pun on "lute."

[71] I thank Caroline Arscott for her astute observations on the visual play between the arrangement of these natural specimens and objects of punishment.

[72] Sloane, "Natural History of Jamaica," 1:lvii.

[73] Ibid., lvi

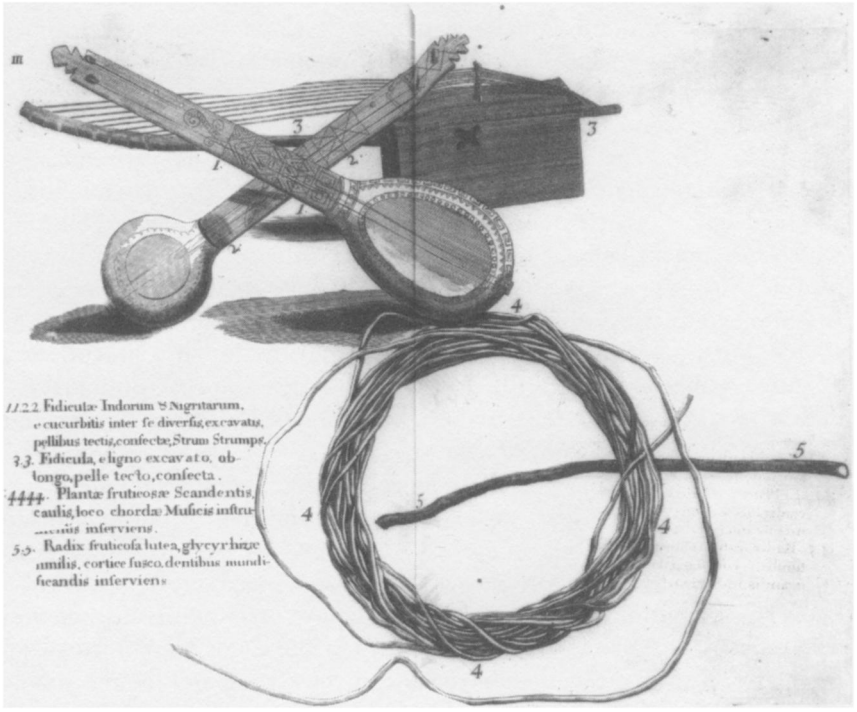

FIGURE VI

African "lutes" and Jamaican *luteus,* plate 3 in volume 1, Sloane, *Voyage to . . . Jamaica.* Brown University Library photograph.

but "natural" link between these two activities, just as the description of slave festivals seems to lead naturally to a detailing of slave punishments. The hidden logic of such an association is that only harsh physical punishments will contain a labor force of enslaved bodies that engage in such savage and wanton pleasures.

Concern with containing unruly bodies and the objects associated with them can also be traced in the system used to order and identify the slave artifacts and natural specimens illustrated in plate 232. Numerals link the various objects displayed to their Latin descriptions. While this form of labeling is common, the repetition of the numeral used to designate a given object is unusual. The "lute" labeled "1" sports not one but two numerals an inch apart along its neck. The vine wreath is framed by four "4"s evenly spaced around its perimeter and somewhat

obsessively labeled "4444. *Plantae fruticosae Scandentis.*" The numbers, deployed like pins on actual specimens, fix them securely within the visual field of the page. This field also contains a Latin tag that effectively unfixes the artifacts: in translation it reads "1.1.2.2. Lutes of the Indians and Negroes, [made] from divers gourds." After such painstaking efforts to attach the objects to the labels, readers of the Latin are presented with an identification that is ambiguous at best, for it identifies the instruments as African and Indian lutes without clearly establishing which instrument belongs to which group. Furthermore, "Indian" is misleading. Sloane's readers might reasonably assume that the word refers to the indigenous peoples of the Americas, as it did in the case of the potsherds, but in fact instrument "1" comes from the Indian subcontinent, not the Caribbean.[74] From the evidence of the text, one can only surmise that this instrument was owned by one of the "East Indian" or "Madagascin" slaves, who, Sloane says, "are reckoned good enough [as workers], but too choice in their Diet, being accustomed in their own Countries to Flesh Meat, etc. and do not well here, but very often die."[75]

The vexed relationship between word and image creates confusion between populations sharply divided by dietary preferences, history, and geography, but united by their inferiority to the English colonizers—an inferiority arising from their position on the wrong side of the divide separating the civilized Christian from the savage heathen. As Winthrop D. Jordan has demonstrated, in the early eighteenth century racialized categories were far more fluid than they became later in the century and depended not solely (or even principally) on perceived physical distinctions, but also on cultural practices such as religion, dress (or undress), language, and the like.[76] Here Sloane lumps Caribs, (East) Indians, and Madagascins under the single epithet "Indians," just as he does later, commenting that he can find no evidence of religion among the "Indians" and "Negros." While he may distinguish East Indians from Africans because the former's diet prevents them from making good slaves, what qualifies them to be slaves in the first place is their savagery and failure to worship the Christian god.

[74] Rath, "African Music in Seventeenth-Century Jamaica," 718.

[75] Sloane, "Natural History of Jamaica," 1:xlvii.

[76] Jordan, *White over Black: American Attitudes toward the Negro, 1550–1812* (Chapel Hill, 1968), esp. 20–28. More recently, Roxann Wheeler has developed this idea in "'My Savage,' 'My Man': Racial Multiplicity in *Robinson Crusoe*," *ELH*, 62 (1995), 821–61. The Anglo-European tendency to confuse the native peoples of India with those of the Americas was a long-standing one that had its roots in Columbus's original misrecognition of the Caribbean Islands as the "East Indies."

In the section of the English text dealing with this plate Sloane is not concerned with making qualitative distinctions among African, West Indian, and East Indian slaves; he focuses solely on the construction of the instruments in a continuation of the passage cited earlier in connection with the musical transcription. He describes how the dancers tied rattles to their legs and cows' tails to their backsides and "add[ed] such other odd things to their Bodies in several places, as gives them a very extraordinary appearance."[77] Such details were of great interest to the physician, who had a long-standing curiosity about such "extraordinary" bodies and amassed a large collection of handbills that described freaks and monsters on display at English fairs.[78] The nineteenth-century chronicler of fair culture Henry Morley claims that Sloane employed a draftsman to accompany him to Bartholomew Fair to sketch the rarities and monsters on display.[79] While these sketches do not appear to have survived, included in the Sloane manuscripts is James Paris du Plessis's portrait of a "Little Black Man," three feet tall, who was exhibited in and around Charing Cross between 1704 and 1712—precisely the time volume 1 was being published and first circulated.[80] Transplanted from their native environments, such "marketable wonders of the colonized world" were subject not only to the stares of the London crowd, but also to the refinement that scientific scrutiny could provide through their transformation into specimens by Sloane's draftsman.[81] Although Sloane owned a drawing of the Little Black Man, the genre of the New World natural history admitted no images of dancing slaves.[82] Instead, the

[77] Sloane, "Natural History of Jamaica," 1:xlix.

[78] This collection is housed in the British Library under the title "A Collection of Seventy-Seven Advertisements Relating to Dwarfs, Giants, and Other Monsters and Curiosities Exhibited for Public Inspection." A number of these handbills claim that the monster or rarity advertised was displayed to Hans Sloane, who allegedly attested to its value as the greatest curiosity ever seen (see, for example, #42, #49, and #64).

[79] Morley, *Memoirs of Bartholomew Fair* (London, 1859), 391.

[80] du Plessis, "A Short History of Human Prodigies, and Monstrous Births of Dwarfs, Sleepers, Giants, Strong Men, Hermaphrodites, Numerous Births, and Extreme Old Age" (1733), Sloane Mss 5246, 1:29. This collection of drawings bears the date 1733, but each drawing is dated at the time it was made. du Plessis and others also record the exhibition in 1715 of another "little Black man Brought from the West Indies" (1:30). Aline Mackenzie Taylor pieces together from contemporary and 19th-century sources the scattered but frequent references to "the Black Prince" and his family throughout this period in "Sights and Monsters and Gulliver's *Voyage to Brobdingnag*," *Tulane Studies in English*, 7 (1957), 29–82, esp. 57–69.

[81] Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (Ithaca, 1986), 40. These authors observe that from the 16th century exotics from the colonized world increasingly came to supplement the domestic monsters and curiosities on display at English fairs.

[82] British illustrated histories of the New World and of Africa did admit images of the local inhabitants engaged in a wide range of activities. See, for example, illustrations of

reader is provided with pacified signs of their primitive energy, an energy that threatens to exceed the constraints of the musical artifacts, roots, and vines that are so decorously arranged and secured in the framework of Arabic numerals and Latin tags on the pristine pages of the text.

In an essay on the state of English reading preferences, first published in 1710, the third earl of Shaftesbury made starkly clear the apparent threat that overly graphic representations of the savage and the monstrous presented to the English reader. Shaftesbury railed against the modern preference for travelers' tales of exotic lands over the Greek and Roman classics: "Our Relish or *Taste* must of necessity grow barbarous, whilst *Barbarian* Customs, *Savage* Manners, *Indian* Wars, and Wonders of the *Terra Incognita,* employ our leisure Hours, and are the chief Materials to furnish out a Library."[83] Underlying this tirade is the fear that the civilizing process could operate in reverse, that colonial exchange could unleash savage appetites at home rather than bring refinements to the barbarians encountered in the New World and elsewhere. And yet Shaftesbury was no enemy of Atlantic commerce; his own wealth and social privilege derived in large part from his grandfather's extensive holdings in the Carolinas and Bahamas and interests in Barbados and the African slave trade.[84] For Shaftesbury, as for Sloane, all the raw materials of this new colonial relationship had to be refined—texts as well as sugar and slaves. The humanist Shaftesbury effected the transformation through the purifying filter of the classics. The refinement process was more complex for the natural historian Sloane, who relied on direct observations that were translated into Latin and English descriptions, copious citations from other European authorities, and judicious selection of exotic specimens suitable for visual representation. These exotics were designed to elicit wonder, curiosity, and perhaps even a certain vicarious pleasure in forbidden delights associated with dark bodies and tropical wildernesses. Under no circumstances were such objects and visual images to call into question the wholeness and purity of the white body.

Indians in Lionel Wafer, *A New Voyage and Description of the Isthmus of America.,* 2d ed. (London, 1704). Africans are shown engaging in wide-ranging activities in John Ogilby's lavishly illustrated *Africa* (London, 1670). What remained at this moment visually unrepresented (unrepresentable?) were Africans and black creole slaves in the British West Indies engaged either in slave labor or their own activities.

[83] Anthony Ashley Cooper, 3d earl of Shaftesbury, "Advice to an Author" (1710), in *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times,* 3 vols., 4th ed. (London, 1727),

[84] *Dictionary of National Biography,* ed. Leslie Stephen (London, 1887), 12:130–31 (on the 3d earl's education), 117–18 (on his grandfather's economic interests in Africa and the West Indies).

Shaftesbury was not the only proponent of the "ancients" to do battle with those "moderns" who were writing about the New World. In 1709, William King published the third and final number of his short-lived satirical periodical, *Useful Transactions in Philosophy, and Other Sorts of Learning;* the entire fifty-seven page issue, titled "Voyage to the Island of Cajamai in America," was a send-up of Sloane's first volume.[85] The reader is told in a publisher's introduction that the author is a Dutchman, one Jasper Hans Van Slonenbergh—a transformation in nationality not lacking in significance for those aware of the poor opinion of Dutch character routinely registered in anticommercial, civic humanist writings by literati such as Shaftesbury.[86] The antitheses of the high-minded ancient Greeks and Romans, the modern inhabitants of the Low Countries were often represented as practical but uncultivated, even boorish individuals, driven in their desire for personal wealth to pursue a vigorous commerce. This Dutch crudeness characterized "Van Slonenbergh's" account of Cajamai, for King later ironically defends the author's inclusion of "observations, which run sometimes a little upon *the nasty,* [and] are made from the meanest actions of mankind, and the very dregs of Nature."[87]

Some of King's examples of nastiness are quoted verbatim from the medical histories appearing at the conclusion of the introduction to volume 1. That section of Sloane's text seems to offer strong evidence that Shaftesbury's and King's worst fears about the corruptibility of the white English body had already been realized in Jamaica. Resounding throughout these case histories is the message that dissolute behavior, not the tropical climate, is a primary cause of illness and death among both the white and the black populations of the island.[88] While blacks are frequently described as "lusty" or suffering from venereal diseases, their

[85] [King], "A Voyage to the Island of Cajamai in America," *Useful Transactions in Philosophy and Other Sorts of Learning,* No. 3 (May-September 1709), 1–57, reprinted in *The Original Works of William King, LL.D.,* 3 vols. (London, 1776), 2:132–78.

[86] David Solkin, *Painting for Money: The Visual Arts and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven and London, 1993), 50–51. See also Solkin's discussion, ibid., 3–19, of Bernard Mandeville's *Fable of the Bees,* in which the Dutch writer aggressively attacks the political and aesthetic ideals of civic virtue promoted by the 3d earl of Shaftesbury.

[87] [King], "Voyage to the Island of Cajamai in America," 135. King also published another attack specifically on the medical histories appearing in Sloane's "Natural History of Jamaica" in a 7-page pamphlet, *The Present State of Physick in the Island of Cajamai to Members of the R. S.* (London, undated).

[88] While Sloane acknowledges the dangers the tropical climate of the West Indies presented to the English, throughout the "Natural History of Jamaica" he insists that there were few if any diseases in Jamaica that did not also exist in Europe. The key to good health, he claims, lies in making appropriate climatic adjustments to habits of eating, drinking, dressing, and so forth (1:xlvii, 2:xv).

white masters are repeatedly chastised for their overindulgence of alcohol—particularly rum punch.[89] This point was made graphically in the first medical history, which describes the physician's failed attempts to treat a Captain Nowel who "had drunk very hard, and was very thin of Flesh."[90] The account ends with a horrific and bizarre inversion of the master-slave relationship, for it relates that the man's excessive drinking (of brandy and sugar) prevented him from taking solid food and reduced him to suckling at the breast of his Negro slave for sustenance.[91]

Those among Sloane's readers who had some knowledge of his noble patron, the duke of Albemarle (see Figure VII), might well have drawn parallels between the duke and over-indulgent white colonists such as Captain Nowel; the duke had a reputation on both sides of the Atlantic for late-night carousing and hard drinking.[92] If there were hopes that such behavior would cease on his taking up a position of authority in Jamaica, they were quickly dashed. The downward spiral of the duke's health is most strikingly detailed in Sloane's own unpublished account of his final illness and death. Obviously written to clear the physician of any responsibility for the duke's premature death at age thirty-four, this sorry narrative is driven by Sloane's futile attempts to moderate the duke's behavior and thereby save a mind and body that were rapidly deteriorating. After five months of heavy drinking and "sitting up very late and making merry" in Jamaica, one of the duke's legs began to swell painfully. He was constipated and jaundiced, suffered from "fits" and "melancholy," and had stopped eating; just before his death he was hemorrhaging from the mouth, had pains in his side, and continued to suffer severe pain and swelling in his leg.[93]

[89] In the introduction to volume 1 Sloane comments that "*Negros, Indians, Mahumetans,* and a great part of Mankind know not the use of this Wine or vinous Liquors, and yet look fresher, and are much healthier than we" (1:xxvii).

[90] Ibid., 1:xc.

[91] Ibid., 1:xci. According to the text, this story of the captain's reliance on the breast milk of his slave was forwarded to Sloane after his return to England.

[92] Aphra Behn's "panegyric" to the duke on the occasion of his voyage to Jamaica contains repeated references to his defective character: "Born for Great Action, but compell'd to Sloth, / He yields to all the Splendid Baits for Youth. / So the Young Victor did at *Capua* lie, / Tamely unnerv'd in Luxury"; Behn, *To the Most Illustrious Prince Christopher, Duke of Albemarle, on his Voyage to his Government of Jamaica* (London, 1687), 2.

[93] Even before leaving port in England Sloane was called in to treat the duke for insomnia accompanied by incoherent ravings; once underway the disorders continued. Coming into Barbados, Sloane noted that the duke was drinking more than usual and given to violent nosebleeds; in Nevis he was seized with "violent paroxysms"; Sloane Mss 3984, fols. 282–84. A member of Jamaica's governing council attended the autopsy of the duke and reported back that all of his organs were "very defective, except his heart"; *Minutes of the Jamaican Council,* Oct. 8, 1688, Sloane Mss 599, fol. 84v.

FIGURE VII

Christopher Monck, 2d duke of Albemarle, engraved by Isaac Beckett, after a painting by John Murray. Photograph by courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery, London.

Taken as a whole, Sloane's medical histories trace a picture of ritual bonding, forged by regular bouts of late night drinking, among the white male population of Jamaica. These celebrations of masculinity involving rum punch and nocturnal "merry making" may usefully be compared with the earlier description of the slave festival, in which Sloane implicitly links the extraordinary transformations of the slaves' bodies through costume and movement to their unbridled sexuality and irreligiosity. While the rituals of communal bonding among African slaves involved temporary and reversible transformations of the body via rattles and cows' tails, the rites of homosocial bonding among the white male population of Jamaica threatened more permanent and arguably more "monstrous" transformations of bodies weakened and often destroyed by the ingestion of those very commodities—rum and sugar—that the slave economy provided in such abundance.

Could this be the reason that Sloane's Natural History contains so few visual images directly relating to the production of sugar and its by-products? European technology makes an appearance in the plates but not in the expected form of a sugar mill. Instead, a diagram of a cotton gin, set in the middle of the Natural History section of volume 2, occupies pride of place on the largest foldout plate in the entire two-volume set (Figure VIII). The caption indicates how the rollers are turned by two wheels operated "by the Negroes feet sitting before it." This is the only plate that directly acknowledges the laboring body of the slave, but a weird synecdoche literally dismembers that body: only "feet" are required improbably to sit and turn the wheels of this most curious machine, which had not previously featured in histories and travel accounts of the Americas.

Displacement and dismemberment take different forms in the representation of the plant that fueled the Jamaican economy. Sugar cane (Figure IX) is not given the prominence of the fruit trees or jellyfish that are featured as curiosities in the plates following the introductory section of each volume. Indeed, sugar no longer could claim the status of a rarity, for the period that encompassed Sloane's sojourn in Jamaica and the production of his text saw the transformation of sugar from a precious luxury item, formed into elaborate sculptures decorating the tables of the wealthy, to a staple foodstuff in upper-class homes.[94] Sloane's catalogue entry on sugar acknowledges its commodity status by stating that the production and refinement of sugar are so well known that they do not

[94] James Walvin, *Fruits of Empire: Exotic Produce and British Taste, 1660–1800* (New York, 1997), 129–30.

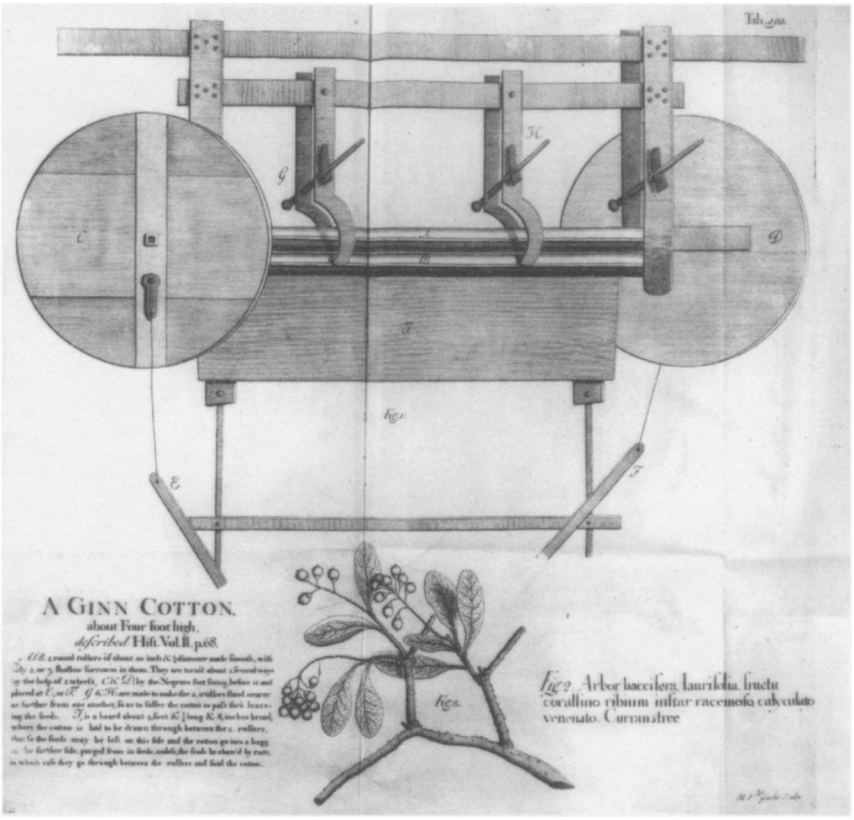

FIGURE VIII

A cotton gin, engraved by Michael van der Gucht, plate 190 in volume 2, Sloane, *Voyage to . . . Jamaica.* Brown University Library photograph.

bear repeating.[95] The visual treatment of sugar cane gives no hint of its central role in the Atlantic economy. Buried in the middle of volume 1, with only its Latin descriptor to guide viewers, the plant with its delicate foliage is virtually unrecognizable to all but those already familiar with it. Its most identifiable and economically important feature, the cane, has been eliminated by an amputation that was performed in the process of translating the specimen into a drawing, for the actual specimen still survives and boasts a stalk just over six and one-half inches long. Such a

[95] Sloane, "Natural History of Jamaica," 1:109. He goes into some detail in describing the process of sugar refining in the introduction to this volume (lx-lxii).

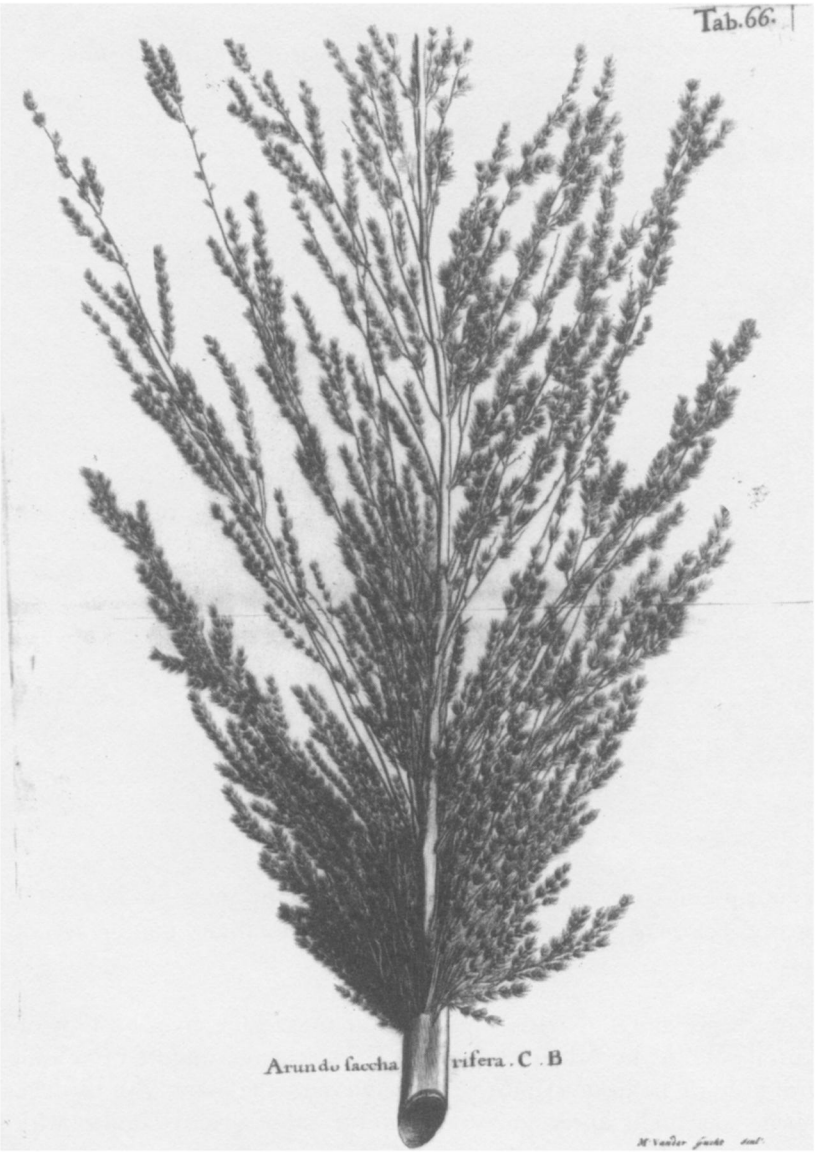

FIGURE IX

Sugar cane ("*Arundo saccha rifera*"), engraved by Michael van der Gucht, plate 66 in volume 1, Sloane, *Voyage to . . . Jamaica.* Brown University Library photograph.

decision was not dictated by the physical limitations of page size. For example, in the case of the grass labeled "*gramen dactylon bicorne tomentosum*" (Figure II) the problem of fitting onto a single page a long-stemmed plant is solved by showing a segment of stem beside the foliated top. This solution was not adopted for the sugar cane. The truncation of the cane, its reduction to a specimen marked by delicate foliage, seem to disavow its status as a commodity requiring hard labor to refine it into a product for the European table. In the process of making the sugar cane into a specimen and the specimen into an image, this most lucrative West Indian commodity has been refashioned as (just another) plant, its grasslike character emphasized not only by the elimination of the cane but also by its insertion into that section of the natural history catalogue devoted to grasses and reeds.[96]

The only New World product to be portrayed as a commodity grown and harvested for profit is one that was not associated with British colonies. Plate 9, appearing after the introduction to volume 2 (Figure X), depicts Indians in Oaxaca harvesting cochineal beetles from prickly pear cacti. The red dye that was produced from the dried beetles was highly prized by Europeans, especially Spaniards, who obtained it as tribute collected from the Indians who cultivated the insects and cacti at various sites in Mexico.[97] Readers of Sloane's text who were familiar with the highly competitive market for New World commodities would appreciate the importance of cochineal, which had earned the Spanish profits in Mexico second only to silver.[98] As the only exporter of the extremely valuable dye, the Spanish jealously guarded the secret of its origins. The true source of the red pigment was a topic of much speculation in the non-Spanish scientific and mercantile community, since the dried meal that comprised it was neither identifiably insect or identifiably vegetable.[99] Sloane correctly names the beetle as the source of the dye in his text, a point that is reinforced in the print.[100] The superimposition of

[96] I thank Kermit Champa for his perceptive comments on the transformation of the sugar cane from a commodity into a plant.

[97] Murdo J. MacLeod, "Forms and Types of Work, and the Acculturation of the Colonial Indian of Mesoamerica: Some Preliminary Observations, " in *El trabajo y los trabajadores en la historia de Mexico,* ed. Elsa C. Frost et al. (Mexico, 1979), 86–87. Many thanks to Douglas Cope for calling this article to my attention.

[98] Susan Fairlie, "Dyestuffs in the Eighteenth Century," *Economic History Review,* 2d Ser., 17 (1965), 501–02. I thank Daniel Finamore for this reference and for pointing out to me the potential implications of Sloane's depictions of the cochineal beetle in the context of the Spanish monopoly of this precious commodity.

[99] As Sloane, "Natural History of Jamaica," 2:152–54, indicates, some writers claimed that the cactus was the source of the dye.

[100] For the textual reference see ibid., 2:vi.

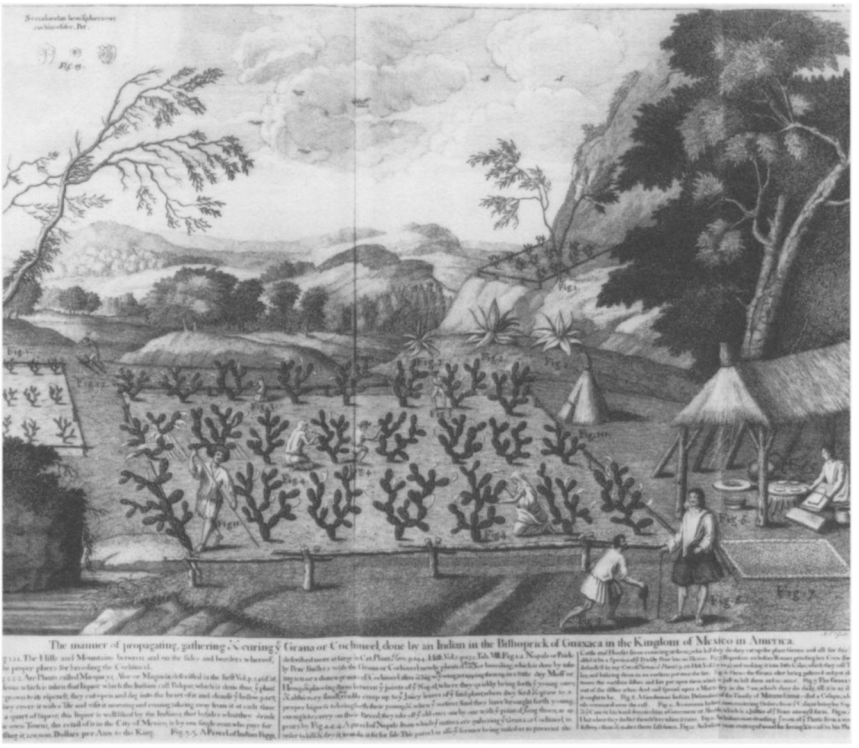

FIGURE X

"The manner of propagating, gathering & curing the Grana or Cochineel, done by an Indian in the Bishoprick of Guaxaca in the Kingdom of Mexico in America," engraved by Michael van der Gucht, plate 9 in volume 2, Sloane, *Voyage to . . . Jamaica.* Brown University Library photograph.

two views of the beetle in the upper right-hand corner of the landscape offers visual testimony that the secret was out, and therefore, theoretically, the Spanish could no longer claim sole rights to profit from this lucrative "crop."[101] That only Indians are represented in the image as the producers of cochineal dye further emphasizes Spanish vulnerability in this particular market.[102] Spaniards lacked the practical knowledge neces-

[101] The text under the print states: "For the farther Knowledge of that valuable dye I have in the corner of the same Plate given a very true Draught of the Insect itself in its due natural Bulk, and a little magnified."

[102] The Spanish maintained their control of the cochineal market until the end of the 18th century, when the first live beetles were smuggled out of Mexico; Fairlie, "Dyestuffs in the Eighteenth Century," 502 n. 1.

sary to produce the dye, because the Indians pointedly resisted all attempts at standardizing the complex process of production.[103]

Set in Sloane's publication, this curious Mexican landscape has the potential to call to mind other conflictual relationships beyond those of resistant Indians and tribute-seeking Spaniards.[104] The seemingly unrepresentable white English masters and their black African slaves also find their surrogates in these indigenous laborers working in the field and making tortillas. The image does not shrink from representing those relations of domination and submission that were so characteristic of colonial agrarian economies. But this is domination with a difference: in the foreground a native man doffs his hat and bows before another, identified in the caption as a *cacique* (chief) descended from Moctezuma. In a British publication about a colony based on slave labor, this representation of courtly obeisance between free-born Amerindians appears as a grotesque parody of European civility rather than an utopian alternative to the plantation system that animated the Jamaican economy.

The authenticity of this depiction of a New World harvest is secured by the attribution of the original drawing to an indigenous artist on site in Oaxaca even though, according to Sloane, the engraving was not made from the original, but from a copy that had been sent to the South Sea Company.[105] Although there is no way of knowing whether an Amerindian produced the original drawing, my concern here is with what is at stake in such an ascription. That this engraving is allegedly based on a drawing on site by a native enhances both its value as a curiosity and its status as the empirical record of an eyewitness. The primitive hand and observing eye of the native artist are visually encoded as technical crudeness in the way the various elements of the composition fail to come together. The fields of prickly pear tilt precariously out of perspective, while the human figures are incongruously placed in the foreground and undergo odd changes in scale in the middle ground. And yet the picture also observes European conventions, based on academic seventeenth-century Franco-Italian painting (epitomized by the work of Claude Lorrain and Nicholas Poussin) for rendering landscape as a series of receding planes framed by side screens of trees and hills.

The spatial and temporal conflation of several stages in the production of the dye is also a European convention derived from a less aesthetically elevated tradition of representing agricultural production, evident,

[103] MacLeod, "Forms and Types of Work, and the Acculturation of the Colonial Indian of Mesoamerica," 87.

[104] For a discussion of how Indians involved in producing cochineal attempted to resist and oppose Spanish merchants and officials, see ibid., 86–89.

[105] Sloane, "Natural History of Jamaica," 2:vi.

for example, in images of sugar production and refining that appear in the seventeenth-century New World accounts of William Piso, Jean-Baptiste du Tertre (see Figure XI), and Charles de Rochefort.[106] Three systems of representation, then, operate in this landscape, each serving to substantiate the authority of the image based on different forms of knowledge: the knowledge of the indigenous eyewitness, the refined and aestheticized knowledge of the Anglo-European cosmopolitan, and the commercially useful knowledge of the New World entrepreneur.

Sloane easily qualified for this latter category. He marketed chocolate under his own name ("Sir Hans Sloane's Milk Chocolate") in London and also imported the Peruvian bark from which quinine is made.[107] Like other contemporary natural histories of America, Sloane's was clearly intended to promote the British colonies in the West Indies as capable of sustaining a wide variety of profitable commodities for export, not just sugar (as well as providing plants that could be cultivated in Britain).[108] He is explicit about this aspect of his publication: "Another use of this History may be, to teach the Inhabitants of the Parts where these Plants grow, their several Uses, which I have endeavour'd to do, by the best Informations [sic] I could get from Books, and the Inhabitants, either *Europeans*, *Indians* or *Blacks*."[109] Visually, the commercial aspect of the "Natural History of Jamaica" is registered in the first plate of volume 1, the map of the island that contains icons marking not only sugar plantations, but also sites where cacao and indigo are produced.[110] Commercial motives no doubt also prompted his inclusion of West Indian and South American fruit trees and the scene of the cochineal harvest among the introductory plates to volume 2, as well as the large schematic diagram of the cotton gin in the middle of that volume. Cotton receives further

[106] Woodcut of sugar mill in Piso, *De Indiae Utriusque Re Naturali et Medica* (Amsterdam, 1658), 108; engraving of sugar production in du Tertre, *Histoire Générale des Antilles Habitées par les François,* 4 vols. (Paris, 1667–1671), vol. 2, after 122; engraving of sugar mill in de Rochefort, *Histoire Naturelle et Morale des Iles Antilles de l'Amérique,* vol. 1, after 332.

[107] MacGregor, *Sir Hans Sloane,* 15. A trade card for Sloane's chocolate is reproduced as figure 2.

[108] This line of argument was stimulated by Rath's perceptive observation that Sloane's interest in cotton and the cotton gin was likely rooted in his desire to increase West Indian trade through well-established commodities such as textiles, which could compete with African textiles and capitalize on markets in India and elsewhere (Rath to author). Sloane's text, I believe, offers evidence for extending this argument to an even broader array of commodities than textiles.

[109] Sloane, "Natural History of Jamaica," preface.

[110] Cattle pens and hog "crawls" are also indicated on the map. This marking of sites where various commodities are produced is extremely common in maps included in New World natural histories and travel accounts.

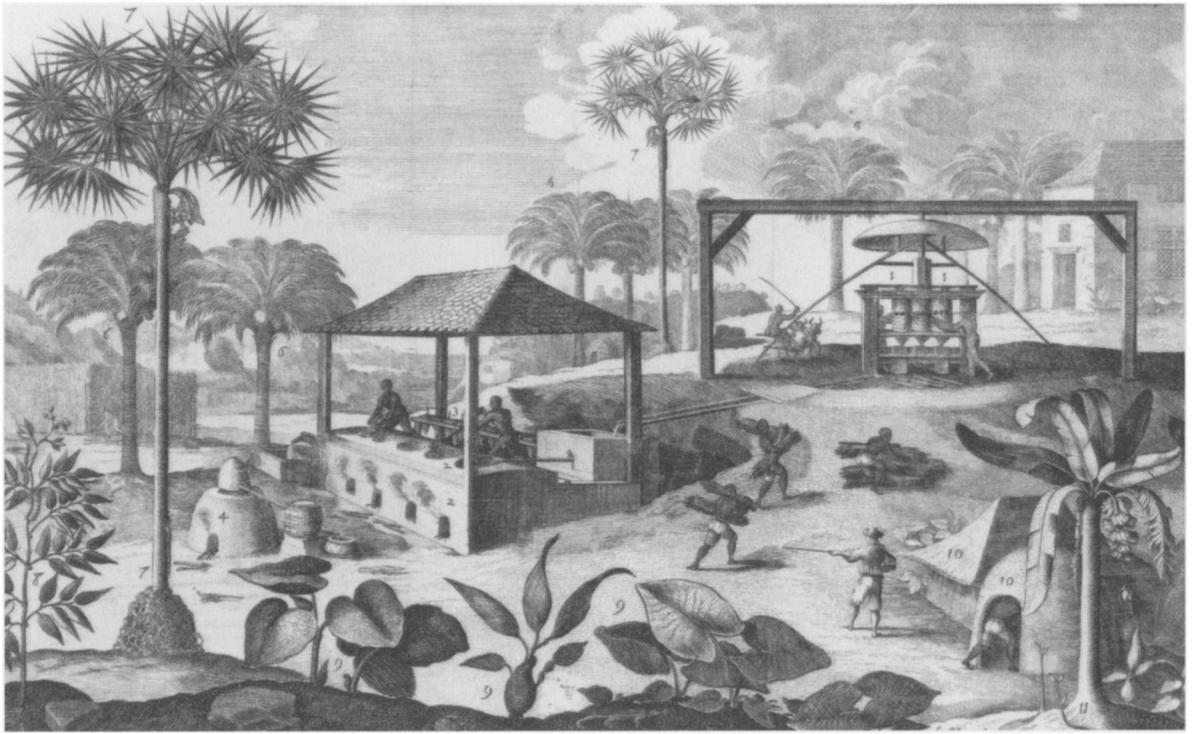

FIGURE XI

"*Sucrerie,*" in Jean-Baptiste du Tertre, *Histoire Générale des Antilles Habitées par les François,* 4 vols. (Paris, 1667–1671), 2:122. Photograph courtesy the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University.

endorsement as a lucrative crop in the section of the text devoted to both the cotton tree and the cotton-bearing shrub. The author emphasizes how extensive the market for cotton was, noting the popularity of cotton textiles not only in Europe but also in China and Brazil. Toward the end of this catalogue entry he quotes John Smith, who, in his account of Virginia, states that "Cotton is one of the wealthy *West India* commidities [sic]."[111] Part of the reason for the decentering of sugar in the "Natural History of Jamaica," then, derives from Sloane's implicit interest in the establishment of a diversified economy in Jamaica, in contrast to the sugar monoculture of Barbados, which, until the early eighteenth century, was the most commercially successful of the British West Indian colonies.

While Sloane's interest in a diversified economy in the West Indies provides one compelling explanation for the disposition of certain images in the text, it does not account for the many incoherences that mark many of the most prominent plates. Just as the compositional incoherence of the cochineal harvest scene testifies to the multiple and often contradictory demands (commercial, aesthetic, scientific) placed on it, so the "Natural History of Jamaica" as a whole is marked by incoherence that attests to the diverse interests, desires, and fears of its producers and readers. Not only do the engravings include an eclectic mix of artifacts, flora, and fauna, but also the text is a patchwork of genres, from scholarly citation and empirical description to various anecdotes and first-person narratives. As Katie Whitaker notes, these shifts of style and genre serve as a way of inciting the wonder and curiosity of the reader.[112] Whereas notionally natural histories were catalogues of all the plants and animals to be found in a particular area, their success and popularity, particularly among the wide public that Sloane was determined to address, depended on the description and illustration of the unusual or curious rather than on the typical.[113] Sloane acknowledges the need to feed this rage for novelty in the introduction to volume 2, which he called more "curious" than volume 1 because it contained previously

[111] Sloane, "Natural History of Jamaica," 2:69.

[112] Whitaker, "Culture of Curiosity," 87. As Whitaker notes, this eclectic mix of writings and visual rendering of curious objects was also a standard of feature of domestic natural histories. See, for example, Plot's natural history of Oxfordshire (1677) and his *The Natural History of Stafford-shire* (Oxford, 1686).

[113] This was not a recent development. In 16th-century Italy it was the bizarre and unusual object that conferred status on natural history collections such as that of the Bolognese natural philosopher Ulisse Aldrovand;. Guiseppe Olmi, "Italian Cabinets of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," in *The Origins of Museums: The Cabinet of Curiosities in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Europe,* ed. Oliver Impey and Arthur MacGregor (Oxford, 1985), 8.

unrecorded descriptions of animals and figures of fruit trees from Peru and other parts of the world.[114]

The inability of these volumes to fix a set of secure meanings around human artifacts and natural specimens is in part owing to the violent nature of the colonial enterprise in Jamaica. The failure also arises from a related demand placed on this particular type of publication. The scientific authority of the natural history requires that flora and fauna be transformed into fully comprehensible objects. The wider appeal of such a project, however, depends on the presentation of rarities that had been associated with the Indies even before Columbus.[115] As Stephen Greenblatt notes, such marvels embody both the fears and the desires aroused by the strangeness of a new world that exceeds European understanding.[116] Although the marvels and monsters recorded by Columbus differ from the curiosities recorded by Sloane, the problem of both retaining and containing their difference persists. If the curiosities represented become too thoroughly pacified in the process of visual and verbal representation, their capacity for arousing the wonder and desire of the reader will be diminished sharply. Too little pacification threatens to expose an Otherness that cannot be known and, even more worrying, cannot be physically contained.

Further difficulties in the representation of curiosities arise from their vulnerability to overexposure. Curiosities lose their status as rarities once their images and descriptions are reproduced and circulated in texts such as Sloane's or once they themselves are transformed into commodities such as sugar. The need to visualize curiosities also explains why the image of a cotton gin replaces that of a sugar mill and a scene of cochineal gathering, the sugar harvest. Although Sloane may have wished for a diverse Jamaican economy, by the time his two volumes were published and circulated sugar's dominance over other commodities was firmly established—a fact discernable not only in export statistics, but also in the greatly increased numbers of African slaves transported to the island.[117] In a burgeoning sugar monoculture, then, these images offer up their curious objects not simply as alternatives or replacements; they are also displacements—surrogates for the raw materials, machines, and especially the slaves involved in the production of the most important commodity to be traded on the world market in the eighteenth century. Displaced but not erased, these memory traces of the plantation economy

[114] Sloane, "Natural History of Jamaica," 2:v.

[115] Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World* (Chicago, 1991), 74.

[116] Ibid., 75

[117] Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves,* 203–04, 119.

return like unbidden ghosts to reanimate these uncanny surrogates that seem so anxious to disavow their existence. Unlike most ghosts, many of the black slaves and white colonists who haunt this early eighteenth-century text were neither dead nor newly departed at the time of its publication, but they were banished from the realm of visual representation because of the pressing and very different demands placed on images versus words.

It is telling that the next major American natural history to appear after Sloane's, Mark Catesby's *The Natural History of Carolina, Florida, and the Bahama Islands* (1731–1743), eschewed illustrations of artifacts as a means of engaging the curiosity and interest of readers. West Indian natural histories produced later in the century followed Catesby's example.[118] One explanation of this change is that Catesby and those who followed him were attempting to produce a more systematic and scientific account of the natural world that privileged knowledge obtained through observation and relied on the physical description, ordering, and imaging of normative and generalized specimens (plants, animals, and later humans). This narrowing of the field of inquiry was closely associated with the professionalization of the life sciences, which relegated curiosities and emblematic images to the realm of popular culture and the domain of amateur pursuits. The fear of violence registered in the curious images that introduce Sloane's "Natural History of Jamaica" suggests that the pressure for restructuring scientific knowledge derived not only from learned amateurs and scientists vying for professional authority at the metropolitan centers of empire but also arose from the colonial periphery, where subject peoples refused to submit peacefully to the "natural order" of an economy based on their exploitation and commodification.

[118] Catesby relied instead on aesthetic devices, such as the use of brilliantly colored plates, and, as Meyers has pointed out (in a personal communication), wit—manifested in the humorous juxtapositions of certain animals and plants; see vol. 2, plate 65, reproduced in Henrietta McBurney and Meyers, *Mark Catesby's Natural History of America: The Watercolors from the Royal Library, Windsor Castle* (Houston, Tex., and London, 1997), 104. As Meyers has argued, Catesby was not unmindful of the conflicts and changes that European colonization (and the establishment of plantations) brought to the North American continent and the West Indies, and registered those changes in drawings of plants and animals (see her essay cited in note 10 above).