CHAPTER 6

Under Sloane's Shadow: The Archive of James Petiver

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In July 1710, the German traveller Zacharias Conrad von Uffenbach called on the botanist James Petiver at his house in London, bearing a letter of introduction and a gift of some fossils from the Frankfurt physician Johann Georg Kisner. Petiver was a member of the Royal Society, with an international reputation as a collector of natural curiosities, but the visit proved to be a great disappointment. "We expected to see a paragon of learning and refinement," Uffenbach wrote in his diary, "but he was quite deficient in both. For he appeared to be wretched both in looks and actions, and he had no parts, speaking very poor and deficient Latin and scarcely able to string a few words together." And Petiver's celebrated natural history collections turned out to be as disappointing as the man himself. "As soon as he gets any object of the least value he immediately has printed a short and insipid description of it, dedicating it to any person with whom he has some slight acquaintance; and then he takes a present for it. Everything is kept in true English fashion in prodigious confusion in one wretched cabinet and in boxes."[1]

Uffenbach was not alone in remarking on the disorganised state of Petiver's collections. On Petiver's death in 1718, Thomas Hearne wrote that he was "a very curious Man, particularly in Plants, but his things were in no Method."[2] Sir Hans Sloane, who bought Petiver's specimens and incorporated them into his own vast museum, paid tribute to him in the introduction to the second volume of his *Voyage to Jamaica* (1725) as having collected a greater quantity of natural curiosities than anyone before him. Unfortunately, Sloane went on, "he did not take equal Care to keep them, but put them into heaps, with sometimes small labels of Paper, where they were many of them injured by Dust, Insects, Rain, &c."[3] This sometimes led Petiver into making embarrassing mistakes, as in the case of the butterfly known as Albin's Hampstead Eye, supposedly

1 W.H. Quarrell and Margaret Mare, eds., *London in 1710: From the Travels of Zacharias Conrad von Uffenbach* (London: Faber & Faber, 1934), 126–7.

2 Thomas Hearne, *Remarks and Collections* (Oxford: Oxford Historical Society, 1885–1921), 6: 255.

3 Hans Sloane, *A Voyage to the Islands Madera, Barbados, Nieves, St Christophers, and Jamaica*, vol. (London, 1725), 2: iv.

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discovered by Eleazar Albin on Hampstead Heath and described for the first time by Petiver in his *Papilionum Britanniae Icones* (1717). In fact, this was an Indo-Pacific butterfly that could not have been collected in England, and the likelihood is that Petiver received it from one of his overseas correspondents and accidentally mislabelled it.[4] Taking their cue from Uffenbach, Hearne and Sloane, modern studies of Petiver have reinforced his reputation as a sloppy and unsystematic collector. Raymond Stearns believed that much valuable information was lost because of Petiver's "careless and disorderly habits," while David Allen's verdict in the *Oxford DNB* was that "for Petiver, acquisition was virtually all: he had scant inclination to document or arrange his collections with the care that they deserved."[5]

Yet this view of Petiver as a man without method cannot be the whole story. No botanist of this period, and certainly no collector, could avoid taking sides in the debates over botanical method ignited by John Ray's *Methodus Plantarum Nova* (1682) and Joseph Tournefort's *Eléments de Botanique* (1694).[6] Petiver, a staunch supporter of Ray's system, was an active participant in these debates. On hearing that his friend Patrick Blair was planning to publish a synopsis of Tournefort's method, Petiver informed him that "although it be accurately done and you have taken great pains in it, yet it will meet with very few buyers" and urged him to adopt Ray's method instead: "I do not find that Dr Tourneforts Method in that Book has gained any great esteem amongst our Brotherhood or the Physitians and therefore yours may have the same Fate."[7] In common with many other early modern virtuosi, Petiver was also a fervent believer in detailed and extensive note-taking as a means of assembling and storing information for future retrieval.[8] His surviving archive is full of such notebooks, including a long series of books of letters sent which he labelled his "Adversaria," another long series of prescription books, and many

4 R.I. Vane-Wright and W. John Tennent, "Whatever happened to Albin's Hampstead Eye?," *Entomologists' Gazette*, 58 (2007): 205–18.

5 Raymond Phineas Stearns, *Science in the British Colonies of America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1970), 200; D.E. Allen, "Petiver, James (*c.*1665–1718)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/22041.

6 For a discussion of Ray and Tournefort and their respective methods, see Julian Martin, "Sauvages's Nosology: Medical Enlightenment in Montpellier," in *The Medical Enlightenment of the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Andrew Cunningham and Roger French (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 111–37 (esp. 118–20).

7 Petiver to Blair, 25 Jan 1708–9 and 6 Jan 1709–10, BL MS Sloane 3337, ff.30–32 and 68–9.

8 On early modern notetaking, see Richard Yeo, *Notebooks, English Virtuosi, and Early Modern Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014).

other volumes of collectanea and commonplace books. This forms a striking contrast with Sloane's archive, which consists mainly of loose papers and correspondence, with relatively few bound notebooks. Sloane may well have kept similar runs of letter-books and medical casebooks, but if so, he does not seem to have deemed them worthy of permanent preservation.

Petiver thus presents us with a paradox: a man who took great interest in methods of botanical classification, whose archive allows us to reconstruct his research methods in exceptional detail, but who was perceived by many of his contemporaries as singularly unmethodical. It should be remembered that he was active at a time when the "order of things" was still very far from settled, and when, as his correspondence shows, it was not unusual for botanists and naturalists to adopt their own idiosyncratic systems of ordering and classifying nature. John Banister, for example, in a letter to Petiver outlining his plans for a natural history of Virginia, explained that he did not propose to follow "so nice and particular a Method as that of the Learned Mr Ray" but to divide his book into four sections corresponding to the four elements. Under the heading of fire, he would describe the frequency of thunderstorms and "the Indians way of fire-hunting, sweating &c"; under air, the climate and some of the common diseases; under water, the "great Rivers" and "what quantity of Ships trade hither yearly"; under earth, "the Nature and felicitie of the soile, also somewhat of the Nature, Customes, and qualitie of the Natives and of the Trade we have with them."[9] Arbitrary as these divisions seem to us, they evidently appealed to Banister as a way of integrating natural and human phenomena into a single system of classification. In the same spirit, we should consider the possibility that Petiver appears unmethodical to us because his methods of knowledge production were so different from our own.

It is a central contention of this chapter that Petiver's reputation is inextricably linked to the afterlife of his archive. Because his collections were swallowed up by Sloane's, it is hard to visualise them as an independent body of material; and because Sloane's collections have been heavily reorganised and are now divided between the three "Sloane institutions" (the British Museum, the British Library and the Natural History Museum), it is even harder to see how Petiver's archive might originally have been organised and articulated. The terms "archive" and "collection" can be used interchangeably here, because Petiver himself would have perceived no distinction between the two. His paper archive of letters, drawings and notebooks in the British Library was intended to be used in conjunction with the plant and insect specimens in the

9 Banister to Petiver, undated, BL MS Sloane 3321, f. 7.

Natural History Museum (to say nothing of the living archive in the Chelsea Physic Garden). His herbarium is itself a paper archive, containing many hundreds of Petiver's original labels (the "small labels of paper" that Sloane referred to) as well as many other lists, memoranda and items of correspondence. It is therefore necessary to read across current institutional boundaries in order to reconstruct the integrity of his collection. Only by doing so is it possible to bring Petiver out from under Sloane's shadow and reconsider him on his own terms.

1 Petiver as Collector

In his own lifetime, Petiver's collection was better known and arguably more celebrated than Sloane's. His name was familiar not just to botanists and naturalists in Britain and Europe but to a global network of agents, travellers and collectors across the Near East, Africa and the New World; John Ray called him "a man of greater correspondence in Africa, India and America than anyone I know of besides."[10] His celebrity was further magnified by his printed catalogues, the *Museum Petiverianum* (1695–1703) and the *Gazophylacium Naturae et Artis* (1702–11), which publicised and illustrated his new acquisitions. Michael Valentini's *Musei Museorum* (1714), a compilation of selected highlights from contemporary cabinet-collections, included a list of no less than 610 items from the *Museum Petiverianum*, putting Petiver in the company of some of the most distinguished virtuosi in Europe.[11] Sloane, by contrast, never issued a printed catalogue, so that knowledge of his collection was limited to a smaller circle of friends, acquaintances, and those visitors to London who could obtain a personal introduction to see his museum.

This extraordinary one-man operation was conducted by Petiver from his apothecary's shop at the White Cross in Aldersgate Street. How did he do it? He was clearly successful in his business, remarking of the apothecary's trade, a little smugly, that "though the profit falls short of the vulgar saying, yet there is a very handsome maintenance to be obtained from it."[12] In 1702 he claimed to have been offered, and refused, one hundred guineas to take an apprentice, and when he drew up his last will in 1717 he was financially secure enough to make cash bequests to family members totalling £550. But as an apothecary he was not

10 Ray to Edward Lhwyd, 11 June 1701, Bodl. MS Eng. hist. c.11, ff. 63–4.

11 Michael Bernhard Valentini, *Musei Museorum* (Frankfurt am Main, 1714), vol. 2: 43–52 (second pagination).

12 Petiver to William Bennett, [after 10 May 1704], BL MS Sloane 4064, f. 6.

in the same league, socially or financially, as the great physician-collectors like Mead and Sloane. In a letter to John Ray he explained that "the daily attendance I am obliged to give in my Vocation" prevented him from writing to his friends as often as he would have liked.[13] Moreover, as he lamented to another of his correspondents, the French botanist Sébastien Vaillant, his means as a collector were limited: "I could yearly procure from most parts of the World things more Curious were there some annual Encouragement given to defray the Expences I am at, which are not a little to a Person of my private Circumstances."[14]

Petiver was therefore obliged to build up his collections through an elaborate process of bargaining and exchange which he termed "retaliation." A typical example comes from a letter to the German botanist Johann Philipp Breyne proposing an exchange of printed books or natural curiosities:

> We do not live in an Age that gives the mean incouragement that true Philosophers only expect, viz a smal competency beyond starving: however I am willing where money is not to be had to exchange what I do for a like vallue in other books of that kind which Curious Persons have often duplicates of or at least can easily procure, & if you will [not] or cannot do it I am willing to traffick with the Booksellers in your parts on the same Account, viz. Barter or Exchange for your Fathers acceptible works, your own or any others published in Dantzic or neer you, or otherwise even for Collections of Naturall Things themselves or other Curiosities if you vallue them not too dear.[15]

This process of exchange encompassed an enormous variety of items. From Madras, the East India Company surgeon Samuel Brown sent opium to Petiver to sell for him in London.[16] From South Carolina, Hannah Williams sent an Indian tobacco pipe, a wild bees' nest, a collection of shells and "the head of a strange Bird," to which Petiver responded with "some Hysterick pills and others for your head and stomack, with some Packetts of News and a printed Account of the Shells you last sent me."[17] Other correspondents in North America were

13 Petiver to Ray, 1 April 1701, BL MS Sloane 3334, f. 23.

14 Petiver to Vaillant, 21 April 1701, BL MS Sloane 3334, ff. 30–2.

15 Petiver to Breyne, [April 1706], BL MS Sloane 3335, f. 9.

16 Petiver to Brown, 15 April 1697, BL MS Sloane 3332, ff. 271–4.

17 Petiver to Williams, 17 Nov 1706, BL MS Sloane 3335, ff. 39–40. For Petiver's correspondence with Hannah Williams, see Beatrice Scheer Smith, "Hannah English Williams: America's First Woman Natural History Collector," *South Carolina Historical Magazine*, 87: 2 (1986): 83–92.

supplied with pots of balsam in exchange for plants and animal skins. The shop in Aldersgate Street was thus at the centre of a constant two-way traffic, with books, medicines and specimens flowing out as well as in.

This makes Petiver's correspondence a uniquely valuable historical source, both on the practical logistics of conveying fragile and perishable objects over very long distances and on the economy of exchange among early modern collectors. Petiver was quite explicit about the *quid pro quo* that this entailed. In a letter to Vaillant thanking him for a gift of plants, he assured him: "you shall be amply recompensed for them with the choicest of my dry specimens … I will take the first Opportunity of sending them, that I may oblige you to continue your so well begun Favours to me."[18] Another correspondent was given an album of specimens to present to the French botanist Antoine de Jussieu, but instructed not to hand it over until Jussieu had offered something in return:

> When you come to Paris I desire you will give Dr Jussieu his Packett with my service & shew him the Hortus Siccus (but part not with it out of your hands,) & let him know if such a Collection will be acceptible to him, I will send it, as soon as I have had a return for what he has already received from me .. You know how desirous I am to keep a Correspondence with so able a Botanist, if he pleases to incourage it by a mutuall & frequent Commutation.[19]

Petiver also played on the vanity of his correspondents by emphasising the fame they could obtain by being the first to report a new specimen:

> It will be your immortall Honour to be the first discoverer of such Plants Shells Insects & Serpents as you shall send before another, which will cause your name to [be] eternized in Golden Letters which will remain to future Ages when you shall be no more. I must tell you its noe small Honour to be taken notice of by so illustrious a Body as the Royall Society besides the advantage that you may in time reap by it, therefore let me advise you to be the first in the discoveries by sending a Collection of Plants Shells & Insects with a small Cask of Snakes &c to me as soon as this comes to your hands to prevent others from being before you who are employed for the same purpose.[20]

18 Petiver to Vaillant, 20 Feb 1700–1, BL MS Sloane 3334, f. 33.

19 Petiver to Dr Urquhart, 30 April 1717, BL MS Sloane 3339, f. 322.

20 Petiver to Edward Bartar, 16 Feb 1696–7, BL MS Sloane 3332, ff. 247–8.

As James Delbourgo has perceptively observed, Petiver was above all a list-maker, and his collecting was a project of "enlistment" in the literal sense of the word, in which people as well as objects were co-opted into lists and catalogues of one sort or another.[21]

To some of his contemporaries, Petiver's collection seemed to reflect the mindset of the tradesman rather than the disinterested pursuit of knowledge. He never fully mastered the epistolary conventions of early modern *commerce de lettres*, constantly pestering his correspondents for new specimens or chiding them for not packing and preserving them properly. He was not embarrassed to offer money for specimens or even, in his *Gazophylacium Naturae*, to promise that anyone could have a plate dedicated to them on payment of a guinea. Here again the contrast with Sloane is instructive: when Sloane's correspondents offered him items for his collection, they frequently chose to disguise these as gifts, even when they evidently hoped for payment in return. But the significance of Petiver's correspondence lies precisely in the fact that it exposes, sometimes with more frankness than finesse, the hard commercial calculations which made early modern collecting possible. When Robert Stevens, in South Carolina, was approached by Petiver offering to purchase specimens, he replied coolly that "what he takes in Collecting of Seeds and Plants, is only to please himself, and oblige one or two particular friends." Yet he added, meaningfully, that if he were to make "a Trade of it," he would require "greater offers" than the sum Petiver had mentioned.[22] His objection, in other words, was not so much to the social solecism of offering money for specimens as to the fact that Petiver had not offered enough.

Petiver's association with Sloane reveals a similar combination of friendship and self-interest. Sloane, five years Petiver's senior, was instrumental in advancing the younger man's career and getting him elected to the Royal Society. Their friendship flourished despite the long history of conflict between the College of Physicians and the Society of Apothecaries, which came to a head in 1696 with the founding of the London Dispensary.[23] Petiver, like other apothecaries, hoped for more independence from the physicians and argued that it was in an apothecary's interests to acquire a working knowledge of practical physic, as "it will qualifie him to give to his own Patients till acquaintance

21 James Delbourgo, "Listing People," *Isis*, 103 (2012): 735–42.

22 Robert Ellis to Petiver, 25 April 1704, BL MS Sloane 4064, f. 2.

23 On the Dispensary affair, see Frank H. Ellis, "The Background of the London Dispensary," *Journal of the History of Medicine*, 20 (1965): 197–212. An anti-Dispensary tract, "A modest defence of the Apothecaries against the dispensary," is copied into one of Petiver's letter-books, BL MS Sloane 3334, ff. 19–22.

and obligations with Physitians further enable him, for I have found it very necessary so to improve myself that I might live without dependance." This was the point at issue in the Rose Case of 1704, the test case which officially broke the physicians' monopoly by giving apothecaries the right to diagnose and prescribe.[24] Sloane's views on the Rose Case are not clear: in private he may have sympathised with the apothecaries, but in public he stood foursquare with his colleagues in the College of Physicians.[25] However, both he and Petiver both tried to repair relations between the two professions and saw them as united by a common reliance on botanical knowledge, which Petiver described as "a Science absolutely necessary towards the accomplishing all Physitians Apothecaries Surgeons Chymists &c in the knowledge of Physick."[26]

Petiver made himself useful to Sloane in other ways: for example, by acting as Sloane's proxy when the botanist Leonard Plukenet attacked him for errors in his catalogue of Jamaican plants. Even by the standards of early modern controversy, Plukenet's attack on Sloane stands out for its ferocity: he declared that Sloane's work was filled "not merely with falsehood, but rashness and stupidity" and scornfully quoted Cicero, "any man can err, but only a fool persists in his error."[27] Yet it was Petiver who took up the challenge, in a series of papers published in the *Philosophical Transactions* ostensibly written as a commentary on Samuel Browne's account of East Indian plants. As he explained to William Sherard:

> I have ventured to publish another Vollum of Dr Browns Indian plants in the last Transactions & did design (as you may see in the first sheet) to take very little notice of our angry adversary, but finding so many Errors that it would be injustice to the world not in some Measure to Correct

24 Petiver to William Bennett, [May 1704], BL MS Sloane 4064, f. 6. Harold J. Cook, "The Rose Case Reconsidered: Physicians, Apothecaries, and the Law in Augustan England," *Journal of the History of Medicine*, 45 (1990): 527–55. Cook argues that many apothecaries were already practising physic and that the judgement in the Rose Case simply reaffirmed the status quo.

25 Cook notes that William Rose appealed to Sloane for support, which may mean that Sloane was thought to be sympathetic to the Apothecaries' case: see Cook, "The Rose Case," 539.

26 Petiver to "Mr S.D." (Samuel Dale) on Ray's method of English plants, BL MS Sloane 3337, f. 20.

27 Plukenet, *Almagesti Botanici Mantissa* (London, 1700), 39: "in quo non falsa modo, sed inscitiae et temeritatis plena cuncta congessit. Cujusvis hominis est errare (inquit Cicero) nullius nisi insipientis in errore perseverare." Petiver's copy of the book, which later belonged to Sloane, is now BL 441.g.10.

> them, I was obleiged to take cognizance of them & him, which if he can disprove, I expect to be severely lasht, tho at present he seems very moody .. and his Zeal to Botany is now grown so cold that he only wishes the Expences he has been at were again in his Pockett.[28]

Most observers seem to have judged Petiver the victor of this "botanical war."[29] John Ray wrote to him: "You have discovered so many oversights and mistakes in Dr Plukenets works, that I fear he may have led me into some errours, who followed him as a most exact Botanist without due examination."[30] At the same time, Petiver's friend David Krieg warned him candidly that he was doing his own reputation no good by engaging in controversy: "pray do not give any occasion to fall out with other people, as you have done [with] Dr Plukenet, for those quarrels hinder allways by some way or other the improvement of that studie."[31] Petiver's reply to Plukenet was thus of the greatest value to Sloane in allowing him to vindicate his intellectual reputation without having to get his hands dirty in the arena of public debate.

This forms something of a pattern in Petiver's relations with Sloane. In their dispute with John Woodward it was, once again, Sloane who remained above the fray and Petiver who acted as his fixer. Writing to Hugh Jones in Maryland, Petiver earnestly warned him not to collaborate with Woodward or allow any of his specimens to fall into Woodward's hands:

> I understand our good friend Dr Woodward is mightily disgruntled that you should send petrifactions to me and Mr Lhwyd .. This I thought fit to acquaint you withall that forewarned, you may know who are your Friends & that Dr Woodwards Anger will not I hope frighten you from sending by all Opportunities to me & the rest of your Friends: And to obleige you to it let me tell you he hath (as he repeated he would spoil my Correspondence) already sent a Person over with a stipend & sallary from the Arch Bishop of Canterbury on purpose to collect Plants, Shells, Insects & particularly Fossills & form"d Stones or Petrifactions, so that

28 Petiver to Sherard, 19 Feb 1700–1, BL MS Sloane 3334, ff. 16–17. Petiver, "An Account of Mr Sam. Brown his Fifth Book of East India Plants," *Philosophical Transactions*, 22 (1700–1): 1007–29.

29 The phrase is Tancred Robinson's, from a letter to Martin Lister, 17 Oct 1699: "Dr Plukenet … reflects very severely upon Dr Sloan and Mr Pettiver, so we are like to have a Bellum Botanicum." Bodl. MS Lister 36, ff. 235–6.

30 Ray to Petiver, 4 April 1701, BL MS Sloane 4063, ff. 77–8.

31 Krieg to Petiver, 30 March 1702, BL MS Sloane 4063, ff. 149–50.

> I begg you would double your diligence & send all you can of every of these that you may have the honour of their first discoverer & he only what's left.[32]

Sloane and Petiver were convinced that Woodward was behind the publication of the satirical pamphlet *The Transactioneer* (1700).[33] Woodward denied it, but even as he did so, recapitulated the pamphlet's portrayal of Sloane and Petiver as a tight little mafia running the Royal Society for the benefit of themselves and their cronies. "The matter is this," wrote Woodward, "Dr Sloane and his friend Mr Petiver cause it to be spread abroad that I am the Author .. They do not directly charge me with it, that is not their way, but they do the thing as effectually by insinuating in their Clubs and meetings."[34] It is a rare glimpse of Sloane behind the scenes, revealing a less affable Sloane than the carefully crafted public image might suggest.

The *Transactioneer*—now attributed to the satirist William King, though possibly a collaborative effort written with the help of some of Sloane's enemies in the Royal Society—presented a well-informed caricature of Petiver as Sloane's client and factotum, the "Philosophick Sancho" to Sloane's Don Quixote. "Sir, he and I are all one," Sloane was made to say of Petiver. "You must know we club Notions, laying them up in a kind of Joynt Stock, and have all things in common .. By my good will I would never be without him."[35] The allusion to Sloane and Petiver as partners in a joint-stock enterprise may have been a dig at Petiver's social position, suggesting that, for all his pretensions, he remained a shopkeeper for whom philosophical ideas were merely articles of trade. However, it may also be a more direct reference to their collaboration as collectors. Petiver's correspondence shows that he and Sloane sometimes acted jointly in buying and exchanging specimens: for example, he wrote to Jean Rudolphe Lavater in 1708 that he had seen "a Letter from you to Dr Sloan our worthy Friend, by which I understand you are in the House of a Curious Collector of Rarities and if we could suddenly see a Catalogue of them as you promised Dr Sloan, either he or I would endeavour to make the Gentleman a reciprocall return for whatever he has duplicates of or after seeing his

32 Petiver to Jones, [Nov 1697], BL MS Sloane 3333, ff. 91–3.

33 On the *Transactioneer* affair, see Delbourgo, "Listing People," and Richard Coulton, " 'The Darling of the *Temple-Coffee-House Club*': Science, Sociability and Satire in Early Eighteenth-Century London," *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 35: 1 (2012): 43–65.

34 "Dr Woodwards Letter," 28 Feb 1699, copied in BL MS Sloane 3334, ff. 58–9.

35 *The Transactioneer, with some of his Philosophical Fancies; in Two Dialogues* (London, 1700), F1v (p. 34).

Catalogue wee shall desire."[36] On occasion Sloane seems to have stepped in to buy material that Petiver could not afford. In their dealings with Maria Sybilla Merian it was Petiver who conducted most of the correspondence, but it was Sloane who eventually bought Merian's drawings for the sum of 200 guineas on Petiver's recommendation.[37]

Petiver's most important errand on Sloane's behalf was his journey to Holland in 1711—the only time he ever travelled outside England—to bid at the auction of Paul Hermann's collection in Leiden.[38] Before his departure for Holland, Petiver drew up a will in which he bequeathed to Sloane "all my Collections of Naturall Things whatsoever, as well Duplicates as single Samples, and of all my Manuscripts relating thereto, excluding my Printed Bookes: on consideration of your cancelling my Bond" and making further bequests of £500, including £100 to the Royal Society "for the Discovery and Collecting Naturall Productions" and £100 to the Chelsea Physic Garden. The reference to the cancellation of a bond is intriguing, as it suggests that Sloane may have loaned Petiver money to support his collecting activities.[39] Petiver's final will, drawn up in August 1717, eight months before his death, left his residual estate to his sister, Jane Woodcock, and made no mention either of Sloane or of his collection.[40] However, as Sloane later wrote, "he always intended if he died before me, that his Collections should come into my Hands," and Sloane reportedly paid the sum of £4000 to acquire the whole collection, either shortly before Petiver's death or soon afterwards.[41]

This was the largest single acquisition that Sloane ever made, and one of the most important. It was a collection of collections, containing not just Petiver's own archive and specimens but a number of other discrete collections formed by his correspondents and suppliers, including James Cuninghame's plants and botanical drawings from China, and George Joseph Kamel's plants and drawings from the Philippines. The relationship between Petiver and Sloane has often

36 Petiver to Lavater, 30 Jan 1708, BL MS Sloane 3336, f. 24.

37 Petiver to J.P. Breyne, [April 1706], BL MS Sloane 3335, f. 9. On Sloane's purchase of Merian's drawings, see also Ella Reitsma, *Maria Sibylla Merian and Daughters: Women of Art and Science* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2008), 203.

38 On Petiver's purchases at the Hermann auction, see his letter to Sloane, 29 June 1711, BL MS Sloane 4042, f. 305 (copied in Petiver's letter-book, BL MS Sloane 3337, ff. 160–1, with some textual differences). Petiver's copy of the sale catalogue, annotated by him with prices and names of buyers, and with related documents bound in, is BL 1044.c.4.

39 Petiver's will is contained in a letter to Sloane, 7 June 1711, BL MS Sloane 4042, ff. 295–6.

40 Petiver's will, National Archives, PROB 11/563.

41 Sloane, *Voyage to Jamaica* (1725), 2: IV. The sum of £4000 is given by Hearne (n.2 above) and in Richard Pulteney, *Historical and Biographical Sketches of the Progress of Botany in England* (London, 1790), 2: 32.

been presented as a study in contrasts: Petiver the industrious accumulator, Sloane the systematic collector, as if the natural fate of Petiver's collection was to be absorbed into Sloane's museum where it could be properly catalogued and organised for the first time. But in terms of their collecting activities, Petiver and Sloane were joined at the hip. Much of what now passes as the "Sloane collection" is in fact Petiver's creation; indeed, many of Sloane's catalogue descriptions were taken straight from Petiver. As the next section will show, Petiver was by no means without a system for organising his collection, but the dynamic nature of his collecting, with letters, printed papers and objects in constant circulation, means that his indexing system can only be partially captured in a static archive. It is this, I suggest, that accounts for his reputation as an unsystematic collector.

2 Petiver as Archivist

Petiver's massive collection of natural curiosities required the creation of an equally massive paper archive to keep track of it. Petiver understood this very well, and, like many other early modern naturalists, took a lot of trouble to develop efficient methods of information storage and retrieval. In a letter of 1696 he explained his system for recording insect specimens, which resembled the system pioneered by Francis Bacon earlier in the century in using two separate notebooks: one for rough jottings, which Bacon likened to a merchant's waste book, and the other for more digested observations, which Bacon likened to a merchant's ledger.[42] The key to the archive was the numbering system, which allowed for easy cross-reference between the paper book and the physical specimen. Equally important was the use of blank space so that new material could be inserted at a later stage:

> Whatever comes in my way, I put down into a small Paper booke I keepe for that purpose under a Series of Numbers even as they come to hand without any Method beginning with No. 1. 2. & so goe on, I allow 2 Insects to each Octavo page in my Adversaria or Note Booke first giving some rough name that may easily convey the remembrance of him to my memory & after that I leave a certain space to add the Synonymous names of Authors as they may come in my way. Then I remark the Place & time I first observed them att, with what else may be remarkable in them & a short description of them. Each Insect I pinn in my Box under

42 On Bacon's method, see Angus Vine, "Commercial Commonplacing: Francis Bacon, the Waste Book, and the Ledger," *English Manuscript Studies*, 16 (2010): 1–33.

> its peculiar Class with the same number I have made my remarks. Then I have a Seperate Catalogue of them in a sheet of Paper, allowing halfe or a whole page or more according to the largness of the Class as for Example
>
> 1. Apum Vesparum & Bombylum Catalogus.
> 2. Muscarum Catalogus. & so on, to each Bee, Fly, Beetle &c adding the Number under which it is in the History as I have done to the end of the names of those I have already mentioned & such I shall send you. This Method till you can find a better I would have you follow.[43]

The "small Paper booke" described here is still preserved among the Sloane manuscripts, with the entries laid out two to a page and numbered 1 to 500.[44] It includes detailed field notes on Petiver's insect specimens, many of them collected on his rambles around Islington, Hampstead and "Caen Wood" (Kenwood). In some cases Petiver did not even need to leave his house to add new insects to his collection: one butterfly was caught by his servant at his kitchen window, another by Petiver himself "on the steps of my street door." Of one small moth he noted: "these are frequent most part of the summer in my parlour, proceeding as I suppose from some dead Birds kept there."[45] Petiver's notes leave no doubt of his dedication to the accurate recording of specimen data; if this has not been widely recognised as it might be, it is because his notebooks in the British Library are now physically separated from the specimens in the Natural History Museum to which they refer.

Petiver also took great interest in systems of botanical classification. In a paper to the Royal Society in 1699, he argued that plants with the same physical characteristics often had the same medicinal effects: for example, umbelliferous herbs such as parsley, caraway and cumin were effective in treating colic and flatulence, while vegetables such as radishes and turnips, which Ray had classed together as "flore tetrapetalo uniformi" in respect of their four-petalled flowers, were powerful diuretics.[46] As an apothecary, Petiver was well aware that this information could have commercial implications. As he pointed out, rosemary and lavender were generally valued for their flowers, but his system of classification suggested that, like other umbelliferous plants, their chief effect

43 Petiver to John Scampton, 4 June 1696, BL MS Sloane 3332, ff. 212–5.

44 Petiver, "Historia Universalis Insectorum," BL MS Sloane 2347.

45 BL MS Sloane 2347, ff. 34r, 52v, 60r.

46 Petiver, "some Attempts made to prove that Herbs of the same Make or Class for the generality, have the like Vertue and Tendency to work the same Effects," *Philosophical Transactions*, 21 (1699): 289–94.

lay in their leaves and husks. If so, then, he predicted, the market value of these plants would rise: "I fear they will quickly sell the Husks as dear as the Flowers, if they find a great vend or a frequent demand for them."[47] But his paper was also, in a sense, his professional manifesto, reflecting his long-held conviction that the botanical knowledge of apothecaries like himself could be directly applied to the improvement of physic. "I doubt not," he told Patrick Blair, "but if you take the Classicall Method into your Curious Consideration" ("classical" in this sense meaning classed or classified), "you will find the Medicinall subservient to it, and perhaps many Plants which grow in such abundant plenty with us to be of more Vertue or Use than we have hitherto found out or conceived, and are not yet reckoned amongst our Materia Medica."[48]

This makes it implausible to suggest that Petiver was solely interested in collecting for its own sake, not in organising his collection. Among the many services he rendered to Sloane was that of putting his herbarium into order. When Sloane purchased Plukenet's dried plants after the latter's death in 1706, he found them "very confused and without Names and references" and called on Petiver to help. "I have taken some pains about them," Petiver wrote to Sherard, "and as I knew most of his Correspondents and the greatest part of his Collection coming from the same hands I had mine, I find I can go a great length towards the elucidating of them."[49] In the same spirit, Petiver urged Sir George Wheler to preserve his important collection of plants from Greece and Asia Minor by "letting them be put into his own Method and pasted all in one Book together," a task which Petiver offered to do for him "and to add some Notes and Synonyms to them by which they would be the better known." Petiver was shrewdly aware that good classification could significantly enhance both the intellectual and financial value of a herbarium. The collection of the great sixteenth-century botanist Leonhard Rauwolff, he pointed out, had been bought by the University of Leiden, "where they Vallue them at the Price they gave for all Dr Isaack Vossius his Library in which they were & paid for them £2500 as I am informed." Wheler, he suggested, could do the same by allowing his collection to be put in order, "and then wherever he leaves them, they may without prejudice be viewed and remain a lasting Monument of his great pains & Travails."[50]

For Petiver, collecting was not simply about the accumulation of objects; it was a continuous process of listing, recording and labelling. His obsessive list-making is exemplified in a volume from Sloane's collection (now Sloane MS

47 Petiver, "Some Attempts," 291.

48 Petiver to Blair, 6 Jan 1710, BL MS Sloane 3337, ff. 68–9.

49 Petiver to Sherard, 20 Sept 1710, BL MS Sloane 3337, ff. 85–6.

50 Petiver to John Covell, 22 May 1717, BL MS Sloane 3340, ff. 323–4.

3331) described in Sloane's catalogue as "loose papers of Mr Petivers pasted on brown paper." At first glance this gives the impression of absolute chaos: hundreds of notes in Petiver's crabbed hand, scribbled on tiny scraps of paper, often literally on the backs of envelopes. On closer examination, however, order starts to emerge. The majority of the loose papers consist of lists of specimens sent to, or received from, Petiver's numerous correspondents, often identified with reference to the numbered descriptions and tables of engravings in his two major publications, the *Museum Petiverianum* and *Gazophylacium Naturae*.[51] One intriguing survival is a list headed "Collectanea Quotidiana," recording new accessions to Petiver's collection in order of acquisition. This may have been intended as part of a larger notebook, modelled on the entry-books that Petiver would have used in his apothecary's business to keep track of day-to-day transactions. The surviving fragment is dated September to November 1717, only a few months before Petiver's death, and reflects the extraordinary diversity of his collection as well as the hectic pace of acquisition: it begins with a list of crabs, shells and sponges sent by James Campbell from Minorca, followed by a list of animal specimens sent by Henry Barham from Jamaica, including a crocodile, an iguana, a galliwasp and a porcupine, all received on a single day, 26 September 1717.[52]

Alongside the collecting and listing of specimens, Petiver was also involved in collecting and commissioning images. This was partly because drawings were less perishable than plants or insects, and easier to transmit across long distances, but also because Petiver needed a constant supply of images to reproduce in his *Gazophylacium Naturae*. In 1697 he employed David Krieg to draw the insects in his collection, describing him as "a most ingenious person" who "hath lodged at my howse about a year in which time he hath painted most of our English Insects and severall other things admirably well."[53] In 1717 he wrote to the Dutch collector Levinus Vincent asking for the loan of some of his specimens and drawings so that they could be copied and engraved; the letter is of interest both for Petiver's remarks on the copying of imperfect specimens and for his candid admission that it was sometimes necessary to improve on nature rather than copying the original "exactly as it lies":

> I could wish for the future what you send me the Paintings of, should be only your most rare, & such you have no duplicates of, for the Charge

51 For a typical example, see the list of "Insects sent Mr Seba," 6 Feb 1712–13, BL MS Sloane 3331, f. 313.

52 "Collectanea Quotidiana," BL MS Sloane 3331, f. 636.

53 Petiver to Hugh Jones, [Nov 1697], BL MS Sloane 3333, ff. 91–3.

> would be the same as painting the most common, which are easier to send over in their own Specimens & if they are not so intire as they should be, we can make up the imperfection of one side or part by the other that is not so, and rectifie what your Painters I find, often err in, viz. of laying the under wing of some above the upper, and sometimes not dividing the one from the other as in Fig. 4. or making one side unequall & differing from the other as in Fig. 4, 5, 6 & 8, they exactly copying the insect as it lies, which may be prevented by sending over the Patterns themselves of such you can spare.[54]

Petiver also acquired natural history images from a number of his overseas correspondents. From Madras, the East India Company surgeon Edward Bulkley sent him drawings of Indian birds; from the Cape, the naval surgeon Martin Dolneus sent him drawings of African plants; while in Virginia, the naturalist John Banister was said by Petiver to have "a very happy hand at designing Plants Shells and Insects the which I have seen curiously performed by him, he frequently sending over what he there observed."[55] Many of the images from Petiver's collection can be found today in Sloane's albums of natural history drawings, identifiable as Petiver's because of the references in his hand to "MP" (*Museum Petiverianum*) and "GN" (*Gazophylacium Naturae*) where they were described and reproduced.

Petiver's publications, particularly the *Gazophylacium Naturae*, drew a decidedly mixed response from some of his correspondents, who were disappointed by the poor quality of the engravings and the brevity of the descriptive text accompanying them. James Bobart, the keeper of the Oxford Botanic Garden, told him bluntly: "I dare not deliver these books to the subscribers without the key to them, or without some account of their contents." One of those subscribers, the Oxford academic Dixon Colby, complained that "such pictures" served no purpose except "to please Children or amuse fooles, being very unserviceable to any Philosopher, without names," while even the mild-mannered John Ray confided to Sloane: "I doe not well like the Cuts of Mr

54 Petiver to Vincent, [March 1717], BL MS Sloane 3340, f. 316.

55 Petiver to Dr Lewis, 2 Feb 1696–7, BL MS Sloane 3332, ff. 254–8. On the important role of ships' surgeons in supplying Petiver with material, see Kathleen S. Murphy, "Collecting Slave Traders: James Petiver, Natural History, and the British Slave Trade," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd series, 70: 4 (2013): 637–70, and Anna Winterbottom, "Medicine and Botany in the Making of Madras, 1680–1720," in *The East India Company and the Natural World,* ed. Vinita Damodaran, Anna Winterbottom and Alan Lester (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 35–57.

Petivers Gazophylacium, they are not so elegant and polite as I could wish mine might be."[56] When the first instalment of the *Gazophylacium* came out in 1702, Petiver sent several copies to David Krieg in Paris in the hope of gaining more subscribers, but without success; Krieg showed the plates to a distinguished group of botanists, including Sébastien Vaillant, Claude Joseph Geoffroy and Charles Plumier, but failed to persuade any of them to subscribe, Plumier remarking unenthusiastically that "it was pity, that they was not well engraved and anatomised, especially the plants." Krieg only made matters worse by his clumsy efforts to excuse Petiver on the grounds that he might have been working from imperfect specimens and, in any case, did not have the artistic ability to draw them himself.[57]

What then should we make of these publications on which Petiver lavished so much effort and expense? The *Museum* and *Gazophylacium* are best understood, I suggest, not as independent works of reference but as extensions of Petiver's collecting activities. The printed text could be cut up to produce labels, which could then be attached to specimens in his collection or duplicates exchanged with other collectors. An inventory of Petiver's miscellaneous papers, drawn up by Sloane after Petiver's death, lists bundles of unbound sheets from the *Museum* and *Gazophylacium* "cutt for labells," and many of these spare labels survive today, loosely tucked into the volumes of Petiver's herbarium in the Natural History Museum.[58] The plates in the *Gazophylacium* also served as desiderata lists, which could be sent to Petiver's overseas correspondents as a handy visual guide to the specimens he wanted them to collect. Two examples survive among Petiver's papers (Fig. 6.1): one of a starfish, annotated "A Sea starr, pray send me all the varieties you meet with," the other of a lizard, annotated "A sort of Lizard which you have many kinds of, which may be sent in a Bottle of Rum or Brandy."[59] While Petiver's subscribers were understandably keen to assure themselves that their copies of the *Gazophylacium* were complete with all the text and plates, Petiver took little interest in creating what bibliographers term an "ideal copy"; to him, his publications were

56 Bobart to Petiver, 6 March 1708–9, BL MS Sloane 3321, f. 243; Ray to Sloane, 22 Aug 1704, BL MS Sloane 4039, ff. 350–1.

57 Krieg to Petiver, 30 March 1702, BL MS Sloane 4063, ff. 149–50.

58 For Sloane's list of printed papers in Petiver's archive, see BL MS Sloane 1968, f. 171. For typical examples of loose labels in Petiver's herbarium, see Natural History Museum HS 150, f. 73v (10 loose labels for "Muscus Saxatilis Foeniculaceus Anglicus") and f. 118 (3 loose labels for "soft Crested Grass").

59 BL MS Sloane 1968, f. 213.

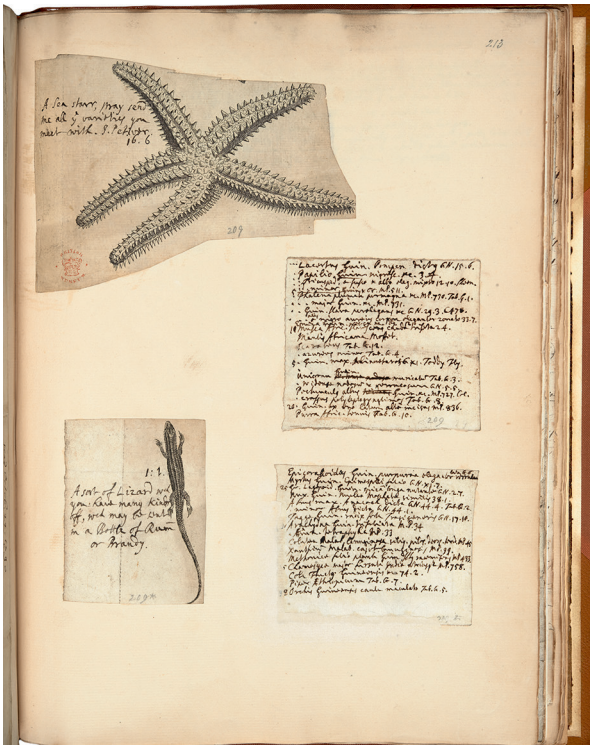

FIGURE 6.1 *A typical group of Petiver's loose notes, with annotated engravings of a lizard and a starfish, and two lists of specimens.*
BRITISH LIBRARY, SLOANE MS 1968, F. 213.

objects to be cut up and disassembled in an ongoing process of commerce and exchange.

The *Museum* and *Gazophylacium* were also used by Petiver as indexes and finding-aids to his collection. One of his working copies of the *Museum* (now BL 972.g.2) is marked up with cross-references to the *Gazophylacium* and a range of other botanical works, including Ray's *Historia Plantarum*, the *Hortus Malabaricus* and Sloane's *Voyage to Jamaica*. Many of his natural history drawings are marked up in the same way with cross-references to his own publications. To take only one example from many: Sloane's album of insect drawings (Sloane MS 5271) includes a drawing of a dragonfly-like insect with mottled wings (Fig. 6.2), with no identifying information other than a reference in Petiver's hand to the *Gazophylacium*. Following up this reference leads one to an engraving of the drawing, in reverse (Fig. 6.3), with a caption identifying it as "Libella Turcica major, alias *Locustae*," noting that the spots on the wings are "very dark, near to black" (obvious in the drawing but less

FIGURE 6.2 *Drawing of the antlion* Palpares libelluloides*, possibly by David Krieg, with Petiver's reference to the* Gazophylacium.
BRITISH LIBRARY, SLOANE MS 5271, F. 172.

clear in the engraving), and giving the source of acquisition: "Caught about Aleppo, by Mr Samuel Daniel, Surgeon."[60] Petiver did not need to note any of this identifying data on the drawing, as the reference to the *Gazophylacium* gave him all the information he needed to retrieve it. In other words, the *Gazophylacium* seems to have been intended by Petiver primarily for his own reference, to be used in conjunction with the specimens, drawings and notes in his collection.

These indexing arrangements were continued and adapted by Sloane after he acquired Petiver's collections. One of the copies of the *Gazophylacium* now in the British Library (443.i.1) is marked up with Sloane's catalogue numbers, showing that Sloane was still using it as a finding-aid to Petiver's collection of butterflies. Another example shows how the *Museum* and *Gazophylacium*

60 The insect is a species of antlion, called *Myrmelion libelluloides* by Linnaeus and now known as *Palpares libelluloides*.

FIGURE 6.3 *Engraving of the same image, known to Petiver as 'Libella Turcica major', from the* Gazophylacium.
BRITISH LIBRARY, 443.I.1 (1).

functioned as what we might call hyperlinks, allowing Petiver, and Sloane after him, to connect the different parts of the collection. Petiver owned both a drawing and a specimen of the beautiful moth from Jamaica, now sadly extinct, which Sloane described as "one of the most elegant Sorts of Butterflies I ever saw" and which was later named *Urania sloanus* in his honour.[61] The drawing, now in the British Library (Fig. 6.4), is annotated by Petiver in his usual fashion, "MP 509." The specimen, now in the Natural History Museum, is catalogued in Sloane's hand with a description copied out of the *Museum Petiverianum*, "Papilio caudatus Jamaicensis nigrescens, utrinque ex viridi aureo splendide striatus" ("long-tailed black butterfly from Jamaica, both wings splendidly striped in green and gold"). But one still has to turn back to the *Museum* to find Petiver's note on the provenance of this specimen: "Mr Patrick Rattray

61 Sloane, *Voyage to Jamaica*, 2: 216 and plate 239.

FIGURE 6.4 *Drawing of the Jamaican moth* Urania sloanus*, with Petiver's reference to the* Museum Petiverianum.
BRITISH LIBRARY, SLOANE MS 5271, F. 101.

brought me this some time since from Jamaica."[62] After three hundred years, the *Museum* and *Gazophylacium* are still, as they were for Petiver and Sloane, indispensable tools for navigating across Petiver's collection and identifying his sources of supply.

Petiver's publications illustrate the point recently made by Daniel Margócsy that early modern taxonomy was "not a simple quest after the

62 Petiver, *Museum Petiverianum*, D1v (p. 50).

FIGURE 6.5 Gazophylacium Naturae et Artis*, plate 14, showing the juxtaposition of natural and artificial curiosities.* BRITISH LIBRARY, 443.I.1 (1).

order of nature" but "a method for facilitating identification in the commerce of curiosities."[63] This explains why Petiver was not chiefly concerned with detailed descriptions or highly accurate illustrations. His catalogues served other purposes: as finding-aids for his own collection, as a public acknowledgement of his suppliers, and as a means of selecting and identifying duplicate specimens which could then be used for trade and exchange. In 1696

63 Daniel Margócsy, "'Refer to Folio and Number': Encyclopedias, the Exchange of Curiosities, and Practices of Identification before Linnaeus," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 71: 1 (2010): 81.

his correspondent Richard Wheeler sent him a sample of the Norwegian moss now known as *Splachrum rubrum*, popularly known as umbrella moss or sometimes moosedung moss because it grows on reindeer dung. Petiver was delighted with the specimen, calling it "one of the finest discoveries that has lately been made"; in a flight of fancy, he christened it bongrace moss "because it hath a Scarlet cap like an Umbrella or Childs Bongrace," and wrote to Wheeler: "pray order those you employ to get Herbs Shells & Insects for me to gather me 40 or so fair Specimens of it, for I design to have a figure of it engraven on a Copper plate which I will send you."[64] Petiver asked for forty specimens not only to ensure that he would have a perfect example to copy, but also to send to other collectors. By having it engraved for the *Museum Petiverianum*, he was able to create a cycle of exchange in which the specimens sent to London were reciprocated by the printed image making the return journey to Norway. In short, Petiver's archive was not a closed collection, but part of a network of long-distance communication to which his printed publications served as keys.

3 Petiver's Afterlives

The amalgamation of Petiver's collection with Sloane's was not a simple or straightforward process. In 1727 his nephew John Woodcock wrote to Sloane to inform him that several important items, including "a large book of very valuable Paintings which I find were painted in Holland and several small books of Exotick Butterflies and severall kinds of Animalls," had only just been recovered from another collector who had borrowed them shortly before Petiver's death.[65] As for Petiver's correspondence, it was not until the 1730s that Sloane incorporated this into his library, at the same time as he accessioned his own archive of incoming letters. This, as I have argued elsewhere, was a pivotal moment in Sloane's self-fashioning as a public figure: the moment when, in a manner of speaking, he added himself to his collection.[66] But by this time Petiver's papers had got inextricably mixed up

64 Petiver to Wheeler, 26 March and 18 July 1696, BL MS Sloane 3332, ff, 200–1 and 223. Petiver, *Museum Petiverianum*, no. 70, "Muscus Norwegicus umbraculo ruberrimo insignito," A6r (p. 11).

65 Woodcock to Sloane, 4 April 1727, BL MS Sloane 4048, f. 273.

66 Arnold Hunt, "Sloane as a Collector of Manuscripts," in *From Books to Bezoars: Sir Hans Sloane and His Collections,* ed. Michael Hunter, Arthur MacGregor, and Alison Walker (London: British Library Publishing, 2012), 203.

with Sloane's, as shown by one entry in Sloane's accession register: "Letters to Mr Petiver and some to my selfe."[67] And despite considerable rearrangement over the years, inextricably mixed up they remain, with several volumes of letters to Petiver labelled on the spine "Letters to Sir Hans Sloane."

A preliminary listing of Petiver's herbarium was carried out by William Sherard, whose catalogue survives among Sloane's papers.[68] However, Sherard later fell out with Sloane over what he claimed was "a breach of his promise" in refusing him access to Petiver's collection.[69] According to Sherard, this was because Sloane wanted priority in using the plants for his *Voyage to Jamaica*. According to Sloane, it was because Petiver's plants had been left in "great confusion" and could not be made available to anyone until they had been properly labelled and pasted into volumes. As he wrote to their mutual friend, Richard Richardson:

> I told him that I was then printing my second volume of the Naturall history of Jamaica which is now near finished, the plates of which had been graved this 20 years & that I intended after that was published to take my Collections of dry"d plants to putt in order, that they were 200 volumes, some of which were very large, that Mr Petivers collections he had seen in great confusion but that if the labels & references which lay loose were not kept with them that neither he nor any body else could ever putt them to rights .. Now you may judge by this account what I can do more, for I shall be allways ready to assist him.[70]

Even after the second volume of the *Voyage to Jamaica* was finally published in 1725, Sloane stuck to his insistence that Petiver's collections were not in a fit state to be seen by anyone else:

> I have taken as much Care as I can to bring his Collections and Papers out of the Confusion I found them in, and will take farther Care, that what he hath gather"d together, by very great and undefatigable Industry, shall not

67 BL MS Sloane 3972B, f. 306v.

68 "A Catalogue of the late Mr James Petiver's Collections" (unattributed, but in Sherard's hand), BL MS Sloane 1968, f. 170.

69 Sherard to Richardson, 14 Oct 1721, Bodl. MS Radcliffe Trust c.4, ff. 53–4, printed in *Extracts from the Literary and Scientific Correspondence of Richard Richardson*, ed. Dawson Turner (Yarmouth, 1835), 175–7.

70 Sloane to Richardson, 9 March 1720–1, Bodl. MS Radcliffe Trust c.4, ff. 4–5, printed in *Extracts*, 161–4.

> be lost, but preserved and published for the good of the Publick, doing right to his Memory, and my own Reputation.[71]

It is true that Petiver may well have left his herbarium in an unfinished state, though Sherard asserted that he had seen it "in order and together," and his listing of the collection shows that it was organised geographically and bound into volumes, very much as it remains today.[72] But it was important for Sloane to stress the disorganisation of Petiver's collection in order to justify himself. As his remark in the *Voyage to Jamaica* makes clear, it was not just Petiver's memory that was at stake, but his own reputation for liberality in sharing his collections with others.

This, then, was how Petiver would be remembered: as a great collector, and in Sherard's words, a man of "indefatigable industry in procuring and graving natural history," but not equal to the task of organising and systematising his collection.[73] His own publications, particularly the *Gazophylacium*, tended to reinforce this impression. As the title made clear, this was a collection of natural and artificial curiosities—*Gazophylacium Naturae et Artis*—and Petiver saw nothing incongruous in juxtaposing the two: in one plate, for example, the new coinage for Queen Anne was pictured alongside a selection of English butterflies, a fern from the Philippines, lichen from Norway, a lizard from America and a scarab beetle from Borneo (Fig. 6.5). It was a purposely eclectic selection, designed to evoke wonder and curiosity in the reader and to mimic the experience of viewing a private museum or cabinet. In this, Petiver was hardly unique. As Kay Dian Kriz has shown, Sloane did exactly the same thing in his *Voyage to Jamaica*, where natural and artificial objects were frequently placed together on the same page, inviting the viewer to read them emblematically as well as scientifically. This juxtaposition, Kriz argues, "promoted the notion that such collections represented the world in microcosm as well as suggesting that human artifacts were linked to and emulations of divine creativity."[74] But with the development of biological classification in the eighteenth century, this began to seem hopelessly unsystematic and unscientific, contributing to Petiver's reputation as a haphazard accumulator of objects.

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71 Sloane, *Voyage to Jamaica*, 2: v.

72 Sherard to Richardson, 14 Oct 1721, Bodl. MS Radcliffe Trust c.4, ff. 53–4. However, a remark in the same letter implies that at least some of Petiver's plants were loose in the volumes: "they will be eat up (if they are not already) in a little time, I mean Petivers, for Plukenets are pasted on."

73 Sherard to Petiver, 25 March 1709, BL MS Sloane 4064, ff. 194–5.

74 Kay Dian Kriz, "Curiosities, Commodities, and Transplanted Bodies in Hans Sloane's 'Natural History of Jamaica'," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd series, 57, 1 (2000): 55.

Petiver also used his publications to position himself as a broker of intellectual credit by acknowledging his correspondents in print and sometimes even naming new species after them. George Lewis, East India Company chaplain at Fort St George in Madras, was rewarded for a consignment of African plants by having an entire genus, Lewisanus, named in his honour.[75] Again, Petiver was not unique in this. As the Edinburgh botanist Charles Preston observed, he was merely following the example of Joseph Tournefort in "baptizing your plants after the names of your friends and benefactors (which is not amisse)." However, as Preston pointed out, Tournefort had provided detailed descriptions of his new species, whereas "you are pleased only to give us the bare names and leave us to seek for the Character some where else. As for instance how is it possible for me or any man else, who has not seen these plants or Specimens, to distinguish Lewisanus capensis foliis capillaceis from other capillaceous plants that grow in the same country, or even in other places, without some particular Character?"[76] Even in Petiver's own lifetime, the increasing precision of botanical taxonomy left publications like the *Museum Petiverianum* looking distinctly old-fashioned. And Linnaeus later scoffed at Petiver's lack of discrimination in naming plants after his friends: "I am astounded when I see with what boldness, with what rashness *Petiver*, to say nothing of others, thrust priceless gifts, too brilliant and valuable for the uneducated, on florists, monks, relations, friends and the like."[77] In Linnaeus's opinion, this only succeeded in bringing botanical nomenclature into disrepute and devaluing what ought to be the highest honour that any botanist could receive. The *Gazophylacium* earned Linnaeus's disapproval too, as one of a number of books whose copperplate engravings made them too expensive for the average student of botany to afford. Linnaeus's aim was to make such books obsolete by basing his taxonomic method on exact verbal description, thus doing away with the need for costly engraved illustrations.[78]

Needless to say, there was a social dimension to this critique. Petiver's humble social origins and lack of university education were widely commented on by his contemporaries. Samuel Molyneux, secretary to the Prince of Wales (the future King George II), visited Petiver's museum in 1713 and observed: "This Gentleman is a very laborious Collector of Nature and I believe

75 J.E. Dandy, *The Sloane Herbarium* (London: British Museum, 1958), 155.

76 Preston to Petiver, 8 Sept 1701, BL MS Sloane 4063, f. 117.

77 Carl Linnaeus, *Critica Botanica*, trans. Sir Arthur Hort and M.L. Green (London, Ray Society, 1938), 54.

78 John L. Heller, "Linnaeus on Sumptuous Books," *Taxon*, 25: 1 (1976): 33–52.

if his Education had been suitable to his Genius and Inclination he might have been very useful to the Enquireing world." Indeed, Petiver himself lamented "my not being allowed Academicall Learning, whereby I might have been better capacitated to serve both my own Country and others."[79] This finds a curious echo in modern scholarship, where Petiver is often portrayed as a social outsider in the polite world of eighteenth-century collecting. Raymond Stearns, the first scholar to make a detailed study of Petiver's papers, described him as "vain, excessively ambitious and occasionally dull" (also, Stearns speculated in a footnote, possibly homosexual), and remarked, a little unkindly, that Petiver's correspondents were "often more interesting and sometimes more significant" than Petiver himself.[80] More recently, Marjorie Swann has argued that Petiver consciously used his collecting as a means of self-fashioning and self-advancement, "coordinating the labour of others and using his control of this work force to enhance his own social status."[81]

No one would deny the social dimension of early modern collecting, and Swann is quite right to observe that for Petiver, collecting objects was also a way of collecting people. But in trying to reconstruct Petiver's social world—a world in which, as Swann puts it, "social interactions [were] predicated on collecting"—there is the risk of fusing the social and the intellectual, and treating Petiver's intellectual shortcomings as a function of his social inferiority. I have argued in this chapter that Petiver was far more interested in method and organisation than modern scholars have been prepared to allow. Some visitors to his collection perceived this: Molyneux, for example, despite his rather patronising remarks on Petiver's lack of education, was impressed by "the method of his Collections which is in all its parts digested according to the different parts of the world so that you have the Plants and Insects of Europe by themselves and so of the rest." He was particularly gratified to see that Petiver gave priority to British botany, "and very properly, for I think all Collectors of this kind should have a particular regard to their own native Country."[82] But this method of arrangement would soon come to be regarded as no proper method at all. When Linnaeus visited Sloane's collection in 1736, he remarked

79 *The London Letters of Samuel Molyneux, 1712–13*, ed. Ann Saunders, with Paul Holden and Sheila O'Connell (London: London Topographical Society, 2011), 120. Petiver to Sir Charles Holt, 2 June 1713, BL MS Sloane 3339, f. 11.

80 Raymond Phineas Stearns, "James Petiver, Promoter of Natural Science, c.1663–1718," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, 62 (1953): 245 and 247.

81 Marjorie Swann, *Curiosities and Texts: The Culture of Collecting in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 90–96.

82 *London Letters of Samuel Molyneux*, 120.

contemptuously that the herbarium was in "great disorder," a judgement not merely on Petiver or Sloane but on a whole system of botanical classification that Linnaeus was now proposing to sweep away.[83] If we fail to perceive method in Petiver's collecting, it may be a reflection of our own inability to think ourselves back into a pre-Linnaean world.

83 Dandy, *Sloane Herbarium*, 12. Linnaeus's remark occurs in a letter to Olaf Celsius, 30 Nov 1736: see Jackson, "The visit of Carl Linnaeus to England in 1736," *Svenska Linnesallskapets Arsskrift*, 9 (1926), 1–11.