

## Slavery in the Cabinet of Curiosities:

### Hans Sloane's Atlantic World

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Portrait of Sir Hans Sloane, 1729, John Faber after Sir Godfrey Kneller. Mezzotint. Bequeathed by William Meriton Eaton, 2nd Baron Cheylesmore. PD 1902,1011.1876

### The Whip in the Coffee-House

In the early eighteenth century, a whip from Britain's Caribbean colonies was put on display in a fashionable London coffee-house. A printed catalogue for Don Saltero's "Coffee-Room of Curiosities" described the object simply as "a manati strap": a whip made from the hide of a sea-cow. Its owner was Sir Hans Sloane (1660-1753). Early in his career – long before he was made a baronet, became physician to the royal family, president of the Royal Society and founded the British Museum – Sloane crossed the Atlantic Ocean to visit the island of Jamaica. This voyage, made between 1687 and 1689, is now far less famous than Joseph Banks' trip to the Pacific in the 1770s or Charles Darwin's to the Galapagos Islands in the 1830s, but in the eighteenth century Sloane was held up by Diderot and D'Alembert's *Encyclopédie* as an exemplary *voyageur*. Although Sloane's voyage is usually remembered for the 800 plant specimens he transported to England, preserved to this day in London's Natural History Museum, plants were not the

only things he brought back from Jamaica. While in the Caribbean, Sloane found himself face to face with African slaves. It was also while in Jamaica that he began his lifelong collection of “curiosities.” Although many collectors prized African artefacts, Sloane may have been unique in collecting curiosities that related specifically to slaves, and in particular, the violence of slavery and its resistance. These included “a barbary Scourge with which the slaves are beaten made ...[from] a palm tree”; a “noose made of cane splitt for catching game or hanging runaway negros”; a “bullet used by the runaway Negros in Jamaica”; a “coat of the runaway rebellious negros who lived in the woods of that Island”; and, finally, the manatee strap “for whipping the Negro Slaves in the Hott W. India plantations.”<sup>1</sup>

Sloane collected these objects from correspondents and friends over a period of years after the Jamaican voyage. While there is no direct evidence that he publicly displayed them or showed them to visitors to his house in Bloomsbury Square, which doubled as his private museum, we do know that he gave the manatee strap to James Salter, a barber and gentleman’s servant, who ran Don Saltero’s in Chelsea. Don Saltero’s was not a modern museum whose objects were labelled and explained to visitors in a controlled environment, but a more chaotic place of conversation, consumption and exchange: customers drank and smoked, and paid to see the “Coffee-Room of Curiosities,” to have Salter make his strange things speak to them. The German traveller Zacharias von Uffenbach noticed with concern how tobacco smoke curled around the room’s rarities, possibly damaging them, but was nevertheless impressed by what he took to be a highly respectable collection. “Standing round the walls and hanging from the ceiling are all manner of exotic beasts,” he observed in 1710, “such as crocodiles and turtles, as well as Indian and other strange costumes and weapons.” To him, Saltero’s was a genuine cabinet of curiosities, a place where one gained wonderful knowledge of strange new worlds. Other commentators, meanwhile, like the *Tatler* magazine’s fictional critic Isaac Bickerstaff, refused to trust the lowly Salter. “I cannot allow a Liberty he takes of imposing several Names ...on the Collections he has made,” Bickerstaff crowed. “He shows you a Straw-Hat, which I know to be made by *Madge Peskad*, within three Miles of *Bedford*; and tells you, *it is* Pontius Pilate’s Wife’s Chamber-Maid’s Sister’s Hat.” The coffee-house was a place of useful news and

commercial information, but also strange sights and tall tales, where credibility was personal and trust always in doubt. The space between objects and their meanings, which exists in all museums, was especially open to question in the coffee-house.<sup>ii</sup>

The image of tobacco smoke curling round exotic specimens points to the relationship between the culture of collecting in Europe and the plantation worlds of African slaves. Early modern curiosity cabinets embodied long-distance trade relationships but also social relationships, between masters and slaves for example, that generated the capital for collection in the first place. Let's imagine that the manatee strap still existed: how would we label it? How would we explain its movement across the Atlantic into public view? Later in the eighteenth century, abolitionist campaigners would publish vivid accounts of slavery's barbarities so that the whips and chains they displayed took on compelling moral meaning for the British public. But what did it mean to display such objects in the long era before abolitionism? Exploring Sloane's connection to colonial Jamaica helps reveal how the experiences of enslaved Africans were first made public, not as a matter of moral or political concern or, conversely, as a "racial" scientific fact, but as a matter of curiosity. Slavery not only has a history, but an historical epistemology: it's not just *what* was known and *when* that needs explaining, but *how* it was known. Rather than see curiosity as an early fusion of scientific observation and imperialist politics that would only be fully realized in the nineteenth century, we need to understand its "scientific" and political status in its own early modern context. What was the relationship between curiosity and empire in Sloane's engagement with slavery? What kind of order did curiosity impose on the traffic in goods and peoples around the Atlantic world or, was curiosity in fact a way of collecting the world without ordering it?<sup>iii</sup>

### **Making Slavery Public**

In 1707, a full century before Britain abolished its slave trade, Sloane published a "curious" account of his voyage to the West Indies, which included both a catalogue of Jamaica's flora and fauna, and a description of its climate and inhabitants, in particular its

slaves. But what did “curiosity” mean at this time? Medieval curiosity had been associated with a sinful lusting after forbidden knowledge, referring primarily to the Fall of Adam and Eve. Human curiosity had divine limits. In the seventeenth century, however, curiosity was gradually redeemed, and assumed new positive meanings at a time when knowledge of the natural world was undergoing unprecedented expansion and reform. Generally speaking, at least two understandings of curiosity became important in this period. The first was linked to the practice of precise observation in order to produce reliable matters of fact. Robert Hooke’s use of the microscope, and the fine-grained engravings of natural specimens he published in his *Micrographia* (1665) epitomize this culture of curiosity: one that aspired to represent the minute structures of natural bodies as specimens of divine craftsmanship. This form of curiosity was morally and epistemologically sure: it was linked to a pious appreciation of the divine order in all created things, that made them intelligible to human reason. The “Knowledge of Natural-History,” Sloane wrote, invoking Francis Bacon’s call to re-found knowledge on practical experience, “being Observation of Matters of Fact, is more certain than most Others ...and less subject to Mistakes than Reasonings, Hypotheses, and Deductions ...[and it affords] great Matter of Admiring the power, wisdom and providence of Almighty God, in Creating, and Preserving the things he created.”<sup>iv</sup>

But curiosity was ambiguous. It retained associations with fascination for the prodigious and unexplained, and a restless childlike passion for anything novel, that could challenge notions of rational or divine order and existing knowledge systems. In addition to the purposeful collection of facts, the experience of curiosity was literally an arresting one, where wonder slowed the faculties and absorbed them in the challenge of making order out of the strange. Seeing nature as a work of art thus encouraged utilitarian efforts to organize and categorize its productions, while also fostering an appreciation for its ability to puzzle the understanding. Sloane’s *Natural History* offered both views of curious nature. Most of his two-volume work was a useful botanical inventory with precise descriptions and illustrations of Jamaica’s plants in order to enable their recognition and cultivation by Europeans. Other parts of the text, however, made surprising juxtapositions between works of art and nature that challenged the reader to make sense of their relationship. The *Natural History* was thus a cabinet of curiosities in

book form. At one point, for instance, Sloane reproduced an engraving of a jellyfish next to one of a coral-encrusted wooden spar from a Spanish galleon that sank in the Caribbean Sea. What was the relationship between these works of nature and art? Sloane did not say; their meaning was not fixed. Instead, his juxtaposition invited the reader into a world of curiosity that necessitated imaginative response. Though often heralded as the first modern national museum, marking a shift from private gentlemanly curiosity to systematic public knowledge, the early British Museum retained these multiple senses of curiosity when it opened. The Rymsdyks' 1778 guide to the Museum offered both minutely rendered engravings of select rarities, with "explanations" as "true and current as *Bank-bills*," not mere "diverting stories." Yet, many of the objects they depicted, such as a coral formation in the beguiling form of a human hand, were still intended to inspire wonder in visitors.<sup>v</sup>

What brought Sloane to Jamaica in the first place was curiosity, or so he claimed. He recalled how viewing cabinets of curiosities in Ireland in his youth had sparked his fascination for all "strange things" and, as an aspiring physician-botanist, sought to improve his knowledge through travel. But to pursue curiosity was to pursue advancement as well. A character in Tobias Smollett's 1771 novel *The Expedition of Humphrey Clinker* praised the British Museum as a "stupendous" achievement because "it was made by a private man, a physician, who was obliged to make his own fortune at the same time." Make his fortune Sloane did, and Jamaica played an important role in his career. The son of a receiver-general of taxes in County Down, Ireland, Sloane moved to London in 1679, where he trained as a physician under Thomas Sydenham. Sloane's biography is usually recited as a roll of titles: promoter of Chelsea Physick Garden; president of the Royal College of Physicians; secretary, then president of the Royal Society after Newton's death in 1727; and of course, collector of almost 80,000 objects (excluding plant specimens) as well as a library of books, prints, and manuscripts numbering some 50,000 volumes, which formed the basis for the British Museum when it opened in 1759. The Jamaica voyage and the specimens Sloane brought back consolidated his reputation as a botanist and cemented his relationships with men like John Locke and John Ray, England's leading naturalists. Sloane was not only making his reputation but his fortune. With a shrewd connoisseur's eye for commercial opportunity,

he probably made most of his money through his medical practice and rents on property he acquired in Chelsea beginning in 1712, as well as through investments in medicinal commodities such as the Peruvian Bark (quinine) and milk chocolate, the sale of which he pioneered in England as a direct result of the Jamaican voyage.<sup>vi</sup>

But Sloane also profited, both indirectly and directly, from the labour of African slaves that was driving the expansion of sugar plantations in the Caribbean. For example, soon after arriving in Jamaica his patron, Christopher Monck, Duke of Albemarle, bought a group of 69 slaves, a large number for the time. (Sloane was Albemarle's physician, but his dutiful ministrations did the Duke little good: Albemarle's drinking and cavorting killed him within months). More important was Sloane's meeting Dr. Fulke Rose and his wife Elizabeth while in Jamaica. Rose was one of Jamaica's leading early buyers of slaves, one of only six colonists who regularly imported significant quantities from the Royal African Company during the 1670s, which then enjoyed a monopoly on the trade. After Rose died, Sloane married Elizabeth back in London in 1695, and gained access to her one-third share of the income from her husband's estates. Sloane was thus the beneficiary via marriage of income from plantations worked by slaves, a financial arrangement that lasted many years. After a violent storm hit Jamaica in 1722, the naturalist Henry Barham (the source for Sloane's Maroon bullet), worriedly informed his friend, "I do not know who looks after your Interests in Sixteen Mile Walk," an area where cocoa was grown, and which Sloane had visited while in Jamaica. He also mentioned severe damage to Knowles and Middleton – plantations in the parish of St. Thomas in the Vale which Rose had bequeathed to his daughters, and from which Sloane derived one-third of the income. Sloane's account books from this period document numerous regular deliveries of sugar from these plantations. In September 1721, for example, he records receiving ten hogsheads of sugar worth almost £38 brought by the ship *Loyal Charles* from "MP" (Middleton). The *Neptune* was a slave ship owned by the South Sea Company: it left London in December 1721 and transported 395 slaves from Cabinda (near the mouth of the Congo River) to Jamaica, before returning to London on April 9, 1723. Two days later, on April 11, Sloane recorded receipt of eight hogsheads worth £32 from "KP" (Knowles) brought by the *Neptune*. Beyond pursuing his own interest in this fashion, Sloane offered botanical advice to well-placed friends in the

Royal African Company. He was a gentleman entrepreneur participating in the hub of Britain's emergent commercial empire who, aided by contacts in the RAC, South Sea Company, East India Company, and many others (ranging from female travellers to pirates), turned a global trade network into his personal collecting network.<sup>vii</sup>

When he landed in Jamaica in 1687, the colony was in an early stage of transition, essentially from piracy to commercial plantation slavery. Since the English had taken the island from Spain in 1655 as part of Oliver Cromwell's "Western Design," investors had begun growing sugar using white indentured servants, with Port Royal becoming a haven for privateers and privates. Later in the century, however, landowners started turning to large-scale plantations using slaves brought from the Gold Coast, West Central Africa, the Bight of Benin and above all the Bight of Biafra (principally modern-day Nigeria), to produce sugar, rum, cocoa, cotton and other commodities. The Jamaica Assembly passed laws in 1664 and 1696 to give slavery permanent legal status, making it compatible with Christian conversion, for example. The population of African slaves expanded dramatically: from approximately 9,500 to 197,000 between 1673 and 1774, with the white minority growing only from 7,800 to 18,000 in the same period. The annual value of exports (sugar chief among them) ballooned from £23,000 to £2.4 million over the same hundred years. Sloane would have witnessed only the early phases of this expansion, in the years when planters were still struggling against the Royal African Company's monopoly on the slave trade, later broken in 1698. Enslaved Africans met this expansion with violent resistance. By the 1730s, roughly a thousand rebels, many of them Akan, had formed permanent "Maroon" communities; so fearful were the British of their capacity to disrupt the plantations that in 1739 they signed a treaty recognizing their right to exist in return for a pledge not to assist future runaways. Despite continuing conflict with Maroons, repeated slave uprisings, and the persistent threat of piracy, Jamaica nevertheless evolved into a prime destination for British merchants, who became the most prosperous slavers of the eighteenth century.<sup>viii</sup>

Although Sloane profited from slavery, and enjoyed relationships with those involved in the trade, his description of slaves in the *Natural History* of Jamaica is far from a coherent attempt to defend the institution. He was neither a crude apologist for empire nor a theorist of racial superiority as a physical fact. There is one very good

reason for this: because slavery was not yet under concerted attack from abolitionist campaigners, there was no pressing need to defend the institution, even for one with a direct financial stake in it. In fact, his account has most often been seen as highly critical of slavery's excesses. This, however, is a misreading of an ambiguous text, one that spoke about slavery not as a matter of moral concern or racialised scientific fact but, most fundamentally, as one of curiosity – a mode of engagement with the natural and social world that generated as many questions as answers.

When Sloane described Jamaica's slaves, whom exactly was he writing about, and how did he identify them? The answer is less obvious than might first appear. "Moors," "blackamoors," "Ethiopeans," "negroes," "blacks": there was no single, stable term by which Europeans understood the many different peoples from the African continent in the early modern era. In addition, Europeans did not automatically identify all African peoples as slaves, but observed distinctions between those with whom they traded and those they enslaved. "Negroes," rather than "Moors," became the term used to refer to Africans in slavery, although both groups possessed dark skin in European eyes. Sloane did not use the term "Africans" in the *Natural History*, but typically referred to "negroes" (from the Spanish) or "blacks," taking up this identification of slavery with colour. This interchangeability was relatively new in Sloane's time, still in the process of becoming established. One scholar dates the shift from identifying Jamaican colonizers as "Christians" to "whites" to the 1670s, with the noun "blacks" denoting slaves emergent in the same period. While Africans were a common enough sight in eighteenth-century London as domestic, often ornamental servants, the identification of "blacks" as slaves was increasingly established in the Americas by proliferating slave codes, while slaves' conversion to Christianity meant that "Christians" could no longer be taken to refer to free whites. Like many, Sloane tended to think of Africa in terms of general regions like "Guinea" and "Angola," where Europeans traded for gold, ivory and slaves. Differences among Jamaica's African populations interested him mainly only when they informed his understanding of slavery, indicating variable levels of physical or cultural "seasoning" for hard labour, for example. Most of the time, Sloane used "negroes" and "blacks" indiscriminately, grouping together people from "Guinea," East Indians ("Madagascins") and Caribbean-born "Creolians." So strong did the identification of slaves as "blacks"

later become that although a Carib Indian, *Robinson Crusoe*'s Friday was often depicted in eighteenth-century illustrations as a black African, to indicate his slave status. "Black" or "negro" appeared to identify a naturally existing group of African people, but they were often in fact social terms meaning slave.<sup>ix</sup>

Rather than emphasize black skin colour's fixity, or its underlying causes, Sloane focused on its modification through artificial means and its instability as evidenced by the unexplained phenomenon of colour change. Colour thus interested Sloane as a matter of curiosity rather than as evidence of the physical inferiority of Africans as a racial fact. He paid attention to the art involved in producing the physical character of the slave body. "When a Guinea ship comes near Jamaica with blacks to sell, there is great care taken that the negroes should be shaved, trim'd, and their bodies and hair anointed all over with palm-oil, which adds a great beauty to them," he remarked, "heightening" their colour. He similarly described how the noses of slave children "are a little flatted against the mothers' back"; "the same is the reason of the broadness of their ...faces." Artifice accounted for physical variation rather than any essential natural difference. "At the plantation of Captain Hudson there was a young woman white all over, born of a black mother," he reported; "I had the curiosity to go and see her." He described the girl in question as "white all over," but with hair that was "short, woolly and curled like those of the blacks in Guinea." Such children were worshipped in parts of Ethiopia "as the offspring of the Gods," he reported, while others put them to "death for being the children of the devil. I was told that in Nieves two such were born ....The skins of such are whiter than ours." Radical colour change was a curious fact bordering on the prodigious: contrary to expectation, yet empirically undeniable. Did this phenomenon reveal anything about the nature of "blacks"? Did it reveal a rent in some presumed natural order of stable colour difference? Sloane did not say. He merely reported the phenomenon – and the spectacular range of interpretations it provoked – dwelling on the puzzling curiosity of colour's changeability.<sup>x</sup>

Sloane did not hesitate to paint derogatory, even animalizing images of slaves' bodies. At one point, for example, he noted that African mothers' breasts "hang very lank ever after, like those of goats." Such comments were not unusual among male travellers; the English writer Richard Ligon had made an almost identical statement in Barbados

half a century earlier. Descriptions of this kind reflected both the presumptuous sexual curiosity of male travellers and colonial investors' economic interest in the reproductive female body to populate plantations with slaves. Such dehumanising images challenged the orthodox Christian view that all human beings possessed rational souls and were part of the same link in the "chain of being," comprising a single human family made in God's image. But they did not posit racial inferiority as a permanent physical fact. These were images refracted through the distinctive lens of colonial curiosity – one that produced strange pictures of exotic peoples, suggesting questions about a potentially monstrous order of beings, without resolving them.<sup>xi</sup>

This point is worth examining more closely. What did "race" mean in the period Sloane visited Jamaica and wrote about slaves? Was there even a concept of "race"? In contemporary society, "race" typically refers to discussions of different social and ethnic groups and the problematic relationships between them. "Race" for us is a social issue, not a physical fact: very few now believe in different "races" of man. Slave codes began to make race a social reality in New World societies like Jamaica in the late-seventeenth century. But what about race as a "scientific fact"? Most scholars see this period as one where Europeans distinguished themselves from other peoples because they were Christian and engaged in "civil" pursuits like commerce, in opposition to heathen "savages" who lived according to brute force. Culture, not nature – behaviour, not the body – made the difference. The term "race" was in use in this period, but not in any systematic way. It mainly denoted different European peoples as distinct genealogical "stocks" (as well as referring in a restricted way to aristocratic clans as "noble races"). Only at the end of the eighteenth century, in reaction to the abolitionist movement and the doctrine of universal natural rights articulated in the American, French and Haitian Revolutions did Europeans, and their American descendants, begin to embrace belief in the reality of different races of man. Only then did claims start to emerge that racial superiority was a permanent physical fact, demonstrable through pseudo-sciences like phrenology and eugenics. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, race thus became what it had never been before: a biological fact that under-girded all of history, explained cultural difference, and motivated systematic scientific exploration directly serving visions of domination and extermination.<sup>xii</sup>

Racial inferiority was thus in no way an agreed-upon “fact” in Sloane’s era. His case histories of Jamaican disease made no fundamental distinction, for example, between the capacities of English and African bodies. The Jamaican climate was habitable by all alike because, according to Sloane, although located in the Torrid Zone, it was blessed with “temperate air.” Yet, the notion of blacks’ physical distinctiveness as a “race” *was* nevertheless present as a question for the curious. Where did they fit in the order of created beings – were they different by nature? Sloane did not invoke the standard explanations of dark skin colour: the biblical Curse of Ham, some trans-generational “infection” of the blood, or the effect of hot climates. But we do know that he participated in a meeting of the Royal Society in 1690 where the discussion of a partridge changing colour “occasioned a discourse about the colour of animals, particularly of the negroes, whether it was the product of the climate or that they were a distinct race of men.” In the *Natural History*, he characterized “negroes” in general as a “very perverse generation of people,” linking what he saw as their unreasonableness with their common genealogical stock.<sup>xiii</sup>

Sloane’s curiosity about “negro” bodies also led him to collect human remains. He catalogued the following items under “Humana”: “part of the Skin of the arm of a black injected wt. red wax & mercury”; “the Skin of a Negro wt. the black corpus mucosum partly taken off from the true skin & partly sticking to it”; “the foetus of a negro from Virginia”; and “stones extracted from the vagina of a negro African girl by Mr. Swymmer in Virginia.” This is an extraordinary collection of human specimens, one that raises many questions. The essential issue for this discussion is their cataloguing. Was this a collection of human specimens or specifically *black* specimens? They are catalogued under the seemingly universal label of “humana,” but marked as “black” and “negro” in particular. A similar puzzle hovers over Sloane’s organization of his slave artefacts. Although scholars refer to his “ethnographic” collections, this is an anachronism. Sloane lacked any such modern category into which to put his curiosities. Hence, they were “miscellaneous things” which did not fit elsewhere in the order of his collections, and which he grouped together with his European curiosities, rather than separating them into different categories.<sup>xiv</sup>

Sloane was also drawn to slave performances, as objects of curiosity collectible in a variety of ways. One of the most striking is his reproduction on staves of the different kinds of music he claimed to have witnessed slaves playing in Jamaica. The three transcriptions, made by a Frenchman named Baptiste, capture a remarkable moment of cultural transmission. Some of the earliest such notations to have survived, they help to trace the creolisation of African musical styles Sloane labelled “Angola,” “Papa,” and Koromanti.” Curiosity of this kind was not necessarily moral approbation. While Sloane praised the slaves’ “great activity and strength of body” in their dances, and was fascinated by their “extraordinary appearance,” he regarded such performances as “bawdy” expressions of slaves’ excessive “venery.” It is, however, remarkable that Sloane thought it worthwhile to collect, transcribe and preserve this music, perhaps even puzzling, given his dismissal of the passionate nature of the music itself. In what sense were these things curiosities worth collecting? Sloane’s miscellanies included a “Jamaica strum strum or musicall instrumt. made of an oblong - hollowed piece of wood,” and also “a negro drum from S. Carolina.” Documenting the “savage” nature of a passionate people may have motivated such acts of collection. But Sloane was clearly aware of musical instruments as both cultural survivals and sources of political resistance, noting that trumpets and drums brought from Africa were now banned in Jamaica, “since it was thought too much inciting them to Rebellion.” Like Maroon weapons and clothing, musical instruments may have possessed curious value precisely as illicit instruments of resistance.<sup>xv</sup>

The passage in the *Natural History* where Sloane characterized the slaves as “a perverse generation of people” – a phrase that epitomizes the tense relation between the physical and the behavioural in his account – is one whose meaning has often been reshaped in the three centuries since it was published, sometimes in spectacular fashion. It described the punishment, torture and execution of rebel slaves. Its adherence to the curious observer’s minute description of particulars requires quoting it at length:

The punishments for crimes of slaves, are usually for rebellions burning them, by nailing them down with the ground on crooked sticks on every limb, and then applying the fire by degrees from the feet and hands, burning them gradually up to the head, whereby their pains are extravagant. For crimes of a lesser nature

Gelding, or chopping off half of the foot with an ax. These punishments are suffered by them with great constancy. For running away they put iron rings of great weight on their ankles, or pottocks about their necks, which are iron rings with two long necks riveted to them, or a spur in the mouth. For negligence, they are usually whipt by the overseers with lance-wood switches, till they be bloody, and several of the switches broken, being first tied up by their hands in the mill-houses. After they are whip'd till they are raw, some put on their skins pepper and salt to make them smart; at other times their masters will drop melted wax on their skins, and use several very exquisite torments. These punishments are sometimes merited by the blacks, who are a very perverse generation of people, and though they appear harsh, yet are scarce equal to some of their crimes.<sup>xvi</sup>

This is a meticulous description, but what purpose did Sloane imagine it served? Although exotic natural histories can rightly be thought of as imperial inventories of useful natural and social information, they were a heterogeneous genre whose criteria for inclusion or exclusion were often obscure. Not all Caribbean travel accounts from the late-seventeenth century dealt with slavery or described the treatment of slaves (or their punishment) in any such detail. To do so was not automatic. Nor does the passage mark the return of a repressed memory contradicting an attempt to erase violence and conflict, and render Jamaica as an idyllic harmonious Eden. Sloane *chose* to include this description, and it is his conscious curiosity about slaves that needs to be understood. Meticulous curiosity drives the passage: a precise observation of the material practices of punishment and their visible bodily effects. Yet, there is also the sheer curiosity of the spectacle in its extremity: its “extravagant” pains, its “exquisite torments.” Even in an era when the physical coercion of labourers of all kinds was still common, as were public executions in Europe, this is not a quotidian scene, at least not to this observer. While it would be tempting to see Sloane as oblivious to the slaves’ own experience in this apparently clinical topography of suffering, it seems to me that the fulcrum of his curiosity is the slaves’ “great constancy,” which evidently surprises him, obliging him to a certain recognition. This image of “constancy” in the face of suffering may even have had overtones of martyrdom, carried over from the traditional Christian emphasis on the redemptive function of pain.<sup>xvii</sup>

The passage is routinely quoted as an authoritative early source on the harsh conditions of slavery. Publicly torturing and destroying the bodies of rebels was viewed by colonists as necessary to break resistance and discourage what they regarded as “treason.” The description has been read in conflicting ways, however. One Caribbean historian interprets the passage primarily as a necessitarian justification of torture, stating that Sloane had a “warped vision of the Negro,” while also characterizing it as a recognition of slavery’s “dehumanizing mechanism.” Another comments: “there is something about this description of torture which suggests a psychological kink, and therefore exaggeration.” Morbid curiosity turning in on itself? An expert on early British attitudes to Africans praises the account as a “gory indictment of plantation cruelty,” and a recent literary scholar writes similarly of Sloane’s “arguments against slavery,” citing the same passage.<sup>xviii</sup>

This anti-slavery interpretation has an irresistible genealogy: the abolitionists themselves. Fascinatingly, some of the leading British and American abolitionists cited or quoted Sloane’s account to argue for ending the slave trade in the later eighteenth century. Modern historians’ reliance on Sloane’s authority thus reproduces that of the abolitionists, who were after all the first historians of slavery, and who raided earlier travel accounts to support their arguments. One can trace the emergence both of affective sympathy with slaves, and its racist opposition – stances *both* absent from Sloane himself – in interpretations of his writing in the second half of the eighteenth century. J. Philmore’s *Two Dialogues on the Man-Trade* (1760), which recognized slaves’ right to rebel in the aftermath of the Jamaican uprising known as Tacky’s Rebellion, described Sloane’s account as “shocking.” “Must not even the common feelings of human nature have suffered some grievous change in those men, to be capable of horrid cruelty towards their fellow men?” asked the American Quaker Anthony Benezet in 1766, quoting the same “shocking” words. The pre-eminent American physician Benjamin Rush and the Methodist founder John Wesley both reprinted Sloane’s words in 1773-1774. And Thomas Clarkson, who was instrumental in the formal political campaign to persuade the British Parliament to abolish the slave trade, drew on Sloane in his 1786 *Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species*, although not without opposition. “If Mr. Clarkson thinks he is authorised by any thing said by Sir Hans Sloane ...to calumniate

the Planters, he is very reprehensible,” replied the pro-slavery apologist Gilbert Francklyn. “Sloane’s accounts ...shew that his credulity misled him into absurdities.” According to Francklyn, Sloane visited Jamaica at a time when the slaves’ “extreme savage state” necessitated “severities ...nearly bordering upon that cruelty, which we of the present age, with justice, condemn.”<sup>xix</sup>

Sloane’s description thus became, decades after its publication, a key text in transatlantic abolitionism. But it therefore became what it had not been before: part of a moral and political attack on the unenlightened “cruelties” of slavery, and an argument for abolition. On the one hand, abolitionists and the scholars who follow them have ignored the ending of the passage, where Sloane states that slaves “merit” such punishments, and its sequel, that other Europeans treat their slaves even worse. On the other, a strict necessitarian reading of Sloane’s conclusion robs it of yet another ambiguity: the slaves “sometimes” merit such punishments, he says, with the implication that sometimes they do not. Several decades later, Clarkson assembled a chest of whips, chains, and other instruments of coercion and torture gathered from slave-ships in British ports, which he and his associates aimed to invest with moral self-evidence for the British public. To display such objects became synonymous with the idea of slavery’s brutality and the political urgency of abolition. Strikingly, Sloane’s engagement with slavery shows how exactly the same prose and objects were in public circulation earlier in the century, not as self-evident horrors, but as morally and politically indeterminate curiosities. His representations were neither anti-slavery nor pro-slavery, because the moral economy of curiosity demanded no such stance. However, instead of seeing this kind of curiosity as a lack – the absence of the moral and political concern it will later acquire – we need, rather, to see the positive work curiosity performed in bringing slavery before the public in the absence of the moral and the political. The long pre-abolitionist history of making slavery public thus becomes visible in its own right, no longer merely the prelude to a period of reckoning to come, but as the production of curious spectacles open to unpredictable interpretations.<sup>xx</sup>

Sloane’s Jamaica was in fact riddled with curiosities that undermined a straightforward projection of colonial power. In documenting the effects of drink as well as disease on the bodies of the colonizers, his medical histories painted an unflattering

view that prompted some to accuse him of speaking “disrespectfully of [Jamaica’s] Inhabitants ...by naming them in my Observations of their Distempers.” “I am sure I never meant to detract any Thing from the Inhabitants of *Jamaica*,” he insisted. In truth, his case histories laid bare British-Caribbean behaviour with sometimes astonishing results. In the case of one Captain Nowel, for example, he detailed how habitual excessive drinking of brandy resulted in vomiting and emaciation. Sloane prescribed Laudanum, but apparently to little effect. “Since I came from Jamaica,” he recorded, “I have been told he could keep nothing therein but the milk of a Negro woman he suck’d.” How this particular curious spectacle would have struck the *Natural History*’s polite readership can only be imagined. Indeed, Sloane noted that the changeability of skin colour was a “white” phenomenon too: in Jamaica “the Complexion of our *European* Inhabitants ...is chang’d, in some time, from white to that of a yellowish colour.” A cloud of physical as well as cultural degeneration hung over the colony Ned Ward lampooned as the “Dunghill of the Universe.” By contrast with this anatomy of hedonistic decay and premature death, Sloane described blacks as “temperate livers” who sometimes reached the age of one hundred and twenty. Elsewhere, he reversed the common identification of nakedness with savagery, and clothing with civility, lauding the slaves who went “almost naked” while criticising the foolish English insistence on heavy clothes in the heat and humidity. He dismissed the slaves’ religious practices, but pointedly insisted against rumours to the contrary that enslaved parents loved their children with fierce devotion. Sometimes he denigrated slave medicine as hollow ritual; at others, he took its effects seriously. He unquestionably took slaves’ botanical knowledge seriously, stating at the outset that the *Natural History* was in fact built on the “best informations I could get from Books, and the Inhabitants, either Europeans, Indians or Blacks.”<sup>xxi</sup>

None of this is to overlook Sloane’s financial, professional and intellectual interests in slavery. Without question, he participated in and benefited from the trade in Jamaican sugar, which drove the expansion of slavery. His curiosity about slavery, however, was not fundamentally informed by a coherent ideology of race or empire. Indeed, if this period lacked stable definitions of “race” and “science,” it also lacked one of “empire.” The British were just beginning to use this term in the early eighteenth

century, and to describe their commercial and maritime interests in the Americas, rather than any broad consciousness of divine dominion over subject or enslaved peoples on a vast territorial scale, as would manifest itself so forcefully in the nineteenth century. Sloane's interest in slavery was shaped by the politically ambiguous logic of curiosity itself, one which drew attention not merely to natural and social particulars, but to the exotic, the strange, even the illicit. Colonialism clearly enabled curiosity: the profitability of Jamaican slavery drew English soldiers, planters and ships to the Caribbean, enabling Sloane's Atlantic crossing. And curiosity drove colonization, as expanding botanical knowledge increased the profits of cultivation. However, instead of seeing the collection and display of objects like the manatee strap as reflecting an imperial ideology already in existence, we should recognize it as an early moment when the link between commerce, colonies, and power over exotic peoples was beginning to be forged for a metropolitan public. Curiosity could also cut against empire. Because it challenged existing knowledge with the rare and the surprising, it did not necessarily make order. Indeed, its collections could speak to the fragility of colonial projects, the dangers that menaced would-be masters, and furnish words and objects that could ultimately be turned against the imperial order that was taking shape.<sup>xxii</sup>



Curiosities of Ancient Times, from "The Comic Almanack", 1843. George Cruikshank, British Museum, 2043. Etching. PD 1859,0316.392

## The Limits of Colonial Curiosity

Although the curious aimed to collect the world, curiosity also signalled the practical limits of dominion. Curiosity's reach exceeded its grasp. Maroon resistance to enslavement was unstoppable in Jamaica, forcing the British to negotiate in the 1730s. Maroon country, because of its sheer danger, therefore, piqued Sloane's curiosity. The un-colonized parts of Jamaica were "very productive of several Things very Curious," he noted, but they were "full of run away Negroes, who lye in Ambush to kill the Whites." Objects like Maroon weapons and clothing were thus irresistible prizes: artefacts brought back from the very geographical frontier of curiosity, where the act of collecting bordered on the impossible, and which surely stretched the bounds of polite taste as embodiments of the violence of slavery. Such was his fascination with Maroons, Sloane appears to have collected a knapsack from a surgeon named Robert Millar merely because Millar had taken it with him on a journey through Maroon country. "*Ne plus ultra*" was how

Edward Slaney labelled the Blue Mountains, which the Maroons controlled, in his 1679 map of Jamaica, meaning “no further.” This was in direct contrast to Bacon’s exhortation to pursue knowledge and empire in the Americas, “*plus ultra*” (“further still”), which Sloane invoked on the *Natural History*’s title-page. Maroon country was commanded by the rebels’ magical “Obeah” religion much more than the curious gaze of natural history. Indeed, the Maroons themselves were significant collectors, too. An eighteenth-century observer pointed out that when they raided the plantations, they carried both slaves and “the Effects of the Planters” back to their “scarce accessible retreats.” A striking photo taken by the Austrian anthropologist Werner Zips shows Wayne Rowe, a Maroon descendant, handling a sword seized from the British in the Maroon Wars of the 1790s, handed down by his ancestors. Collecting has long nourished the historical identity of resistance, not just colonization.<sup>xxiii</sup>

Opposing Clarkson in 1789, Gilbert Francklyn insisted that the “severities” of the slave system witnessed by Sloane a century earlier were part of a barbaric albeit necessary stage in Caribbean social development now happily past. The eighteenth century was, after all, an age in which conjectural history flourished as a means of placing the world’s different peoples in a universal story of progress from barbarism to civility. Narcissistically, however, Francklyn was preoccupied with British identity, not Africans’, thinking that the refinement of slavery demonstrated white moral progress. The instruments of torture, it seemed, could now safely go into museums to help illustrate the progress of civil society. Early guides to the British Museum confirm how from the middle of the eighteenth century the Museum’s declared aim was “to prevent our falling back again into a state of ignorance and barbarism,” and to “see the Progress of Art in the different Ages of the World, exemplified in a Variety of Utensils that each Nation in each Century has produced.” Such confident narratives unsurprisingly provoked satirical smirks. George Cruikshank’s nineteenth-century print, the “British Museum: Curiosities of Ancient Times,” depicts a group of tourists looking at a sequence of torture devices representing a “tyrannical” ancient English past, amid references to vanishing “races” and abuses to which the poor and enslaved had formerly been subject. The scene makes fun of the narcissism of progress, and the self-congratulating role of museums in seeming to

make barbarous cruelty a thing of the past, precisely through displaying its instruments as curiosities.<sup>xxiv</sup>

In the world before the British Museum, Don Saltero's was a cabinet whose rarities possessed no fixed labels. There was no separation between curiosity and commerce in the bustling world of the coffee-house. In that early eighteenth-century world, the violent enslavement of Africans by the English was not a dark moment in the long march of progress, but part of an increasingly profitable present whose end was nowhere in sight. We can never know for sure how Don Saltero's customers reacted to the manatee strap. To Sloane, these artefacts of slavery and its resistance were no mere cast-offs; the variety of the objects and specimens he collected, not to mention his account in the *Natural History*, signals a curiosity sustained over many years. Though Sloane passed the strap to Salter, he made particular note of it in his book: "beating with Manati straps is thought too cruel, and therefore prohibited by the customs of the country. The cicatrices are visible on their skins for ever after, and a Slave, the more he have of those, is the less valu'd." Many were disciplined by the whip in this era, of course, from servants to sailors. But here is the clue to this whip's curiosity for its collector: its extremity, perhaps even the paradoxical vicious circularity of a violence so extreme it devalued the very labour it sought to command, by permanently inscribing that violence on the skin. Here was an artefact that embodied the extremes to which colonizers went to wring value from exotic nature – a Caribbean sea-cow – as an instrument for shaping its social relations. The manatee strap was a literal braiding together of the extremity of the social relationships being forged in the West Indies. Its passage from the Caribbean to England and into Sloane's hands, meanwhile, embodied the great collector's ongoing relationship to the world the slaves made, long after the traces of his own Jamaica voyage appeared submerged in his carefully crafted metropolitan identity.<sup>xxv</sup>

We might think of such an interpretation as the product of more enlightened times and an anachronism to the moral economy of the early eighteenth century; that this connection between labour, violence, wealth and collecting is one seen only through post-abolitionist eyes; that it could not have been imagined as a moral question in the smoky confines of Don Saltero's. But the connection *was* made at the time, on the very cusp of consolidating African slavery, as the English were just starting to accumulate

unprecedented fortunes and convert them into great storehouses of possessions. The connection was not only made, but made in moral terms, by Thomas Tryon, a radical Protestant who wrote against slavery as a shamefully un-Christian practice even before Sloane went to Jamaica. For Tryon, writing in 1684, curiosities were material artefacts of the immoral exploitation of labour. “Add to this,” he wrote in an attack on slavery addressed to the rising English planter class, “your great *Palaces*, and sumptuous chargeable Buildings, and all kind of rich superfluous Ornaments, and *Knick-Knacks* in your Houses, wherein you study to out-try and exceed each other, merely for *State, Pride* and *vain Glory*, and to be honoured of men; which extravagancy is attended with another sore Evil, for that it *cannot be maintained* but chiefly by *great Oppression* of Men and Beasts.” While the relationship between curiosity and empire was often uncertain and ambiguous, it has always been possible to imagine it as a moral and political problem.<sup>xxvi</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> The manatee strap would have gone on display at some point between 1695, when Don Saltero’s opened, and 1729, the publication date of its first catalogue. See [James Salter,] *A Catalogue of the Rarities to be Seen at Don Saltero’s Coffee-House in Chelsea* (London, 1729), 8; Louis de Jaucourt, “Voyageur,” *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire Raisonné des Sciences, des Arts et des Métiers*, 17 vols. (1751-1772), 17 (1765): 477 (my thanks to Neil Safier for this reference); items 54, 1623, 1796, 1966, 1090, Sloane Miscellanies Catalogue, British Museum, transcript by Jonathan King. The standard biographies of Sloane are Gavin de Beer, *Sir Hans Sloane and the British Museum* (London, 1953) and E. St. John Brooks, *Sir Hans Sloane: The Great Collector and His Circle* (London, 1954); on Sloane’s collections, see Arthur MacGregor, ed., *Sir Hans Sloane: Collector, Scientist, Antiquary, Founding Father of the British Museum* (London, 1994). For recent reappraisals, see Kay Dian Kriz, “Curiosities, Commodities, and Transplanted Bodies in Hans Sloane’s ‘Natural History of Jamaica,’” *William and Mary Quarterly* 57 (Jan. 2000): 35-78, and Mimi Sheller, *Consuming the Caribbean: From Arawaks to Zombies* (New York, 2003), 19-32. Ezio Bassani, *African Art and Artefacts in European Collections, 1400-1800* (London, 2000) does not mention any objects relating to African slavery in European cabinets, and notes that African objects were themselves relatively rare in such collections: xxviii.

<sup>ii</sup> *The Tatler* 34 (28 June 1709); von Uffenbach quotation and Salter discussed in Brian Cowan, *The Social Life of Coffee: The Emergence of the British Coffee-House* (New Haven, 2005), 121-125; on London coffee-houses and commercial information, see David Hancock, *Citizens of the World: London Merchants and the Integration of the British Atlantic Community, 1735-1785* (Cambridge, 1995), 88-90; on early modern museums as conversation spaces, see Paula Findlen, *Possessing Nature: Museums, Collecting, and Scientific Culture in Early Modern Italy* (Berkeley, 1994). Angela Todd, “Your Humble Servant Shows Himself: Don Saltero and Public Coffeehouse Space,” *Journal of International Women’s Studies* 6 (June 2005): 119-135 is informative but suffers from an overly dichotomous distinction between “science” and curiosity.

<sup>iii</sup> Bruno Latour, “Why Has Critique Run out of Steam?: From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern,” *Critical Inquiry* 30 (Winter 2004): 225-248; Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel, eds., *Making Things Public: Atmospheres of Democracy* (Cambridge, Mass.,

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2005); Bill Brown, "Thing Theory," in Brown, ed., "Things," *Critical Inquiry* 28 (Autumn 2001): 1-16; Lorraine Daston, ed., *Things That Talk: Object Lessons from Art and Science* (New York, 2004), 9-24; Lorraine Daston, "Historical Epistemology," in James Chandler, Arnold I. Davidson and Harry Harootunian, eds., *Questions of Evidence: Proof, Practice, and Persuasion Across the Disciplines* (Chicago, 1994), 282-289. On curiosity as "colonialism in its infancy," see Nicholas Thomas, *Entangled Objects: Exchange, Material Culture, and Colonialism in the Pacific* (Cambridge, Mass., 1991), 126-151. Thomas emphasizes the gathering of curiosities from the eighteenth-century Pacific Islands as haphazard, opportunistic and speculative, where collectors lacked clear criteria of value or utility. On curiosity-collecting and value, see Krzysztof Pomian, *Collectionneurs, Amateurs et Curieux: Paris, Venise XVI-XVIII Siècle* (Paris, 1987). On the relation between curiosity and empire from a colonial American perspective, see Susan Scott Parrish, *American Curiosity: Cultures of Natural History in the Colonial British Atlantic World* (Chapel Hill, 2006); on Amerindian objects in Georgian Britain, see Troy Bickham, "'A Conviction of the Reality of Things': Material Culture, North American Indians and Empire in Eighteenth-Century Britain," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 39 (Fall 2005): 29-48. On commerce and knowledge, see Pamela H. Smith and Paula Findlen, eds., *Merchants and Marvels: Commerce, Science and Art in Early Modern Europe* (New York, 2002). Most histories of early modern science neglect slavery, but on slaves and botany see Beth Fowkes Tobin, *Colonizing Nature: The Tropics in British Arts and Letters, 1760-1820* (Philadelphia, 2004), chap. 2; Londa Schiebinger, *Plants and Empire: Colonial Bioprospecting in the Atlantic World* (Cambridge, Mass., 2004), and Parrish, *American Curiosity*, chap. 7; on the relation between moral order, the English state and the gold trade in the late-seventeenth century, see Simon Schaffer, "Golden Means: Assay Instruments and the Geography of Precision in the Guinea Trade," in Christian Licoppe, Heinz Otto Sibum & Marie-Noëlle Bourguet, eds., *Instruments, Travel and Science: Itineraries of Precision from the Seventeenth to the Twentieth Century* (New York, 2002), 20-50. On collecting, empire, and identity after 1750, see Maya Jasanoff, *Edge of Empire: Conquest and Collecting in the East, 1750-1850* (London, 2005).

<sup>iv</sup> See, for example, Hooke's remarks on the "curious" formation of seaweed and coral in the *Micrographia: or some Physiological Descriptions of Minute Bodies made by Magnifying Glasses with Observations and Inquiries Thereupon* (London, 1665), 140-141; Hans Sloane, *A Voyage to the Islands of Madera, Barbados, Nieves, S. Christophers and Jamaica, with the Natural History of the ...Last of those Islands*, 2 vols. (London, 1707-1725), 1: preface (unpaginated). On curiosity, see Katie Whitaker, "The Culture of Curiosity," in N. Jardine, J. Secord, E. C. Spary, eds., *Cultures of Natural History* (Cambridge, 1996), 75-90; Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature, 1150-1750* (New York, 1998), 122-125, 273, 305-316; Barbara Benedict, *Curiosity: A Cultural History of Early Modern Inquiry* (Chicago, 2001); Marjorie Swann, *Curiosities and Texts: The Culture of Collecting in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia, 2001); P. Fontes da Costa, "The Culture of Curiosity at the Royal Society in the First Half of the Eighteenth Century," *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London* 56 (2002): 147-166.

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<sup>v</sup> The jellyfish and encrusted spar images are reproduced in the first volume of Sloane's *Natural History*, and are well discussed in Kriz, "Curiosities, Commodities, and Transplanted Bodies," 52-57; John and Andrew van Rymsdyk, *Museum Britannicum, Being an Exhibition of a Great Variety of Antiquities and Natural Curiosities, belonging to that Noble and Magnificent Cabinet, the British Museum* (London, 1778), ix, 82, 50; Thomas, *Entangled Objects*, 127. On wonder-cabinets, see Daston and Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature*, 255-301; Arthur MacGregor and Oliver Impey, eds., *The Origins of Museums: The Cabinet of Curiosities in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Europe* (Oxford, 1985); Ken Arnold, *Cabinets for the Curious: Looking Back at Early English Museums* (Aldershot, 2006); on Sloane's collection as transitional, see Benedict, *Curiosity*, 180-182, and Swann, *Curiosities and Texts*, 195-200.

<sup>vi</sup> Sloane, *Natural History*, 1: preface; Tobias Smollett, *The Expedition of Humphrey Clinker* (1771; Harmondsworth, 1967), 133; de Beer, *Sir Hans Sloane*, esp. 141, 160-161, and Brooks, *Sir Hans Sloane*; Arthur MacGregor, "The Life, Character and Career of Sir Hans Sloane," *Sir Hans Sloane*, 11-44; Schiebinger, *Plants and Empire*, esp. 25-30.

<sup>vii</sup> Trevor Burnard, "Who Bought Slaves in Early America?: Purchasers of Slaves from the Royal African Company in Jamaica, 1674-1708," *Slavery and Abolition* 17 (Aug. 1996): 77, 74; Trevor Burnard and Kenneth Morgan, "The Dynamics of the Slave Market and Slave Purchasing Patterns in Jamaica, 1655-1788," *William and Mary Quarterly* 58 (Jan. 2001): 219; on Albemarle, see Estelle Frances Ward, *Christopher Monck, Duke of Albemarle* (London, 1915); will of Fulke Rose (Mar. 24, 1694), Prob. 11/420, National Archives, London; marriage settlement between Sloane and Elizabeth Langley Rose (May 9, 1695), Add. Ch. 46345 b., British Library; Henry Barham to Sloane, Sept. 13, 1722, Sloane Ms. 4046, British Library; Sloane, *Natural History*, 1: lxxv; items 1-ANC/9/D/5a & 1-ANC/9/D/5d, Sloane Account Books, Ancaster Deposit, Lincolnshire Archives (my thanks to Mike Rogers and his staff for this material); on Sloane's relationship to the Fullers, who acquired Jamaican plantations via marriage into the Rose family, see *The Fuller Letters, 1728-1755: Guns, Slaves and Finance*, ed. David Crossley and Rich Saville (Lewes, Sussex, 1991); on the *Neptune*, see David Eltis, Stephen D. Behrendt, David Richardson, and Herbert S. Klein, eds., *The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade: A Database on CD-Rom* (Cambridge, 1999); James Blackeley to Sloane, Feb. 2, 1721, Sloane Ms. 4046; Duke of Chandos to Sloane, Dec. 4 & 7, 1721, Sloane Ms. 4046; Francis Lynn to Sloane, Dec. 29, 1721, Sloane Ms. 4046; see also Larry Stewart, "The Edge of Utility: Slaves and Smallpox in the Early Eighteenth Century," *Medical History* 29 (1985): 60-61; on the Duke of Chandos as a connoisseur who invested in slavery and art, see David Dabydeen, *Hogarth's Blacks: Images of Blacks in Eighteenth-Century English Art* (Athens, Ga., 1987), 87-89; on the early Royal Society's links to slavery, see Mark Govier, "The Royal Society, Slavery, and the Island of Jamaica: 1660-1700," *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London* 53 (1999): 203-217, and Schaffer, "Golden Means," 26-29; on the relationship between trade and the state, see John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power: War, Money and the English State, 1688-1783* (London, 1989); on the figure of the Jamaica widow, see Kathleen Wilson, *The Island Race: Englishness, Empire*

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and *Gender in the Eighteenth Century* (New York, 2003), 129-168.

<sup>viii</sup> Richard S. Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624-1713* (Chapel Hill, 1972), esp. 149-187; Burnard and Morgan, "Dynamics of the Slave Market"; David Barry Gaspar, "'Rigid and Inclement': Origins of the Jamaica Slave Laws of the Seventeenth Century," *The Many Legalities of Early America*, ed. Christopher L. Tomlins and Bruce H. Mann (Chapel Hill, 2001), 78-96; Richard B. Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery: An Economic History of the British West Indies, 1623-1775* (Baltimore, 1973), 216-217; Marcus Rediker, *Villains of All Nations: Atlantic Pirates in the Golden Age* (Boston, 2004), 34. See also Nuala Zahedieh, "Trade, Plunder, and Economic Development in Early English Jamaica, 1655-89," in Verene Shepherd and Hilary Beckles, eds., *Caribbean Slavery in the Atlantic World: A Student Reader* (Kingston, 2000), 179-193; on the Maroons, see Orlando Patterson, "Slavery and Slave Revolts: A Sociohistorical Analysis of the First Maroon War, 1665-1740," in Richard Price, ed., *Maroon Societies: Rebel Slave Communities in the Americas* (Garden City, N.Y., 1973), 246-292; Mavis C. Campbell, *The Maroons of Jamaica, 1655-1796: A History of Resistance, Collaboration, and Betrayal* (South Hadley, Mass., 1988).

<sup>ix</sup> Sloane, *Natural History*, 1: xlvi-xlvii; Roxann Wheeler, *The Complexion of Race: Categories of Difference in Eighteenth-Century British Culture* (Philadelphia, 2000), 57, 75, 85, 98, 303, 323, 326, and chap. 1 on *Robinson Crusoe*; on early English distinctions between Africans as traders and slaves, see April Lee Hatfield, "A 'very wary people in their bargaining' or 'very good merchandise': English Traders' Views of Free and Enslaved Africans, 1550-1650," *Slavery and Abolition* 25 (Dec. 2004): 1-17; on the importance of Canon Law to early Iberian views of Africans, see Herman L. Bennett, "'Sons of Adam': Text, Context, and the Early Modern African Subject," *Representations* 92 (Fall 2005): 16-45; Diana Paton, "Punishment, Crime, and the Bodies of Slaves in Eighteenth-Century Jamaica," *Journal of Social History* 34 (Summer 2001): 931; see also Geoff Quilley and Kay Dian Kriz, eds., *An Economy of Colour: Visual Culture and the Atlantic World, 1660-1830* (Manchester, 2003); on the variety of African peoples transported across the Atlantic, see John Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800* (Cambridge, 1992). Sloane also discusses the "Indians" brought from "the Musquitos or Florida": see *Natural History*, xlvi.

<sup>x</sup> Sloane, *Natural History*, 1: lii-liii. Joyce E. Chaplin, *Subject Matter: Technology, Science, and the Body on the Anglo-American Frontier* (Cambridge, Mass., 2000), argues that seventeenth-century English commentators tended to depict Amerindian colour as the product of art, whereas African colour was regarded as more exclusively the work of nature.

<sup>xi</sup> Richard Ligon, *A True and Exact History of the Island of Barbadoes* (London, 1657), quoted and discussed in Jennifer L. Morgan, "'Some Could Suckle over Their Shoulder': Male Travelers, Female Bodies, and the Gendering of Racial Ideology, 1500-1770," *William and Mary Quarterly* 54 (Jan. 1997): 167-192. See also Winthrop D. Jordan,

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*White Over Black: American Attitudes towards the Negro, 1550-1812* (Chapel Hill, 1968), 216-265.

<sup>xii</sup> For an overview of the histories of race and racism, see George Frederickson, *Racism: A Short History* (Princeton, 2002); Ivan Hannaford, *Race: The History of an Idea in the West* (Baltimore, 1996); and Colin Kidd, *The Forging of Races: Race and Scripture in the Protestant Atlantic World, 1600-2000* (Cambridge, 2006); for evidence of seventeenth-century English claims about Amerindians' innate bodily inferiority, see Chaplin, *Subject Matter*, 157-198; on the eighteenth century specifically, see Nicholas Hudson, "From 'Nation' to 'Race': The Origin of Racial Classification in Eighteenth-Century Thought," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 29 (1996): 247-264; Wheeler, *The Complexion of Race*; David Bindman, *Ape to Apollo: Aesthetics and the Idea of Race in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 2002); Robert Bernasconi, "Who Invented the Concept of Race?: Kant's Role in the Enlightenment Construction of Race," in Bernasconi, ed., *Race* (Oxford, 2001), 11-36; for later developments in Britain, see Nancy Stepan, *The Idea of Race in Science: Great Britain, 1800-1960* (London, 1982).

<sup>xiii</sup> Sloane, *Natural History*, 1: xiii, lviii; Govier, "Royal Society," 214-215; Wendy Churchill, "Bodily Differences?: Gender, Race, and Class in Hans Sloane's Medical Practice, 1687-1688," *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 60 (Oct. 2005): 391-444; Chaplin, *Subject Matter*, 116-156. For early English views of Africans, see Kim F. Hall, *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England* (Ithaca, 1995) and the evidence collected in James Walvin, ed., *The Black Presence: A Documentary History of the Negro in England, 1555-1860* (London, 1971); on the curse of Ham, see David M. Goldenberg, *The Curse of Ham: Race and Slavery in Early Christianity, Judaism, and Islam* (Princeton, 2005).

<sup>xiv</sup> On Sloane's "Humana" catalogue, held in the Palaeontology Department, Natural History Museum, London, see Michael Day, "Humana: Anatomical, Pathological and Curious Human Specimens in Sloane's Museum," in MacGregor, *Sir Hans Sloane*, 69-76; H. J. Braunholtz, *Sir Hans Sloane and Ethnography* (London, 1970); on the miscellanies, see J. C. H. King, "Ethnographic Collections: Collecting in the Context of Sloane's Catalogue of 'Miscellanies,'" in MacGregor, *Sir Hans Sloane*, 228-244; see also John H. Appleby, "Human Curiosities and the Royal Society, 1699-1751," *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London* 50 (1996): 13-27; and Chaplin, *Subject Matter*, 232-235. My thanks to Laila Parsons for discussing this point.

<sup>xv</sup> Sloane, *Natural History*, 1: xlviiii-xlix, lii; items 56, 1458, Miscellanies Catalogue; Richard Cullen Rath, "African Music in Seventeenth-Century Jamaica: Cultural Transit and Transition," *William and Mary Quarterly* 50 (Oct. 1993): 700-726; Kriz, "Curiosities, Commodities, and Transplanted Bodies," 57-62; on Afro-Caribbean performances in Jamaica as a form of political resistance, see Wilson, *The Island Race*, 146-168. A drum from Virginia described by Sloane as "Indian," but subsequently identified as West African (Asante-style), is extant and on display in the British Museum: item 1368, Miscellanies Catalogue.

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<sup>xvi</sup> Sloane, *Natural History*, 1: lvii.

<sup>xvii</sup> Kriz, "Curiosities, Commodities, and Transplanted Bodies," 45-46. Myra Jehlen's reading of Ligon is extremely useful for thinking about the ambivalence of such curious displays: see Jehlen, "History Beside the Fact: What We Learn from *A True and Exact History of Barbadoes*," in Ann E. Kaplan and George Levine, eds., *The Politics of Research* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1997), 127-139. On the transformation of the status of pain and torture, from a means of Christian redemption to an indefensible cruelty, see Lisa Silverman, *Tortured Subjects: Pain, Truth, and the Body in Early Modern France* (Chicago, 2001). Abolitionists later made much of slave suffering as a form of martyrdom: see Marcus Wood, *Blind Memory: Visual Representations of Slavery in England and America, 1780-1865* (New York, 2000), 241-271. My thanks to Lorraine Daston and Nick Dew for discussing this point.

<sup>xviii</sup> Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, 247-248; W. R. Aykroyd, *Sweet Malefactor: Sugar, Slavery and Human Society* (London, 1967), 51-52; Anthony J. Barker, *The African Link: British Attitudes to the Negro in the Era of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1550-1807* (London, 1978), 20; Helen Thomas, *Romanticism and Slave Narratives: Transatlantic Testimonies* (Cambridge, 2000), 23. On exemplary punishment in Jamaica, see Paton, "Punishment, Crime, and the Bodies of Slaves," 939, and Vincent Brown, "Spiritual Terror and Sacred Authority in Jamaican Slave Society," *Slavery and Abolition* 24 (Apr. 2003): 24-53.

<sup>xix</sup> J. Philmore, *Two Dialogues on the Man-Trade* (London, 1760), 48-49; Anthony Benezet, *A Caution and Warning to Great Britain and her Colonies, in a Short Representation of the Calamitous State of the Enslaved Negroes in the British Dominions* (Philadelphia, 1766), 31-32; Benjamin Rush, *An Address to the Inhabitants of the British Settlements, on the Slavery of the Negroes in America*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Philadelphia, 1773), 15-16; John Wesley, *Thoughts upon Slavery* (London, 1774), 26; Thomas Clarkson, *Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species, Particularly the African* (Dublin, 1786), xxiv-xxv; Gilbert Francklyn, *An Answer to the Reverend Mr. Clarkson's Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species, Particularly the African; in a Series of Letters from a Gentleman in Jamaica, to his Friend in London* (London, 1789), 235-236. On the *Two Dialogues* in relation to Tacky's Rebellion, see Marcus Rediker and Peter Linebaugh, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston, 2000), 221-224.

<sup>xx</sup> Wood, *Blind Memory*, esp. 219-230; on abolitionism, see Chris L. Brown, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism* (Chapel Hill, 2006); and Adam Hochschild, *Bury the Chains: Prophets and Rebels in the Fight to Free an Empire's Slaves* (New York, 2005); on the eroticisation of instruments of slave punishment, see Karen Halttunen, "Humanitarianism and the Pornography of Pain in Anglo-American Culture," *American Historical Review* 100 (1995): 303-334.

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<sup>xxi</sup> Sloane, *Natural History*, 2: xv; 1: xci, xviii, xlvi, ix, preface; Edward Ward, *A Trip to Jamaica, with a True Character of the People and Island* (London, 1700), 13, 15-16.

<sup>xxii</sup> On the emergence of a British imperial ideology, see David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge, 2000), esp. chaps. 3, 5; and Nicholas Canny, "The Origins of Empire: an Introduction," in Canny, ed., *The Oxford History of the British Empire, Volume I: The Origins of Empire* (Oxford, 1998), 1-33; on Jamaican instability, see James Robertson, "Re-Writing the English Conquest of Jamaica in the Late Seventeenth Century," *English Historical Review* 117 (Sept. 2002): 813-839; on the fragility of empire more generally, see Linda Colley, *Captives: Britain, Empire, and the World, 1600-1850* (New York, 2004); on science and empire in the early modern Americas, see James Delbourgo and Nicholas Dew, eds., *Science and Empire in the Atlantic World* (New York, 2007).

<sup>xxiii</sup> Sloane, *Natural History*, 2: xviii; item 1969, Miscellanies Catalogue; Robert Millar to Sloane, Feb. 12, 1737 & Dec. 6, 1737, Sloane Ms. 4055; Edward Slaney, "Tabulae Iamaicae Insulae" (1678), British Library Map Collection; James Theobald to Lord Macclesfield, May 1757, Royal Society Letters & Papers, 3: 244. On Pacific Islanders' appropriation of European things, see Thomas, *Entangled Objects*, 83-124; on early modern collections of curiosities in Spanish America that were marshalled specifically as challenges to the natural order imagined by the Spanish, see Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, *How to Write the History of the New World: Historiographies, Epistemologies and Identities in the Eighteenth Century Atlantic World* (Stanford, 2001), 283. My thanks to Werner Zips for permission to reproduce this photograph. On contemporary Maroon society, see Werner Zips, *Black Rebels: African Caribbean Freedom Fighters in Jamaica*, trans. Shelley L. Frisch (Princeton, 1999).

<sup>xxiv</sup> George Cruikshank, The "British Museum: Curiosities of Ancient Times," Reid 2232, © The British Museum; *The General Contents of the British Museum: with Remarks, Serving as a Directory in viewing that Noble Cabinet* (London, 1761), vii, 18; on conjectural history in relation to Amerindian civilisations, and Creole Spanish-American responses to European interpretations, see Cañizares-Esguerra, *How to Write the History of the New World*.

<sup>xxv</sup> Sloane, *Natural History*, lvi; the strap was nevertheless apparently in use: see *The Jamaica Lady: or, The Life of Bavia* (London, 1720), 37, 103. On the politics of classifying African objects as works of art rather than ethnographic objects, see James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge, Mass., 1988), esp. 189-251.

<sup>xxvi</sup> Thomas Tryon, "Dialogue, Between an Ethiopean or Negro-Slave and a Christian, That was his Master in America," in *Friendly Advice to the Gentlemen-Planters of the East and West Indies* (London, 1684), 166; see Philippe Rosenberg, "Thomas Tryon and the Seventeenth-Century Dimensions of Antislavery," *William and Mary Quarterly* 61 (Oct. 2004): 609-642; and also Jack P. Greene, "'A Plain and Natural Right to Life and

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Liberty': An Early Natural Rights Attack on the Excesses of the Slave System in Colonial British America," *William and Mary Quarterly* 57 (2000): 793-808.