Leaving a Bittersweet Taste: Classifying, Cultivating and Consuming Sugar in Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century British West Indian Visual Culture

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Abstract

This thesis explores visual representations of British West Indian sugar in relation to the African slave trade practiced during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. During this time, sugar played a vital role to the lives of both European and non-Europeans as it was a source of great wealth for many and became transformed into one of the most demanded and widely consumed commodity. From the earliest days of British colonization, the cultivation and production of sugar in the Caribbean has been inextricably linked with the trade in African slaves to provide free labor for plantation owners and planters. This thesis considers how European artists visually represented sugar in its various forms – as an object for botanical study, as landscape and as consumable commodity – and in so doing, constructed specific ideas about the African slave body and the use of African slave labor that reflected personal and imperial agendas and ideologies.

Résumé

La présente thèse étudie les représentations visuelles de l'industrie britannique du sucre dans les Caraïbes en lien avec la traite d'esclaves africains au 17^{e} et au 18^{e} siècle. Transformé en un bien de consommation de première nécessité et une source de profits considérables pour plusieurs marchands, le sucre était à cette époque une denrée vitale pour les Européens comme pour les non Européens. Afin de fournir aux propriétaires de plantations de canne à sucre une main-d'œuvre gratuite, la culture et la production de sucre dans les Caraïbes furent intrinsèquement liées à la traite d'esclaves africains dès les premiers temps de la colonisation britannique. En ce sens, cette thèse explore comment les artistes européens ont visuellement représenté le sucre – à titre de curiosité botanique, de portion de paysage ou de bien de consommation – et ainsi participé à façonner une perception singulière de l'esclave africain et de son corps qui reflétait d'une part leurs visions personnelles et d'autre part les idéologies impérialistes.

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List of Illustrations

INTRODUCTION

The importance of sugar to the establishment of the African slave trade in the British West Indies is an issue that has been acknowledged and discussed in great detail by scholars of various disciplines, historical periods and regions of focus. It is an established fact that the transformation of the British Caribbean into a sugar monoculture was one of the driving forces behind the increased demands for labor by early British inhabitants, which was filled by the forced transplantation of millions of African slaves.[1] Sugar then, has played a critical role in shaping the imperial history of settlement, colonization and economic development of the British West Indies. As a focus of academic scholarship, sugar goes back very far in history, and has not only been limited to the West Indian islands occupied by the British, but is also connected to the history of European development, commerce and the rise of modern industrialization and urban growth.[2] While sugar has been the focus of study by historians, scientists and anthropologists, little scholarly work has focused on the visual representations of this valuable commodity as a source of insight from which to consider how imperial ideologies worked to construct notions about West Indian agricultural production generally, sugar production specifically and their relations to plantation slavery. As such, this project aims to expand on the existing scholarship on sugar by introducing an art historical perspective that considers the visual representations of sugar by European artists in the construction of specific notions about slavery, the African slave labor used to cultivate and produce this commodity and the subsequent European consumption during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

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[1] The Trans Atlantic slave trade had an official lifespan of about four centuries, beginning in the sixteenth century and continuing until the nineteenth century.

[2] For example, see: Falconer, William. "Sketch of the History of Sugar in the Early Times, and Through the Middle Ages." *Memoirs of the Literary and Philosophical Society of Manchester* 4 (2), 1796. pp 291-301; Reed, William. The History of Sugar and Sugar-yielding Plants. London: Longmans, Green, 1866; Lippmann, Edmund von. Geschichte des Zuckers. Niederwalluf bei Wiesbaden: Dr. Martin Sandig, 1929; Deerr, Noel. The History of Sugar. London: Chapman and Hall Ltd., 1950.

By the sixteenth century, in the wake of European colonization of the West Indies, some of these islands began to cultivate sugar to supply consumers in Europe. Sugar however, remained a costly imported luxury at this time, and was affordable to only a small minority of the European population who were of the prosperous classes, aristocracy and of the highest social standings. During the sixteenth century in England, when the first sugar from the West Indies began to arrive via Europe, one pound of sugar cost one shilling and was equivalent to a laborer's wage for two days.[3] Over the course of the seventeenth century, as sugar imports from the West Indies increased, the price of sugar gradually fell and thus entered the social lives of more people in England and throughout Europe.[4] This increased supply of sugar which brought about a decrease in its price, was as a result of the rapid development of the slave colonies of the West Indies. Because sugar was becoming so commercially popular throughout Europe, wherever Europeans settled in the West Indies, the majority of them tried to grow sugar to fill the ever-increasing demands. As such, West Indian planters needed more and more labor to meet their expanded cultivation of sugar and turned to the trade of Africans to fill their requirements.[5] From the first days of sugar development in the West Indies through to the parliamentary abolition of the slave trade in 1807, Africa provided slaves in vast numbers, to provide free labor to toil in the sugar fields.[6] In fact, until 1800, the West Indies was responsible for more than eighty percent of both sugar and the trade in slaves and as a direct result, was simultaneously responsible for nearly half of all the seagoing effort, naval and civil, of the western European nations.[7] It is therefore evident that sugar played a critical role in the development and rise of the African slave trade that resulted in

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[3] Shammas, Carole. The Pre-industrial Consumer in England and America. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990. pp 81.

[4] Walvin, James. Fruits of Empire: Exotic Produce and British Taste, 1660-1800. Washington Square, New York: New York University Press, 1997. pp 118.Walvin notes that over the course of the seventeenth century, the cost of sugar fell by a half and in the fifty years to 1750, decreased again by another third.

[5] Initially the indigenous populations were used as forced labor but the majority of these slaves revolted, escaped or died and this resistance to slavery only increased demands for Africans to replace them.

[6] Walvin. Fruits of Empire. pp 123.

[7] Hobhouse, Henry. Seeds of Change: Five Plants that Transformed Mankind. London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1985. pp 44.

the forced relocation of millions of Africans to the islands of the West Indies, all because of the need to cultivate and produce more and more sweetness.

From the beginning of European colonization efforts in the West Indies, there were movements of people from Europe to the Caribbean islands. These people were comprised of various professions and educational training and all had different motivations for their travels to these new and "exotic" lands.[8] Professional backgrounds were as wide ranging as medical doctors who were in search of new natural remedies that could cure popular ailments[9], botanists, prospective planters and plantation owners, military men, ex-convicts and adventure seekers in search of a new life and attracted by the promises of great wealth that could be made in the West Indies. However, from the late seventeenth century, exploration of the West Indies intensified in ways that had enormous scientific, cultural, economic and political significance to both the European and West Indian populations. A majority of the new knowledge produced during this period consisted of representations of natural riches that included shorelines, animals, flora and fauna that were previously unknown to Europeans. [10] The urge to seize nature, to classify it, and thereby construct a narrative about it, became unavoidably implicated in the systems of control and power of the imperial countries over the natural terrain and human labor that served to transform it into profit.[11] As a result of these diverse sources of information circulating about the West Indies in Europe, certain concepts about these tropical islands of the Atlantic began to be formulated in both the written and visual accounts of these exotic locals.

According to Londa Schiebinger, "Historians, post-colonialists, even historians of science rarely recognize the importance of plants to the processes

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[8] The term "exotic" in relation to the people, land and natural life of the West Indies reflects the bias of the Western gaze which transformed all that was different and unknown into a source of fascination, curiosity and even fear.

[9] Schiebinger, Londa. "Prospecting for Drugs: European Naturalists in the West Indies". Colonial Botany: Science, Commerce, and Politics in the Early Modern World. Eds. Claudia Swan and Londa Schiebinger. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005. pp 119.

[10] Miller, David Philip and Peter Hans Reill eds. Introduction. Visions of Empire: Voyages, Botany, and Representations of Nature. Cambridge, New York, Melbourne: Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge Press, 1996. pp 2.

[11] Ibid. pp 3.

that form and reform human societies and politics on a global scale."[12] This analysis however, recognizes this importance and considers the ways in which the visual representations of plants were often constructs that reflected specific imperial agendas. More specifically, the analysis that follows focuses on a particular type of plant, the sugar cane, which was a plantation crop and thus cultivated in large scale for economic profit. The fact that the sugar cane plant was a plantation crop adds to the importance of this natural commodity as it also opens up consideration of the slave labor transported from Africa to cultivate this specific type of plant on a mass scale. The specificity of the sugar cane stems from the value of the crop to the wealth generated for the European powers that colonized the West Indies. Sugar was in fact the supreme cash crop of the eighteenth-century. Except for gold, it was the only colonial product before 1750 that showed a trade balance in favor of the colony.[13] This project then, seeks to locate the ways in which artists during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries addressed or disavowed the issue of African slavery through their visual representations of sugar. By considering images where sugar is pictured in its various stages and forms, I hope to explore the artistic and aesthetic devices employed in the construction of ideas and concepts associated with the African slaves.

The focus on the visual representations of sugar in this project has been limited to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as it represents the period from when the British presence in the West Indies was being established, through to the heights of imperial domination and control and ends with the emergence of early abolitionist campaigns that directed focus on the atrocities experienced by African slaves in British colonies as being inextricably linked to the establishment of sugar plantation systems in the West Indies. While there has been much scholarly research concerning visual representation in a colonial context, most of this work has focused on the nineteenth century and has, for the most part, neglected the

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[12] Schiebinger, Londa. Plants and Empire: Colonial Bioprospecting in the Atlantic World. Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2004. pp 3.

[13] Hobhouse, Henry. Seeds of Change: Five Plants that Transformed Mankind. London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1985. pp 58.

Caribbean region as a site for investigating imperial power and control. Instead, these studies based in the nineteenth century have focused on areas such as the United States, Europe, India, Africa and the Middle East.[14] As a result of this bias toward the nineteenth century and geographical locations outside of the West Indies, there is a need for more research that looks at visual representations produced in the earlier seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and which turns its focus of attention to the Atlantic world. According to the historian James Walvin, these two centuries are representative of "the period between the development of a powerful British imperial and global trading presence and the early days of modern industrialization and urban growth"[15] and so they provide a productive framework from which to explore the ways in which imperial ideologies were manifest in the visual representations of sugar - as plant, landscape and commodity.

Throughout the chapters that follow, my primary focus of investigation is on the British colonized West Indian islands and England, the center of the British imperial project. This is not to suggest that other Caribbean islands that were colonized by the Spanish, Dutch or French for example, did not share similar histories of the establishment of sugar plantations, the forced migration of African slaves and the increased consumption and desire for sugar by the corresponding European metropolis. In fact, this project references images of sugar produced by other non-British European artists in order to demonstrate, where appropriate, the far-reaching impact of certain visual traditions of representation. However, the focus of this thesis on the British artistic tradition and the sugar plantation systems of the British West Indies is meant to provide a more in-depth consideration of the presence of sugar in visual representations in a uniquely British context. This focus on England and the British West Indies was also necessary given the scope of this project as it would have otherwise been impossible to include, given space

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[14] For example, see: Stevens, Mary Anne ed. The Orientalists, Delacroix to Matisse: European Painters in North Africa and the Near East. London: Royal Academy of Arts, 1984; Rosenthal, Donald A. Orientalism: The Near East in French Painting, 1800-1880. Rochester, New York: Memorial Art Gallery of the University of Rochester, 1982; Lewis, Reina. Gendering Orientalism: Race, Femininity and Representation. London, New York: Routledge, 1996.

[15] Walvin, James. Fruits of Empire. pp ix.

restrictions, all other imperial presences in the Caribbean in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, while acknowledging the differences in practices of colonization and imperial rule that makes each situation unique.

The methodology used in this project encompasses fields of scholarship from various disciplines and trains of critical thought. In the analysis that follows however, my engagement in the visual representation of sugar is done most consistently through the lens of a postcolonial art history scholar and my work has also been greatly enriched by art historical scholarship concerning race and representation. Theories that have emerged from fields such as critical whiteness studies have also been beneficial to portions of this text. The traditional discipline of art history has actively denied the relevance of issues such as race and racial identity[16] and Western "high" art tradition has privileged genres such as portraiture and nudes over representations of natural life. As a site for the writing of art and cultural history as a material practice with ideological consequences, the British West Indies has also been largely overlooked for the geographical and historical context it provides for considering the development of European art and other forms of visual culture.[17] As such, this thesis aims to expand the limited boundaries that have directed the study of art history by considering the variety of ways in which European artists visually depicted British West Indian sugar during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In so doing, I have also turned to other fields of study such as history, anthropology, literature and the history of science to provide suitable methodological and theoretical frameworks from which to conceptualize and analyze the representations of sugar in its various stages and forms. While other academic disciplines have begun to recognize the relevance of conducting commodity based investigations in order to explore the social, scientific and economic trends of a given historical period, the discipline of art history has not yet taken up such direction. As such, an analysis of this nature in which a commodity such as sugar is the central object of discussion, has little

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[16] Nelson, Charmaine, "Slavery, Portraiture and the Colonial Limits of Canadian Art History." *Canadian Woman Studies – Women and the Black Diaspora*. Winter 2004, Vol. 23, No. 2. pp 22.
[17] Kriz, Kay Dian and Geoff Quilley eds. Economy of Colour: Visual Culture and the Atlantic world, 1660-1830. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2003. pp 1.

precedence to follow, but remains a critical and necessary exercise to understand the importance of the visual component in constructing ideas about British West Indian slavery that was in keeping with imperial ideologies and agendas.

As has been noted previously, scholarship on sugar and the relation between the emergence of a sugar monoculture in the British West Indies and the rise of the African slave trade has a well-established tradition. The most comprehensive study to date on the history of sugar remains the two-volume work by Noel Deerr (1950) in which he presents a detailed study of this resource ranging from its physical properties, earliest recorded usages, introduction to the New World and associations with slavery throughout the West Indies. Following Deerr's history and overview of sugar, scholars such as Richard Dunn and Richard Sheridan have focused more exclusively on the rise of sugar plantations in the British West Indies during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, with particular focus on the impact of this plantation monoculture on the forced migration of African slaves as exploited labor. Expanding on this focus on sugar, other writers such as James Walvin and Henry Hobhouse have produced studies on the importance of plant based commodities including tea, coffee and tobacco to the growth of imperial power and the ways in which these natural resources produced in colonies across the world helped to shape history – both of the colonized countries and the corresponding imperial powers. Returning to the study of sugar and its ability to reveal a history of changing relationships among peoples, societies and substances[18], anthropologist Sidney W. Mintz's *Sweetness and Power* explores the place of sugar in modern history and considers issues such as production, consumption and power associated with this natural resource. Much of my art historical approach and methodology in this project is indebted to the writings of Geoff Quilley and Kay Dian Kriz who have edited, published and contributed to a series of essays that explores the visual culture of the early modern Atlantic world. Their publication, *An Economy of Colour: Visual Culture and the Atlantic World, 1660-1830* pays specific attention to the trade in goods

[18] Mintz, Sidney W. Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History. New York, Ontario: Viking Penguin Inc., 1985. pp xxv.

and human bodies that sustained the Atlantic economies of the major colonial powers in Europe.[19] Finally, the work of Jill Casid has been instrumental to the formulation of my discussion and analysis of landscape images of West Indian sugar plantations in relation to the representation of the laboring slave body. Casid's work presents the argument that landscaping in all its various manifestations, "should be understood as united discursive and material practices that came to the fore in the eighteenth century as techniques of empire."[20] By reading the landscape images of sugar plantations produced by British artists in the West Indies through this critical framework, a more nuanced understanding of the manifestation of imperial control as it relates to sugar production and slavery in the eighteenth century emerges.

In addition to the scholarship that deals with the history of sugar and theoretical concepts surrounding the visual representation of this commodity during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, I have also consulted various primary sources as evidence for my arguments throughout this thesis. In order to fully impart the centrality of sugar to the social, economic and politic life of the period, it became necessary to consult the original texts in which many of the images of sugar first appeared. This turn to primary material was all the more critical for this project since many of the images and illustrations discussed throughout cannot be removed from their context of production if a complete and accurate appreciation of how they functioned is to emerge. As such, the textual/visual relation in publications such as Hans Sloane's *Natural History of Jamaica* (1707, 1725) and William Beckford of Somerley's *Descriptive Account* (1790) has been explored in detail in order to contextualize and situate the importance of sugar to seventeenth and eighteenth century culture as compared to the way it is visually constructed by artists.

The organization of this thesis allows an exploration of three distinct issues surrounding the central focus of sugar. What unifies these three themes

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[19] Kriz, Kay Dian and Geoff Quilley eds. An Economy of Colour. pp 1.

[20] Casid, Jill H. Sowing Empire: Landscape and Colonization. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2005. pp xxii.

however is the continued emphasis placed on analyzing the ways in which the visual representations discussed relate to issues of imperialism, colonial rule and slavery in the British West Indies. While distinct issues have been addressed in each chapter, they have been included in this study because of their ability to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the various manifestations of imperial control as it relates to sugar and slavery. Considering the ways in which sugar is represented in its stages as natural object for scientific inquiry, picturesque landscape of the West Indies and finally naturalized in images of European consumption allows more detailed consideration about how the idea of slavery is addressed by artists and writers of the period.

Chapter One presents a brief overview of the history of sugar, its cultivation, production and introduction to the West Indies. This chapter also introduces key theoretical concepts about empire and imperialism, issues that are dealt with throughout the body of the text that follows. This chapter is meant to provide the historical and theoretical context from which to frame the entire discussion about the visual representation of sugar that follows.

Chapter Two considers the ways in which the sugar cane plant was illustrated in natural histories and travel narratives produced by British travelers to the West Indies. This chapter uses as a case study a publication by Hans Sloane entitled *Natural History of Jamaica* which was a result of Sloane's travels through the West Indies and his collection, observation and illustration of new and exotic natural life encountered during his journey. By analyzing Sloane's illustration of the sugar cane plant in conjunction with his written descriptions of the islands he visited and the actual specimens he collected there and later took back with him to England, a greater understanding of the visual traditions surrounding botanical classification in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries will emerge. This chapter also addresses the ways in which the science of botany during the period worked to inform European audiences about the unknown and exotic islands of the Caribbean. Through the guise of accurate and objective observation, these publications and accompanying illustrations in Sloane's *Natural History of Jamaica*, worked to construct specific notions about natural life that engaged with

demands of European audiences for objects of curiosities and which became, in essence, a denial of the slave labor required for sugar cultivation.

Chapter Three changes focus to the representation of sugar cultivation by African slaves on plantations throughout the British West Indies. This chapter explores landscape images produced by British artists such as George Robertson and considers the artistic and aesthetic devices employed in the construction of the West Indian sugar plantation as a picturesque ideal. Through the promotion of the concept of "variety" of natural life, the West Indies was transformed into a picturesque landscape that served to deny the realities of the condition of slavery and suppress the presence of the laboring African slave body under the hardships of the plantation system. This erasure of the black laboring body from landscape scenes of sugar plantations served both the imperial and personal agendas of those invested in the plantation system. Considering the alternatives employed in picturing the black slave body within the picturesque West Indian landscape also reveals how these images were used in the service of anti-abolitionists and those invested in the continuation of the slave trade and further development of sugar plantations.

Chapter Four concludes the thesis by turning to the source of consumption and demand of sugar, the European metropolis, paying particular attention to the visual representation of British consumption. This chapter ties together the previous two as it focuses on the reasons for the suppression of the labor-intensive demands of sugar in scientific representations as well as the construction of the picturesque sugar plantation which erased the presence of the laboring slave body from the West Indian landscape – the growing desire for sweetness by the metropolis.

As a final point of note for this introduction, some mention must be made of the images explored throughout the body of this text. While this thesis discusses images of various media such as illustrations in natural histories and accompanying textual descriptions, paintings and subsequent engravings, and portraiture, all the objects analyzed provide a more comprehensive understanding of the importance of sugar to the seventeenth and eighteenth century economies

and lives of Europeans, Africans and West Indians. Sugar was the product that united these three distinct geographical locations and linked their historical trajectories. In fact, the range of objects discussed attests to the critical role that sugar played in constructing imperial control of the West Indies and producing the identity of the black African slave that was consistent with imperial agendas. As a result of the range of images and objects analyzed throughout, it would be impossible, given the scope of this project, to discuss in exhaustive detail, the various audiences for these works as well as the differences in circulation and reception that results from the various media. However, I have attempted to provide in all instances, some discussion of the materiality, audience, context and circulation in order to provide a context for how these objects would have been understood during the time they were produced. I acknowledge however, that many of these issues could have been developed more fully but in such instances I have attempted to provide further sources that the reader may consult to obtain any additional information required.

As noted earlier, the aim of this thesis is to provide an analysis of the ways that sugar – both in its natural form as a sugar cane plant, as picturesque landscape and as a commodity – was used by artists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to construct specific notions about the West Indies, the body of the African slave, white plantation owner and the changing consumption habits of the British population. Through exploring this range of visual conventions related to sugar, it is hoped that a greater appreciation and understanding will emerge for the impact of what has become such a commonplace and often-unquestioned commodity today.

CHAPTER ONE

Historical and Theoretical Considerations

This thesis focuses on the visual representations of British West Indian sugar in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and seeks to explore the ways in which artists used these images to construct ideas about African slavery, which was an integral part of the cultivation and production of this resource. Because of the historical nature of this investigation, it is necessary to provide some background information in order to help situate the analysis that follows. As such, this chapter will provide a brief historical overview of the origins of sugar, its introduction to the West Indies and the early European colonization efforts that transformed the landscape and culture of the British West Indies through the establishment of a sugar monoculture. In addition, this chapter also provides a suitable opportunity to consider both the meaning and implications of the term "empire" and the links that can be drawn between this concept of empire and the artistic and literary productions emerging from West Indian travelers, explorers, plantation owners and those invested in sugar production in the West Indies.

The concept of Imperial power and control over the land and people of the West Indies remains an inescapable issue when discussing colonial expansion in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In our contemporary understanding, empire has come to denote a political unit comprising of a number of territories or nations that are or were ruled by a single supreme authority.[1] However, it should be noted that the concept of "empire" is also in part a mental construction as it reflects a way of conceiving the world which gives privileged status to the forms of knowledge and canons of rationality that predominate in the metropolitan power.[2] It becomes productive then to consider the needs of an empire as determining the activities of travelers, for example, in shaping the forms of discourse that emerged from their expeditions, whether in the official service of the imperial powers or for personal gain

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[1] http://www.thefreedictionary.com/empire

[2] Gascoigne, John. "The Ordering of Nature and the Ordering of Empire: a Commentary." Science in the Service of Empire: Joseph Banks, the British State and the Uses of Science in the Age of Revolution. Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998. pp 107.

and adventure. There is no doubt that a relationship between knowledge and power exists but this relation needs to be expanded to consider, according to Simon Schaffer, "the empowerment of bearers of knowledge and the role of knowledge, skill, and practice in the formation of political regimes."[3] Numerous scholars have identified some of the more prevalent themes that have been observed working in the service of empire which include the constructed narrative in visual and literary productions in support of the imperial power's presence in newly colonized territories to 'save' the natives and forcibly transplanted African slaves from their immoral and savage customs by bringing order and religion to their lives.[4] A pluralistic view of other cultures and the primitivist tradition of the "noble savage" were a crucial aspect of the context of voyages and narratives produced about the West Indies.[5] In conjunction with this constructed narrative surrounding the slave body, natural objects like plant life and animals were also represented in ways that supported systematic collection techniques which often sought "to scale down the world to the manageable proportions of a map"[6] as well as refashion the larger world along the lines of a model that allowed a sense of control and order over the unknown.

By turning attention to illustrations and engravings that accompanied travel narratives and natural history texts, for example, a different point of departure emerges from which to explore relations of power and knowledge in the colonial context. While history has traditionally deemed print culture as "low" art, its significance to understanding the conception and promotion of imperial ideology cannot be underestimated. Because illustrations and engravings were produced for texts which were more affordable and physically more conducive than paintings and sculpture for circulation, they were instrumental in informing the larger public, both in Europe and the West Indies during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, about nature and agriculture in the New World. According to Beth Fowkes Tobin, the role

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[3] Schaffer, Simon. "Visions of Empire: Afterword". Eds. Miller, David Philip and Peter Hanns Reill. Visions of Empire: Voyages, Botany and Representations of Nature. Cambridge, New York, Melbourne: Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge Press, 1996. pp 336.

[4] The various issues concerning the slave body and their relation to the plantation landscape images and labor shall be explored in greater detail in Chapter 2.

[5] Millner, David Philip. "Introduction". Visions of Empire. pp 12.

[6] Gascoigne, John. "The Ordering of Nature and the Ordering of Empire: a Commentary." Visions of Empire. pp 109.

of agriculture and the harnessing of nature to serve imperial interests have for too long been undertheorized in the study of colonial expansion.[7] For Tobin, agriculture and nature are crucial to understanding empire since the economics of imperialism has traditionally been discussed in terms of the forging of trade routes, the rise of mercantile capitalism, and the concomitant military conquest of territory. The plantations that were devoted to the monoculture of sugar in the Caribbean had a huge impact on the people moved from one region of the globe to another to provide labor as well as on the social fabric of Europe by shaping daily rituals of consumption.[8] Therefore, the narratives and illustrations produced about the plantation systems, the agriculture and the natural life encountered during travels to the Caribbean are instrumental tools to understand the ways in which imperial agendas were produced, promoted, circulated and consumed during the period of colonial occupation of the West Indies. However, before such issues are explored in more detail in the chapters that follow, some historical information will help to situate these concepts about empire in relation to sugar produced in the British West Indies.

A Brief History of the Sugar Cane [9]

The taste of sweetness is known to man through berries, fruit, sugar and honey – with honey being the most intensely sweet.[10] Honey is an animal product in the sense that its raw material is gathered from flowering plants by bees. Sugar on the other hand, can be derived from various sources such as the sugar cane plant and the sugar beet. The focus of this thesis is on sucrose, an organic chemical of the carbohydrate family. While sucrose can be produced from the sugar cane plant and the sugar beet,

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[7] Tobin, Beth Fowkes. Colonizing Nature: The Tropics in British Arts and Letters, 1760-1820. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005. pp 9-10.

[8] Ibid. pp 10.

[9] For this history of sugar and its derivation from the sugar cane plant that follows, I am greatly indebted to the past scholarship of Sidney W Mintz and Noel Deerr, of which portions of their research have been repeated verbatim, where appropriate.
See: Mintz, Sidney W. Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History. New York, Ontario: Viking Penguin Inc., 1985 and Deerr, Noel. The History of Sugar. Vol I and II. London: Chapman and Hall Ltd., 1950.

[10] Sensations of sweetness must be carefully distinguished from the substances that give rise to them. In addition, processed sugars such as sucrose, which are manufactured and refined technochemically, must also be distinguished from sugars as they occur in nature. For the purpose of this thesis however, my use of the term sugar, unless otherwise noted, refers to sucrose, which is derived from the sugar cane plant.

it should be noted that sugar beets were not economically important as a source of sucrose until the middle of the nineteenth century, but the sugar cane plant has been the prime source of sucrose for at least a millennium. The sugar derived from the sugar cane is a vegetable product extracted by human ingenuity and technical achievement and was a late introduction to human diet as compared to honey. Sugar made from the sugar cane spread slowly during the first millennium or so of its existence, and became widespread only during the past five hundred years.

The sugar cane[11] is indigenous to the south Pacific and from this native location, moved to Southeast Asia and India. It is not completely clear how the sugar cane plant came to be introduced to these regions, but the consensus among scholars is that cuttings of the plant may have washed up on these foreign shores where they took root and readily flourished. While there are some early references to sugar in Indian literature, it is uncertain if the sugar that is referred to was the same partially crystallized, non-liquid product derived from the juice of the sugar cane in the form that we now know sugar today. References to sugar making however do not appear until well into the Christian era. For sugar to be produced, it must be crystallized from liquid in a process that is ancient, complex and difficult.

There are six known species of the sugar cane plant of which *Saccharum officinarum* is the most widely used in the production of sugar. Referred to as the "noble cane", this species has a soft, sweet, juicy stalk that grows as thick as two inches and is twelve to fifteen feet high when mature. With adequate heat and moisture, the sugar cane may grow an inch a day for six weeks and becomes ripe and reaches the optimum condition for extraction anywhere from a period of nine to eighteen months. The extraction of the sugar cane juice from the plant, which in essence is how crystallized sugar as we know it today derives, can be accomplished in a number of different ways. The cane can be chopped, then ground, pressed, pounded or soaked in liquid. Heating the liquid containing the sucrose causes evaporation and a resulting sucrose concentration and as the liquid becomes supersaturated, crystals begin to appear. While cooling and crystallizing, the emerging "raw sugar" leaves behind it molasses, or treacle, which cannot be crystallized further by conventional

[11] The Latin name for the sugar cane is *Saccharum officinarum* which means "sugar of the apothecaries".

methods. This process is obtaining crystallized sugar from the cane juice is an ancient technique and in fact, there is no other practical means by which to make sugar from the cane other than through a series of liquid-solid operations accompanied by heating and cooling.

It was only after the eighth century that sugar was known and consumed in Europe while there is unmistakable written evidence of its use and consumption prior to this in China and India.[12] It was the Arab expansion westward that marked a turning point in the European experience of sugar and it is the Arabs that first introduced the sugar cane, its process of cultivation and the art of sugar making which spread through the Mediterranean basin. From the Mediterranean basin, sugar was supplied to North Africa, the Middle East, and Europe for centuries and production there ceased only when production in the New World colonies such as the West Indies became dominant in the late sixteenth century.[13]

Sugar cane is a tropical and subtropical crop with a growing season that may be in excess of twelve months and requires large amounts of water and labor. Though it can flourish without irrigation, it does far better and increases its sugar content when it is watered regularly and when its growing season is not subject to sharp and sudden declines in temperature. As such, the West Indies proved an ideal climate for the sugar cane plant to flourish but since it has always been a labor-intensive crop to cultivate, sugar production was a challenge in terms of securing adequate labor. As has already been noted, this challenge in securing adequate labor was filled when Europe turned to Africa and began importing millions of slaves to the West Indies.

Between the Old and New Worlds

Before sugar cultivation and production moved almost exclusively to the New World, most predominantly in the West Indies, a sugar industry was developed

[12] For example, see the *Buddhagosa* or Discourse on Moral Consciousness, a Hindu religious document that dates to circa 5oo.

[13] The decline of the Mediterranean sugar industry has been traditionally and solely attributed to the rise of the competing sugar industry in the New World. However, some scholars have noted that warfare and plague, which resulted in marked declines in the populations, hurt the sugar industry in Crete and Cyprus. As such, the price of labor-costly goods such as sugar rose after the Black Death.
See: Galloway, J.H. "The Mediterranean Sugar Industry." *Geographical Review* 67(2), 1977: 177-192.

by the Portuguese and Spanish on the Atlantic islands of Sao Tome and the Canaries, located off the north-western coast of Africa. This proved to be the stepping stones by which the industry would move from the Old World to the New and it was the form perfected in Sao Tome and the Canaries that the New World industry was to find its prototype. Both Portugal and Spain's sugar experiments had many parallels and in the fifteenth century, Portugal seized Sao Tome and other neighboring islands and Spain captured the Canaries. Both the Spanish and Portuguese sugar endeavors were characterized by slavery but the Spanish employed a system that combined the use of both free and enslaved labor. This combination of free and enslaved labor in the Canaries resembled the pioneering mixed-labor systems that initially emerged on British West Indian plantations before the African slave trade was fully established. However, according to the Spanish scholar Fernandez-Armesto, "The Canarian system evokes far more the methods of the Old World, and the equal sharing of produce between owners and workers is most akin to the farming *a mezzadria*, which developed in late medieval northern Italy and in some parts is still practiced today."[14]

Introducing Sugar to the New World

Columbus first carried sugar cane to the New World on his second voyage in 1493. The sugar cane he introduced was taken from the Spanish Canary Islands and the cane was first grown in the New World on the Spanish colonized Santo Domingo. There is no record of successful initial cultivation of the sugar cane and it is believed that the canes went wild, but by 1510, there were about a dozen sugar estates on the island.[15] As Sidney Mintz notes, beginning from around the year 1516, sugar from the New World was being shipped back to Europe.[16] However, Henry Hobhouse argues that until 1550, the only sugar imported from the region consisted of a few loaves brought back as proof of the possibility of production, or as mere curiosities and that the New World had no effect on production, distribution or prices until the latter half of the sixteenth century, and only became dominant from about

[14] Fernandez-Armesto, F. The Canary Islands after the Conquest. Oxford: Clarendon, 1982. Qtd. in Mintz, pp 32.
[15] Hobhouse, Henry. Seeds of Change: Five Plants that Transformed Mankind. London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1985. pp 49.
[16] Mintz. pp 32.

1650.[17] Regardless of this early impact of New World sugar cultivation to the supplies of Europe, what is of interest to this project is the fact that enslaved Africans worked Santo Domingo's sugar industry, with the first slaves having been brought there shortly after the sugar cane itself. The first African slaves were imported before 1503, and in spite of local fears of depredations by slave runaways, the importations continued and by 1509, enslaved Africans were being imported to work the royal mines with others soon following to power the sugar industry. These early Spanish plantations of Santo Domingo are believed to have consisted of about one hundred and twenty five acres of land and were manned by as many as two hundred slaves and freedmen.[18] It was therefore Spain that pioneered sugar cane, sugar making and the use of African slave labor in the New World, a practice which was later taken up and expanded by the British in the seventeenth century. On other West Indian islands such as Cuba, Puerto Rico and Jamaica, Spanish settlers introduced the sugar cane plant, the methods for its cultivation, the enslaved African labor and the process for extracting sugar from the sugar cane plant. The Spanish sugar industry however, amounted to very little[19], and within only a century, the British and French became the western world's great sugar makers and exporters.

The Early British West Indies

Soon after Sir Walter Raleigh's first voyage to the Guianas in 1595, the English explorer Captain Charles Leigh attempted to start a settlement on the Waiapoco (Oyapock) River.[20] Though these efforts did not succeed, they were connected with an interest in sugar and other tropical products. In 1607, the first English colony in the New World located on Jamestown island and about sixty miles from the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay was founded and the sugar cane was brought there in 1619 but the cane would not grow.[21] Following this initial attempt by the British to cultivate sugar in the New World, in 1624 Sir Thomas

[17] Hobhouse. pp 44.
[18] Mintz. pp 47.
[19] The reasons for this lack of success by the Spanish have been attributed to many factors, some of which include the Spaniards obsession with metallic riches, the excessively authoritarian controls imposed by the crown or the lack of capital available for investment.
[20] Mintz. pp 36-7.
[21] Ibid. pp 37.

Warner along with a small group of followers occupied the island of St. Christopher. English influence in the region soon spread as settlements appeared in Barbados in 1627, Nevis in 1628, and Antigua and Montserrat in 1632. The last major settlement by the English in the West Indies during the seventeenth century was in 1655, when a military expedition seized Jamaica from the Spanish.[22]

Slavery was present in the early English West Indies almost from the time of the first major settlement when Captain Henry Powell brought some of the first shiploads of English settlers to Barbados in 1627. Among these first settlers were ten Africans who had apparently been captured from a Portuguese ship during the voyage to the West Indies.[23] More Africans were brought into the West Indies in subsequent years but their numbers remained small until the introduction of sugar cultivation and its subsequent drive toward monoculture that produced fundamental changes in the economy and society. Early settlers were forced to grow their own food while they searched for a profitable staple crop. Crops such as tobacco, cotton and indigo were experimented with but ultimately proved unsuccessful and of a quality too poor to be competitive on the European market.[24] This initial inability of the early settlers to find a profitable staple crop meant that the demand for labor grew relatively slowly and was satisfied primarily by the importation of English indentured servants. Indentured servitude had been devised as a solution to the problem of how the major source of hired labor in England, service in husbandry, could be connected with the labor demands of the New World planters. In seventeenth-century England, the majority of all hired labor was done by "servants in husbandry" who were young individuals of both sexes in the teen ages and early twenties who lived and worked in the households of their employers, usually on annual contracts.[25]

Sugar introduced to Barbados in the early 1640s flourished and the climate and soil of these West Indian islands proved to be ideal for sugar cultivation. The

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[22] Galenson, David W. Traders, planter, and slaves: Market behavior in Early English America. Cambridge, London: Cambridge University Press, 1986. pp 2.
[23] Bridenbaugh, Carl and Roberta Bridenbaugh. No Peace Beyond the Line: The English in the Caribbean, 1624-1690. New York: Oxford University Press, 1972. pp 32.
[24] See: Dunn, Richard S. Sugar and Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624-1713. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1972.
[25] Galenson. pp 6.

newly planted cane fields proved to be very successful and combined with the high European price for sugar served to make sugar an extraordinarily profitable crop and quickly became the dominant product of the English colonists in the West Indies. With the introduction of sugar cultivation in the British West Indies and the sudden availability of a profitable export crop, there was a large increase in the demand for labor as the planters scrambled to increase the output of this new lucrative crop. As such, the existing availability of the relatively small number of indentured servants from England proved inadequate to provide the required labor to produce sugar in the quantities desired by the colony's planters. Adding to the limited number of English indentured servants willing to travel to the West Indies was the fact that knowledge of the harsh working conditions involved in growing sugar under the tropical conditions spread in Britain and so prospective immigrants and servants became increasingly reluctant to travel to the islands under indenture.

In the face of this increasingly severe shortage of indentured white labor, planters turned to the use of black African slaves. Large numbers of African slaves first began to arrive on the island of Barbados early in the 1640s and the planters initially added the blacks to their field gangs, where they worked alongside the white indentured servants.[26] In the course of about two decades, the balance of labor used by the West Indian planters shifted and it became unusual to see whites at work in the cane fields at all.[27] In fact, by the close of the seventeenth century there were very few white servants in the West Indies and indentured servitude survived into the eighteenth century only as a marginal supplier of skilled craftsmen.[28] By the close of the seventeenth century, the rise of a black majority among the populations of all the islands in the English West Indies was also closely related to the growth of a wealthy group of large plantation owners who dominated the economic and political life of the region. As such, political power and social status on these West Indian islands lay in the

[26] Dunn. Sugar and Slaves. pp 68-9.
[27] Galenson. pp 10.
[28] Ibid. pp 11.

hands of the white plantation owners who regulated all aspects of daily life for the forcibly transported African labor supply.

The subtropical environments of the plantation required the English planters to adjust to seasonal schedules that were completely different from those of their native and temperate country. Because sugar cane needed up to a year and a half to mature, the planting and harvesting schedules devised by the English were elaborate and completely novel concepts. For example, on the island of Barbados, planters soon divided their lands into equal portions of about ten acres each so that they could be planted and harvested *seriatim*, thus assuring the steady flow of cane to the mill and thus a continual supply of sugar to fill the import demands of Europe.[29] In addition to the innovations required in the planting and harvesting schedules of the sugar cane, the work involved in transforming the sugar cane crop into exportable sugar was a difficult and often dangerous task that was performed by the African slaves. The production of sugar, from the planting and harvesting to its grinding, boiling and packaging, proved to be the "most onerous of West Indian industries"[30] as a result of the unceasing and horrendous labor requirements for which the African slaves were responsible.

Not only was the European demand for sugar itself increasing the profitability of its cultivation in the British West Indies, but other sugar-based exports were also contributing to the lucrative nature of this agricultural venture. Rum and molasses for example, were two of the by-products that were derived from the refining processes carried out on the sugar cane plant. Rum quickly gained popularity and by the year 1655, the British navy even introduced a daily ration of grog, a drink composed of equal parts of rum and water along with sugar and lime juice, to each sailor.[31] It is this early British naval connection with West Indian produced rum that is believed to be the source of introduction of rum to Europe. By the late seventeenth century, a thriving export trade for rum in

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[29] Mintz. pp 49.
[30] Mathieson, W.L. British Slavery and Abolition. London: Longmans, Green, 1926. pp 63.
[31] Standage, Tom. A History of the World in 6 Glasses. New York: Walker and Company, 2005. pp 108-9.

addition to other sugar-based exports had developed between the West Indies and Europe, thus further increasing the demands of sugar cultivation and refining.

The production of rum and other by-products of the sugar cane plant was also implicated in the slave trade and traffic of African labor across the Atlantic. According to Tom Standage, the incorporation of grog to the daily rations of the British navy "played an unseen role during the eighteenth century in establishing British supremacy at sea."[32] During that time, one of the main causes of death among soldiers was scurvy, a disease brought about by a lack of vitamin C in the diet. One of the best sources of vitamin C was lemon or lime juice and because in the eighteenth century, it became compulsory that rations of rum distributed to sailors to be mixed with water and lime or lemon juice, there was a dramatic reduction of scurvy among British naval sailors.[33] Rum was also used as a currency to purchase African slaves and by the year 1721, one English trader reported that rum had become the "chief barter" on the slave coast of Africa.[34] The ability of rum to be used as a currency for the purchase of slaves who were then used to cultivate and produce sugar and the by-products of sugar refining being used to produce rum which enabled the purchase of more slaves reflects the importance of the sugar cane to a complex system developed as a result of the profitability of sugar production in the West Indies.

One final use of rum that also reflects its significance to early British sugar production in the West Indies is the use of rum as a tool of social control across sugar plantations. Rum was typically given to newly arrived slaves to subdue those who resisted. Slaves were also encouraged to become dependent on rations of rum, which was used both as an inducement and so they could withstand the unending hardships and labor demands placed on them. As a source of reward, slaves were give extra rum for performing particularly unpleasant tasks which they could either drink or use to barter for food and other necessities.[35]

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[32] Ibid. pp 109.
[33] Ibid. pp 110. The Royal Navy's unique ability to combat scurvy is said to have greatly increased their strength at sea and it also contributed to British sailors being referred to as "limeys".
[34] Qtd. in Standage. pp 111.
[35] Ibid. pp 108.

The seventeenth century was one of tremendous activity for English sailors, merchants, adventurers and royal agents. Many more English colonies were established in the New World than Dutch, French or Spanish and the English settler population, including African slaves, far exceeded that of any other European country.[36] England fought the most, conquered the most colonies, imported the most slaves and went the furthest and fastest in creating a plantation system with the most important product of that system being sugar. According to Sidney Mintz, "the English connection between sugar production and sugar consumption was welded in the seventeenth century, when Britain acquired Barbados, Jamaica, and other 'sugar islands', vastly expanding her trade in African slaves.....and first began to build a broad internal consumer market...[that] survived attacks by other classes in the metropolis, at least until the mid-nineteenth century."[37] The impact then, of early British settlement in the West Indies on the history of sugar and the African slave trade is one that requires further investigation especially in relation to the visual representations that emerged about sugar and the ways in which these images worked to construct concepts about slavery and the black laboring body.

[36] Mintz. pp 38.
[37] Ibid. pp 61.

CHAPTER TWO

Classifying Nature: The Sugar Cane Plant as Object of Science

Chapter One presented a brief history of sugar and the sugar cane plant as well as discussed early European colonization of the West Indies. It also introduced some theoretical concepts about empire and imperialism which forms the basis of the analysis of sugar that follows in the next three chapters. Following this historical and theoretical overview, this chapter investigates the images and accompanying descriptions about the sugar cane plant published in natural histories and travel narratives that emerged as a result of increased European travel to the West Indies during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. As a case study that is illustrative of the tradition of representing the sugar cane plant, I consider a publication by the British physician Sir Hans Sloane entitled *Natural History of Jamaica* (1707, 1725). Sloane visited the West Indies where he collected, observed and illustrated the new and exotic natural life he encountered and later published his observations in a two volume illustrated text upon his return to England. By analyzing Sloane's illustration of the sugar cane plant in relation to the textual descriptions and actual plant specimens he collected and took back with him to England, this chapter argues that the representation of the sugar cane plant can be read as an erasure of the body of the African slave which was the necessary labor used for sugar cultivation in the West Indies. This chapter also argues that many of the "scientific" representations of the West Indian sugar cane plant were done more with principles of aesthetics in mind rather than as an exercise in objective recording that these images proposed to be. In the treatment of the sugar cane plant as an object of science, it removed the realities of the slave labor and plantation systems that were established for the large-scale cultivation and refinement of this lucrative resource that transformed the landscape of the Caribbean.[1] These plantations were the seats of sugar production and while they

[1] This is not to suggest that sugar was the only natural resource cultivated in large scale on plantations in the West Indies. Other commodities that were also produced on plantations included rice, tobacco, cotton and cocoa. Because of space restrictions and the historical importance of

were agricultural undertakings (since all the cultivation and much of the industrial processing of the cane were carried out there) they can be viewed as a synthesis of field and factory that were completely run by the labors of transplanted African slaves.[2]

According to Martin Kemp, "no modern science has a more visual history than botany and no scientific illustrations have been more widely admired for what we may call aesthetic reasons."[3] Kemp continues to note the "tendency for the reader [of botanical publications] to look at the illustrations in an innocent manner, assuming that their descriptive and aesthetic roles are unproblematic."[4] Following Kemp, I am seeking a critical reevaluation of these botanical illustrations which takes into consideration the "complex compound of conditions under which the illustrations were produced"[5] as well as the ways in which different media and visual conventions worked to translate information to readers. As such, my analysis aims to provide some of this much needed reevaluation of illustrations of the sugar cane plant in relation to issues of patronage, motivations for travel, intended audience and the promotion of imperial ideologies that was the impetus for such expeditions and scientific inquiry. Images and publications about the sugar cane plant that emerged from travels to the West Indies have often been overlooked by postcolonial and critical theory scholars and so this analysis reveals a more nuanced reading of images and writings that have been dismissed for too long, as being objective accounts of the world in the service of science and "progress".

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sugar, I have limited the focus of my analysis to the sugar cane plant in order to provide a more detailed investigation of the visual and textual conventions that emerged in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. See bibliography for scholarship on other resources produced in the West Indies.

[2] Mintz, Sidney W. Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History. New York, Middlesex, Victoria: Viking Penguin Inc., 1985. pp 46-7.

[3] Kemp, Martin. " 'Implanted in our Natures': humans, plants and the stories of art." Visions of Empire: Voyages, Botany, and Representations of Nature. Eds David Philip Miller and Peter Hanns Reill. Cambridge, New York, Melbourne: Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge Press, 1996. pp 197.

[4] Ibid. pp 197.

[5] Ibid. pp 197.

History of Natural History

Since at least the late fourteenth century, naturalists of the Western world have devoted considerable time and interest to collecting, preserving and recording objects from nature.[6] Renaissance and post-Renaissance Western Europe played a unique role in the development of various arts and sciences devoted to the imitation of nature. It has been argued that early modern Europeans sought to master nature through technology on an unprecedented scale, making the conquest of nature a political imperative from the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries.[7] This desire to collect, observe and master nature has been categorized as the pursuit of knowledge of the natural history of the world. The term "natural history" itself can be considered as both a concept and practice: a concept that until recently held that nature could be contained and organized into grand, fixed schemes, and a practice that entailed everything from stuffing birds to pressing plants and drawing pictures.[8] The emergence of natural history as a science was, according to Sue Ann Prince, grounded in the belief that humans could "understand and attain dominion over nature by naming, labeling, organizing, and theorizing about its endless manifestations."[9]

Natural history, before the nineteenth-century when it became fractured into more specialized disciplines such as zoology, botany, astronomy, geology and ethnography, was a field practiced by polymaths with broad interests and talents.[10] Because of the numerous important aspects of plants as food, shelter and clothing, what we refer to today as botany – the observation, collection and visual and written descriptions of plants – is believed to have one of the longest traditions of scientific and scholarly study.[11] This interest in botany (and nature more

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[6] Bedini, Silvio A. "The Evolution of Science Museums." *Technology and Culture* 6 (1965): 1-2. According to Bedini, the first recorded collection of objects of nature was started in the late fourteenth century by Jean de Berry, Duke of Burgundy and included items such as foreign shells.
[7] Smith, Pamela H and Paula Findlen. "Commerce and the Representation of Nature in Art and Science." Merchants and Marvels: Commerce, Science and Art in Early Modern Europe. New York, London: Routledge, 2002. pp 3.
[8] Prince, Sue Ann. "Introduction." Stuffing Birds, Pressing Plants, Shaping Knowledge: Natural History in North America. Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 2003. pp 1.
[9] Ibid. pp 1.
[10] Ibid. pp2.
[11] Shetler, Stanwyn G. "The Herbarium: Past, Present and Future." *Proceedings of the Biological Society of Washington*. 82 (Nov. 17, 1969): 695. According to Shetler, the oldest surviving

generally) took on one of its earliest manifestations in the popular culture of Europe in the form of cabinets of curiosities.[12] One such example of these early modern cabinets can be seen in an image of the museum of the apothecary Francisco Calzolari in Verona (Fig. 1). In this cabinet, animals, birds and fishes are shown hanging from the ceiling and natural and man-made objects crowd the shelves and drawers. The particularly choice specimens in Calzolari's cabinet are displayed in a sort of altar at the end of the room. This cabinet and others like it were in fact rooms filled with a vast range of objects from plant and mineral samples to exotic artifacts from distant cultures, based on the interest of the collector. Early modern curiosity cabinets were a product of long-distance trade relationships as well as social relationships that generated the capital necessary for collecting in the first place.[13] These cabinets have often been discussed in regards to their relationship to the formation of what we know as museums, since they usually performed an educational role and facilitated the accumulation and dissemination of knowledge. However, what is of particular relevance is the role they played in the early modern fascination with collecting and recording flora and fauna specimens both in Europe and what was then referred to as the New World. This growing fascination with botanical specimens and illustrations gained more momentum from the colonial territorial and navigational expansions taking place during the time. Interest in the natural life of the New World literally grew in proportion to the expansion of European trade, travel and colonization. The relationship between travel and cabinets of curiosity cannot be stressed enough as, according to Lorraine Datson, "travel was the alpha and omega of collecting, being both the source of the bulk of the objects – voyages of exploration and subsequent trade with the newly discovered lands created a steady flow of exotica

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institutional herbarium dates from 1545 at the University of Padua, Italy, although a collection of dried plants may have been associated with the botanical gardens at the University of Pisa.

[12] For more information on these Cabinets of Curiosities see: MacGregor ed. The Origins of Museums: The Cabinets of Curiosities in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century Europe. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985 and Mauries, Patrick. Cabinets of Curiosities. London: Thames & Hudson Ltd., 2002.

[13] Delbourgo, James. "Slavery in the Cabinet of Curiosities: Hans Sloane's Atlantic World." The British Museum Website. pp 3. http://www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/news/hanssloane.pdf. May 20th 2007.

– and the occasion for inspecting them in Amsterdam, Oxford, Venice.... or wherever the curios and peripatetic tourist might land."[14]

With accounts of newly 'discovered' and conquered lands, naturalists became more interested in obtaining specimens or illustrations of plants and animals that were not native to Europe and were thus representative of distant and unknown places. This period of colonial expansion coincided with a growing desire for new knowledge of the natural world that existed beyond the boundaries of Europe as well as witnessed the rise of the botanic garden in Europe. Following the discovery and subsequent explorations of the New World, small enclosed gardens with a variety of plants representing, or symbolically re-creating the Garden of Eden became popular in the early fifteenth-century.[15] These small, enclosed gardens quickly expanded and in the sixteenth-century the first formal botanic gardens were established in Europe as places where the properties of plants could be studied. These gardens were traditionally divided into four parts which were representative of the four corners of the earth but the four parts gradually came to represent the four continents, and so plants were often laid out according to their place of origin.[16] New plants from the Americas and other exotic parts of the world were usually eagerly awaited by the gardener or owner of these botanic gardens and by the end of the sixteenth century, gardeners often gave explorers lists of desired plants for their collections.[17]

One of the most famous of these botanic gardens in Europe was established in the city of Leiden in the Netherlands in the year 1587. This garden was laid out in the traditional four parts and visitors were welcome to stroll its paths to observe the plants growing there. In adjacent galleries were collections of objects such as rocks and animals collected from distant countries that added to the overall exotic appeal of the garden. In an engraving produced in 1610 by Willem Swanenburgh after I.C. Woudanus entitled *Leiden University Hortus Publicus* (Fig. 2), some of the exotic animals and objects from surrounding galleries are pictured at the

[14] Datson, Lorraine. "The Factual Sensibilitys." *Isis* 79 (1988), pp 455.
[15] Doggett, Rachel ed. New World of Wonders: European Images of the Americas, 1492-1700. Washington, D.C., The Folger Shakespeare Library, 1992. pp 75.
[16] Ibid. pp 75.
[17] Ibid. pp 75.

bottom of the illustration and provides a view of what one of these botanic gardens would have looked like in the seventeenth-century. It must be noted however, that the increased demand for objects of nature that occurred after the discovery of the New World was not tied solely to a desire for increased knowledge of the unknown world or scholarly inquiry into nature. The demand for and collection of nature was also implicated in a system of commerce. Things of nature and their naturalistic representations were collected, studied, sold, and consumed all over Europe. None of the natural curiosities, botanic gardens or the illustrations and paintings of nature existed in the realm of pure representation as they also played an active role in the world of commerce.[18]

Concurrent with this increased desire for new knowledge about the natural world, European presence in the Atlantic was also being more firmly established.[19] One such area of increased imperial domination was the chain of Atlantic islands that were referred to as the Caribbean or West Indies.[20] These islands were a source of vast wealth and opportunity for the European powers who frequently engaged in battle with each other to retain possession of these important and economically valuable resources.[21] Through naval wars of varying scales among the Dutch, French and British, these European powers were able to define their stakes within the West Indian islands.[22] The economic significance of the West Indian islands to the European metropolis has been explored by scholars in regards to the implications of forced slave labor of Africans, the

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[18] Smith, Pamela H and Paula Findlen. "Commerce and the Representation of Nature in Art and Science." Merchants and Marvels. pp 5.

[19] See Chapter One for details on early British and European settlement in the West Indies.

[20] The "West Indies" is an archipelago that extends from near southern Florida to the coast of Venezuela. It was given this name in error by the Spanish explorer Christopher Columbus in 1492 because he believed that he had discovered a new group of islands near the coast of India. In 1496, the Spanish on Hispaniola made the first permanent European settlement. As noted previously, by the middle of the seventeenth-century, the British, Spanish, French and Dutch had established settlements throughout the West Indies.
The name "Caribbean" is derived from the word "Caribs", one of the dominant native groups in the region at the time of European contact in the late fifteenth century.

[21] For example, after Christopher Columbus arrived in Jamaica in 1494, Spain claimed the island and began occupation in 1509. For one hundred years, between 1555 and 1655, Spanish Jamaica was subject to many pirate attacks. In May 1655, British forces seized the island from the Spanish. The British were forced to defend the island from attacks by pirates and the Spanish who were trying to regain control until 1670 when the British received formal recognition of possession through the Treaty of Madrid.

[22] Mintz, Sidney W. Sweetness and Power. pp 38.

implementation of plantation systems, the subjugation of native communities and the overt systems of control employed by the Imperial powers. The West Indies however, was not only a site of human exploitation and a source of great wealth for the European colonizers, but was also seen as a new and unexplored territory, filled with unusual and exotic natural life. This "exoticism" attracted many European travelers who were in search of adventure, wealth and prestige. These areas of imperial expansion, when first encountered by European travelers, were unknown, uncertain and dangerous places where foreigners had to rely on local knowledge and contact with the native inhabitants for survival and daily needs.[23] Travelers frequently produced accounts of their journey to these exotic islands that were then circulated in Europe to inform the public about the experience. One of the most obvious examples of the reliance of travelers on the native inhabitants was the creation of the map but this desire extended to include a mapping of the natural world through the creation of systematic collections and recordings of nature, virtual guidebooks to the natural world and accounts of experiences with the unknown.[24] These accounts, guidebooks and narratives not only worked to relay the experiences of a traveler but also quickly became an integral part of the popular culture of Europe in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and served as a form of entertainment and recreation. What the overwhelming majority of these accounts have in common is that they position and construct a view of the West Indies as existing outside of and in opposition to the civilized and superior European power. Furthermore, they sold an idea of the Atlantic world that appealed to readers, viewers, and consumers across Europe, and this idea marketed a world that was identifiably "exotic".[25] The written and visual accounts that were produced by travelers to the West Indies provided, in short, rich and plentiful models for those in the European center who would wish to contemplate the exotic world.

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[23] Gascoigne, John. Visions of Empire: Voyages, Botany, and Representations of Nature. Eds David Philip Miller and Peter Hanns Reill. Cambridge, New York, Melbourne: Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge Press, 1996. pp 108.
[24] Ibid. pp 108.
[25] Schmidt, Benjamin. "Inventing Exoticism: The Project of Dutch Geography and the Marketing of the World, circa 1700." Merchants and Marvels: Commerce, Science, and Art in Early Modern Europe. Eds. Pamela H. Smith and Paula Findlen. London, New York: Routledge, 2002. pp 349.

Consuming the West Indies

In conjunction with the vast expansion of knowledge of strange and distant parts of the world, the size and diversity of the audiences for such knowledge also expanded.[26] Information about the New World was relayed to an eager reading public and explorers were able to reveal previously unknown worlds of botany through instrumental developments such as the microscope and telescope.[27] The new and mind-boggling microscopic universe revealed by these instrumental developments were first seen as amusement for aristocratic voyeurs, became propelled by a dynamic appreciation of nature in the larger society and then transformed into a type of protopositivism that through "a cunning of reason forced its practitioners to introduce an artificial idealization necessary for minimalist abstraction [of botanical illustrations]." [28] With the increased activity of botanists and scientists, both amateurs and those with formal training, the readership for books that recorded and demonstrated the new discoveries expanded apace. Much like the travelers and explorers of the Atlantic world, European botanists voyaging out to the colonies were a varied lot and were comprised of some who were traveling missionaries to those who were academically trained as physicians or apothecaries.[29] Regardless of the level of formal training of these botanists, consumption of their "exotic recordings" spread through the libraries of wealthy European society and images that were once only accessible to the elite few were more widely circulated and reproduced in popular media.[30] Botanical books, ranging from scholarly texts to sumptuously illustrated folios were often kept on display in the homes of European consumers as

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[26] Visions of Empire. Introduction. pp 2.
[27] Ibid. pp 2.
[28] Reill, Peter Hanns. "Seeing and Understanding: A Commentary". Visions of Empire. pp 296. For a more detailed analysis of the relationship between seeing and understanding as it relates to what has been characterized as a liminal vision which was originally proposed to account for the attempts to describe the new world exposed by microscopic vision, see Barbara M. Stafford's "Images of Ambiguity: Eighteenth century microscopy and the neither/nor" in Visions of Empire ; Body Criticism: Imaging the Unseen in Enlightenment Art and Medicine (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991) and "Voyeur or Observer? Enlightenment Thoughts on the Dilemmas of Display" *Configurations: A Journal for Literature, Science and Technology 1* (1993): 95-128.
[29] Swan, Claudia and Londa Schiebinger eds. Introduction. Colonial Botany. pp 10.
[30] Ibid. pp 3.

works of art in their own rights.[31] Seeing nature as a work of art, argues James Delbourgo, served to encourage utilitarian efforts to organize and categorize its productions, while also fostering an appreciation for its ability to puzzle the understanding.[32] In addition, words alone were seen as being unable to adequately represent the marvels of the New World for a European audience. They needed to see through illustration and images, the strange and different natural objects in order to comprehend them fully.[33]

One issue that needs to be addressed in any art historical investigation of botanical illustrations is the gap in translation between the actual specimen in question and the visual rendering of the object. It was a common practice for botanists to commission artists and illustrators to produce the images that would accompany their publications only after returning from their travels in the West Indies. This practice suggests that the artists who actually provided the visual reference for the public, were often unfamiliar with the actual plant or animal specimen that they recorded (many having never traveled to the region themselves) and thus relied heavily on other such images and artistic conventions of representation. Some botanists like Hans Sloane also brought back to Europe actual specimens of the plants he encountered in the West Indies. These specimens then served as a source from which the commissioned artists could base their illustrations but it is important to note that the specimens usually offered only partial and limited views of the plant as it would exist in its natural state.[34] These specimens, which stood in for living objects, were a curious means of representing nature as they were only composed of part of what the living thing itself was. They thus became more than a representation but still remained less than real, live nature as they were mediated by human hands and yet

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[31] Browne, Janet. "Botany in the Boudoir and garden: the Banksian context." Visions of Empire. pp 153.

[32] Delbourgo, James. "Slavery in the Cabinet of Curiosities: Hans Sloane's Atlantic World." The British Museum Website. pp 4. http://www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/news/hanssloane.pdf . May 20th 2007.

[33] Smith, Pamela H. and Paul Findlen. "Commerce and the Representation of Nature in Art and Science." Merchants and Marvels. pp 7.

[34] Koerner, Lisbet. "Purposes of Linnaean Travel." Visions of Empire. pp 130-1.
According to Koerner, before the invention in the 1830's of the Wardian case – an enclosed glass box that stabilizes humidity and temperature – live plants were rarely able to survive sea journeys. As such, botanists usually took back dried plant specimens to Europe.

were universally used for study and as "live models" for drawings and paintings.[35] As such, the production of these West Indian natural histories usually depended heavily on the destruction of living plants and animals, their transformation into inert specimens and their eventual 'replacement' by textual descriptions and full scale engravings by artists and engravers who were often not even familiar with the original specimen.[36]

This issue concerning the gap in translation between the artist and the object of reference also brings to the forefront the more practical and economically motivated issues that affected the production and publication of texts about botanical explorations in the Caribbean and other newly "discovered" territories around the world. Publishers of texts were well aware of the importance of the visual to promote sales and interest in the public. Botanists were made aware of the need to have figures and drawings that "were crucial components of the cultural capital which the polite naturalist and elegant curioso must accumulate to make such journeys [to new territories] meaningful."[37] These considerations of financial profitability of botanical publications were of such concern that specific artists were often commissioned to provide the accompanying illustrations to texts depending on the intended target audience. However, as Simon Schaffer reminds us, these choices should not be read as a simplistic distinction between art and science since the choice of illustrators was often based on whether or not the text was aimed at a more elite and educated audience or to the general public in search of entertainment and filled with curiosity about the new and exotic plants and animals encountered on overseas voyages to distant lands. Instead, Schaffer sees them as "a socially structured contrast between the demands of different and overlapping communities of curiosi, virtuosi, and savants."[38] Clearly then, illustrations were and remained the active currency of natural history in the seventeenth and eighteenth-centuries[39] and to separate the visual from

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[35] Prince, Sue Ann ed. Introduction. Stuffing Birds, Pressing Plants, Shaping Knowledge: Natural History in North America, 1730-1860. Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 2003. pp 4.
[36] Kriz, Kay Dian. pp 89.
[37] Schaffer, Simon. "Visions of Empire: Afterword." pp 338.
[38] Ibid. pp 337.
[39] Porter, Charlotte M. " The Drawings of William Bartram." *Archives of Natural History* 16 (1989): 298.

the textual is to lose a fully comprehensive understanding of the botanical and natural history publications under investigation.

Another final issue that needs to be considered in the study of representations of nature is the presence of artistic subjectivity in plant and animal illustrations. Since the beginning of the seventeenth-century when Sir Francis Bacon articulated the visual foundations of natural history in his *Great Instauration* of 1620, the goal of objectivity that was to be grounded in ocular experience was expressed.[40] According to Bacon, "All depends on keeping the eye steadily fixed upon facts of nature and so receiving their images simply as they are. For God forbid that we should give out a dream of our own imagination for a pattern of the world."[41] According to Bacon and his highly influential text, historians of nature were to remain passive before nature and let the images be received by the eye only, without interference from thought and imagination. The discovery of nature however, has never been a process that was carried out with the innocent eye. This concept of the lack of objectivity of the artist in his visual renditions of various plant and animal specimens is of great significance, as it represents the preconceived values and ideologies that, I argue, manifest themselves in images of plants produced about the West Indies. These ideologies, when fully deconstructed, reveal the powerful influence of the concept of "empire" that was a critical component of the majority of artistic and literary productions during the period of colonial expansion and rule in the West Indies.

Travels to the Caribbean: The Natural History of Sir Hans Sloane.

One such natural history text produced as a result of travel to the Caribbean in the seventeenth-century was Hans Sloane's lavishly illustrated two-volume set titled *Voyage to the Islands Madera, Barbados, Nieves, S. Christophers, and JAMAICA, with the Natural History of the Herbs and Trees, Four-footed Beasts, Fishes, Birds, Insects, Reptiles etc. of the last of those Islands*. This publication,

[40] Gaudio, Michael. "Surface and Depth: The Art of Early American Natural History." Stuffing Birds, Pressing Plants, Shaping Knowledge: Natural History in North America, 1730-1860. Ed. Sue Ann Prince. pp 55.

[41] Bacon, Francis. A Selection of His Works. Ed. Sidney Warhaft. pp 323. qtd. in Michael Gaudio's "Surface and Depth: The Art of Early American Natural History." pp 55.

commonly referred to in its short title form, *Natural History of Jamaica* was published in two folio-sized volumes with volume one published in 1707 and volume two in 1725.[42] Born in 1660 and 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 directing his attention to the study of botany and pharmacy. Medicine had been an itinerant profession from the Middle Ages, and young physicians in the seventeenth century still considered a grand European tour important to their education.[43] Following this tradition, Sloane set off in 1683 for France and the Jardin du Roi, one of the great natural historical institutions in Europe at the time. In 1685 he was made a fellow of the Royal Society and later in 1687 he also became fellow of the Royal College of Physicians. That same year, he was offered the chance to travel to Jamaica as physician to the new Governor, Christopher Monck, the 2nd Duke of Albermarle. In correspondence with Sloane before he accepted the position in Jamaica, his friend John Ray wrote,

> Were it not for the danger and hazard of so long a voyage, I could heartily wish such a person as yourself might travel to Jamaica, and search out and examine thoroughly the natural varieties of that island. Much light might be given to the history of the American plants, by one so prepared for such an undertaking, by a comprehensive knowledge of the European. Nay (which is more), that history, we might justly expect, would not only be illustrated but much improved and advanced.[44]

Sloane's desire to learn more about nature of the West Indies is echoed in his response to Ray when he stated that, "Next to the serving of his grace and family in my profession, my business [in the West Indies] is to see what I can meet with all that is extraordinary in nature in those places."[45] These exchanges between the two friends

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[42] Kriz, Kay Dian. "Curiosities, commodities and transplanted bodies in Hans Sloane's *Voyage to....Jamaica*." An Economy of Colour: Visual Culture and the Atlantic World, 1660-1830. Geoff Quilley and Kay Dian Kriz eds. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2003. pp 85-6.

[43] Schiebinger, Londa. Plants and Empire: Colonial Bioprospecting in the Atlantic World. Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2004. pp 26.

[44] Letter from John Ray to Sloane. Qtd from Mac Gregor, Arthur. pp 12.

[45] Letter from Sloane to friend John Ray. Dated 11 November 1684. Qtd. from MacGregor, Arthur. "The Life, Character and Career of Sir Hans Sloane." Sir Hans Sloane: Collector, Scientist, Antiquary Founding Father of the British Museum. London: British Museum Press, 1994. pp 12.

reflect both Sloane's interests and his expertise to undertake an expedition to 'advance' the knowledge of the natural world in the Caribbean. It also reveals an assumption of European superior scientific knowledge as compared to the existing indigenous knowledge of native West Indian inhabitants. Because, according to his friend John Ray, Sloane has a comprehensive knowledge of European plants, he is more equip to add to the history and knowledge about the new plants he encounters on his travels. European scientific knowledge then, is represented as the basis from which knowledge about the New World must emerge, improve and advance.

Sloane, an astute businessman, arranged to have himself appointed physician to the British West Indian Fleet, a position that gave him charge of all surgeons and brought him an annual salary of six hundred pounds.[46] With these conditions, Sloane accepted the position with the Governor and embarked on the long trip to Jamaica, on the way stopping at numerous other West Indian islands including Barbados, Nevis and Hispaniola.[47] This arrangement, whereby naturalists signed on for nonscientific work in order to travel to learn more about natural life, was typically how both British and Dutch naturalists traveled during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[48] Sloane sailed from Portsmouth in September 1687 on a fort-four gun war ship accompanied by two merchant ships and the duke's yacht. The voyage, except for reported seasickness, was uneventful, and in December the party arrived in Port Royal, Jamaica.[49] In addition to his official duties as physician to the Duke and his desire to advance knowledge of the natural life of the West Indies, Sloane also had proposals of his own, namely, prospecting for new drugs that might afford him a profit.[50]

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[46] Schiebinger, Londa. Plants and Empire. pp 26. This annual salary of six hundred pounds would have been a very handsome amount as ordinary seamen would usually make one and a half pounds per month in peacetime and two and a quarter pounds per month during war. In addition to his salary, Sloane was also paid three hundred pounds in advance for supplies.

[47] MacGregor, Arthur. pp 13.

[48] Schiebinger, Londa. pp 26. It was not until the late eighteenth century that the British government consciously followed the French model and begin financing voyages and supporting botanical research.

[49] Ibid. pp 27.

[50] Ibid. pp 28. Sloane invested in, among other drugs, the Peruvian bark or quinine, a remedy intended to cure ague and other malignant recurring fevers and carried a cargo of this bark back to England and promoted it by prescription in his medical practice in London.

During his leisure hours, when not performing his official services, Sloane botanized, searching "the several places I could think afforded natural productions."[51] In total, Sloane managed to amass around eight hundred new plants and prepare live plants and dried specimens for transport back to England.[52] At the end, Sloane spent fifteen months in Jamaica making extensive notes and amassing large collections of plants and animals until the death of the Duke of Albermarle who died ten months after arriving in Jamaica. The mortality rate in Jamaica during the seventeenth century was remarkably high but the Duke was the only member of the original party who died while on the island.[53] It took five months before Sloane, the Duchess and his patron's embalmed body could return to England because of political situations that would have made travel over sea unpredictable and dangerous.[54] Before leaving Jamaica, Sloane also met Elizabeth Langley Rose, the daughter of John Langley, an alderman of London, who he later married. This marriage was of great importance and benefit to Sloane as Elizabeth was the widow of Fulk Rose Esq., who owned lucrative sugar plantations in Jamaica. Elizabeth inherited a third of the income of the Rose estates, an incredibly large fortune that supported Sloane and his scientific pursuits throughout his life.[55] Upon his return to England, Sloane continued in the service of the Duchess of Albermarle for four years, before setting up his very successful medical practice and home in 1693 with his new wife Elizabeth at Bloomsbury Place which was then at the center of a fashionable residential area. Sloane's patients included many of the most prestigious figures of the day and at the same time he maintained close relations with the most active members in the community of scientists, several of whose names, including Sloane himself, have

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[51] Sloane, Hans. Qtd in Schiebinger, Londa. Plants and Empire. pp 28.
[52] Schiebinger. pp 30.
[53] See Dunn, Richard S. Sugar and Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624-1713. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1972.
During the first six years of settlement in Jamaica (1655-61), an estimated 12,000 Englishmen went to Jamaica but by the end of the time, the population was only 3,470.
[54] Kriz. pp 35. At that time, England was undergoing a 'reform' by expelling the Francophone King James II and inviting the William of Orange to take his place. This event lead to renewed hostility between British and French fleets on the high seas, which delayed Sloane for five months from performing his last official duty of accompanying his embalmed patron's body back to England.
[55] Schiebinger. pp 30.

been associated with a naturalists' 'club' that met at regular intervals at the Temple Coffee House.[56]

In the years that follow his return from the West Indies, Sloane also began to publish his observations from the West Indies which were first submitted to the *Philosophical Transactions*, a publication where papers by various writers on species such as coffee and the Jamaican pepper tree appeared.[57] Sloane's talents for accurate notation and keen observation was again expressed by his friend Ray in a letter dated 28 February 1693 in which he wrote, "I cannot again but admire your industry in collecting so great a number of species in so short a time, and not only collecting but so exactly observing them."[58] This concept of exact observation was one that has always been associated with the study of natural history and botany in Europe. As noted previously, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, Sir Francis Bacon articulated the visual foundations of natural history and botany and claimed that the natural historian was to remain passive before nature as its images were received by the eye only, free from any interfering thoughts.[59] Bacon's views exerted enormous influence on the history of scientific thought and practice and Ray's letter to Sloane expresses his admiration for Sloane's ability to "so exactly observe" the new species and natural life he encountered in the West Indies. Sloane then, is believed to conform to the requirements for noteworthy scientific endeavors in recording nature, as he is claimed to have recorded the species he encountered through exact observation only and with no external interfering thoughts.

This however, as we shall see, was not the case with Sloane's subsequent publication of his *Natural History of Jamaica*. In fact, Sloane's publication is simply representative of the reality of natural histories and botanical classifications that emerged in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The discovery and subsequent recording and illustration of nature has never been a process carried out with an innocent eye and Sloane is no exception to this tradition. Regardless of the claims of his friend Ray that his illustrations and descriptions follow exact observation, they

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[56] MacGregor. pp 13.
[57] Ibid. pp 13.
[58] Letter from Sloane to friend John Ray. Dated 28 February 1693. Qtd. from MacGregor, Arthur. pp 14.
[59] Gaudio. pp 55.

cannot be simply approached as such. In the words of the historian Richard White, "no new land, no new place is ever *terra incognita*. It always arrives to the eye fully stocked with expectations, fears, rumors, desires and meanings."[60] As such, Sloane's account of his journey to the West Indies reflects his expectations, desires and social conditioning and do not simply present a view of the natural life he encountered in the Caribbean as they actually were.

Of particular relevance then to this present investigation is Sloane's subsequent publication of his *Natural History of Jamaica* that was completed in conjunction with his highly successful efforts to establish his medical practice. In the sixteenth and seventeenth-centuries, accounts of the West Indies had been published by other writers, but Sloane's was the first major publication, according to Kay Dian Kriz, "to provide a voyage type commentary with a natural history catalogue in which plants and animals are identified by pre-Linnaean Latin tags...and illustrated with 274 detailed engravings."[61] Most of the images of plants were done in full scale and derive from actual specimens Sloane took back to England upon his return.[62] As noted earlier, many of the travelers who produced natural histories of the West Indies often commissioned artists and engravers to provide the accompanying illustrations for their texts and Sloane was no exception to this practice. This practice reflects the belief in accuracy being attainable only through direct visual observation. It also reveals the Western bias toward vision as the most important sense to the acquisition of knowledge, especially knowledge about nature, an issue discussed previously in the views of Sir Francis Bacon's visual foundations of natural history.

While in Jamaica, Sloane hired a local amateur artist, Reverend Garrett Moore to travel around the island with him and make on site sketches and drawings of the specimens he collected. According to Sloane, Reverend Moore was "one of the best designers I could meet with there" and the two men made the tedious journey

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[60] White, Richard. "Discovering Nature in North America." *Journal of American History* 79 (Dec. 1992): 874. Qtd. in Gaudio. pp 56.

[61] Kriz, Kay Dian. "Curiosities, commodities and transplanted bodies in Hans Sloane's Voyage to ... Jamaica." pp 88.

[62] A large number of these plants acquired by Sloane and are now part of the Sloane Herbarium housed in the Botanical Library at the Natural History Museum in South Kensington. See: http://www.nhm.ac.uk/research-curation/projects/sloane-herbarium/hanssloane.htm. May 20th 2007.

across the central highlands to the north coast of the island on horseback.[63] Upon his return to England, the Dutch artist Everhard Kick also produced additional drawings from the dried specimens taken back from the West Indian island and at least two engravers, the Englishman John Savage and the Flemish engraver Michael van der Gucht were involved in producing the plates that accompanied the folios.[64] Of the hundreds of illustrations of plants and natural life that were published in Sloane's *Natural History of Jamaica*, Michael van der Gucht's engraving of the sugar cane plant (Fig. 3) forms the basis for the present discussion.[65] The importance placed on the representation of botanical specimens such as fruit trees and other natural specimens is evidently lacking from the engraving produced by van der Gucht of the sugar cane plant for Sloane's text. It becomes even more striking when one considers the lack of prominence placed on the engraving in light of the importance of this plant to imperial powers, specifically the British, and raises questions as to why Sloane's *Natural History of Jamaica* contains so few visual images directly relating to the production of sugar and its by-products.

During the period when Sloane was in the West Indies as well as the years following his return to England and the publication of his *Natural History of Jamaica*, the sugar trade in the Caribbean islands was at its peak. The Caribbean region, as Sidney Mintz has pointed out, has always been entangled with the wider world and since 1492, the region has been "caught up in skeins of imperial control, spun in Amsterdam, London, Paris, Madrid and other European and North American centers of world power."[66] The story of European sugar consumption however, while not historically tied solely to the Caribbean, remains one of the predominant sources and sites of production and worldwide supply. The importance of sugar to the world economy is demonstrated by the fact that the production of sugar has never fallen for more than an occasional decade at a time during five centuries and in fact, world sugar production shows the most remarkable upward production curve of any major

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[63] Schiebinger. Pp 29.
[64] Kriz. pp 88.
[65] I am greatly indebted to Kay Dian Kriz for my analysis of Van der Gucht's engraving of the sugar cane plant that appeared in Sloane's *Natural History of Jamaica*.
[66] Mintz, Sidney W. Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History. New York and Ontario: Viking Penguin Inc., 1985. pp xv-xvi.

food on the world market over the course of several centuries.[67] In order to better illustrate the increased importance of sugar, I will turn to figures of British import of sugar from the West Indies. In the early 1650s, a few thousand tonnes of sugar were exported from the West Indies to British ports and by 1700, this figure had risen to twenty three thousand tonnes. By the end of the eighteenth-century, sugar import had increased tenfold and Britain received about two hundred and forty-five thousand tonnes of sugar from the West Indies every year.[68] On the larger European scale, between the years 1690 and 1790, Europe imported twelve million tonnes of sugar and until the nineteenth century, the West Indies was responsible for eighty percent of the worldwide sugar trade.[69] These import/export figures are illustrative of the economic significance of the sugar cane plant to British society during the early eighteenth century, which further highlights the peculiarity of Sloane's exclusion of more visual images that directly address this important plant and plantation crop in the *Natural History of Jamaica*.

Sugar Cane as Natural Curiosity

Volume One of Sloane's *Natural History of Jamaica*, published in London in 1707, contains an engraving of a sugar cane plant he encountered during his travels to the West Indies. This volume begins with the title pages and preface in which Sloane takes the opportunity to explain the scope of his project and dedicate the volume to the Queen of England. Sloane dedicates his publication "To Her Most Excellent Majesty, the Queen: This Natural History of Jamaica, one of the Largest and most Considerable of Her Majesty's Plantations in America"[70] (Fig. 4). This acknowledgement from the onset of the volume makes evident the importance of the West Indian islands to the power and wealth of the British monarchy. Sloane continues in his Preface to provide information to his audience about his background and the reasons for his travels to the West Indies. According to Sloane, "I had from

[67] Ibid. pp xx-xxi.
[68] Walvin, James. Fruits of Empire: Exotic Produce and British Taste, 1660-1800. Washington Square, New York: New York University Press, 1997. pp 127.
[69] Hobhouse, Henry. Seeds of Change: Five Plants that Transformed Mankind. London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1985. pp 41-44.
[70] Sloane, Hans. Natural History of Jamaica. pp 2.

my youth been very much pleas'd with the Study of Plants, and Other Parts of Nature, and had seen most of those Kinds of Curiosities, which were to be found either in Fields, or in the Gardens or Cabinets of the Curious in these Parts."[71] Sloane's choice of the word "curiosities"[72] is also demonstrative of the desire for the unknown and the exotic in new collections of natural histories about distant lands. After this Preface is an Introduction that is about one hundred and fifty pages in length. Following this are two double folio sheets with engravings that were clearly designed to capture the attention of the reader/viewer of the publication.[73] After these double folio sheet engravings, is the body of the text where Sloane recounts his observations during his travels to the West Indies, at the end of which he includes the engravings of the plants discussed. Sloane groups his engravings under different categories depending on the physical characteristics of each item. He groups the engraving of the sugar cane plant under the category devoted to grasses and reeds. This choice of categorization and the accompanying visual treatment of the sugar cane however, does not provide an accurate indication of the importance and centrality of this plant and resource to the British economy.[74] There is a sense that Sloane's choice of categorization and the accompanying engraving can be read as an attempt to distance and perhaps even remove the importance this product played in shaping the British empire and the tremendous economic profits that resulted from the large scale plantation cultivation of this natural commodity. It also acts as a removal or denial of the realities of the slave labor and human exploitation that was implicated in any discussion or representation of the sugar cane.

The first of these double folio sheets placed after the Introduction section of the text depicts two views of a land crab from above and below with two potsherds placed beneath each of the crabs. The second sheet depicts a jellyfish and various types of sea life encountered during Sloane's journey to the West Indies. The

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[71] Sloane, Hans. pp 3.

[72] The term "curiosities" simply referred to objects – plants, animals, artifacts – that aroused interest in Europeans because of their novelty and association with distant and exotic places and people.

[73] Kriz. pp 90.

[74] Other categorizations in Sloane's text include, for example : Submarine Plants; Herbs with grassie Leaves; Herbs with Monopetalous Flowers; Herbs commonly accounted to have many naked seeds and Herbs that are Bacciferous or Pomiferous.

prominence given to these two illustrations – through their placement at the end of the introduction and before the body of the text and other illustrations grouped at the end, as well as the size and detail of their representation – stands in contrast to the treatment of the engraving of the sugar cane plant. Buried in the middle of the engravings included at the end of the text of Volume One, the sugar cane plant also stands apart from the representation of other plants that surround it. Many of the images of plants in the corresponding sections at the back of the publication are represented in various angles and different perspectives thus giving the reader/viewer a more detailed idea of what the actual specimen would have looked like in its natural state. However, the sugar cane is only shown from one angle with great detail taken to delineate every strand of the delicate foliage at the top of the truncated stalk. In addition, many of the other illustrations surrounding the sugar cane also include sub and cross sectional views of the inside of seeds, fruits or branches – especially in the cases when the pictured subsection is the edible or economically valuable portion of the plant. This however, is not the case with the sugar cane as there is no cross sectional view of the sugar cane stalk which represents the portion of the plant that was used for producing sugar and all other sugar-based products.

The most obvious issue to most viewers of van der Gucht's engraving of the sugar cane, both today and in the eighteenth-century when it was first published, is that his image bears almost no resemblance to what the sugar cane plant actually looks like in its natural state (Fig. 5). Choosing to highlight only the delicate foliage of the plant, the part that is actually of no economic value in the sugar refinery process, van der Gucht ensured that this image would only be recognizable to those who already possessed a very intimate familiarity with the plant in its various stages of growth and cultivation. To further highlight the lack of easy identification of the engraving, the only textual guide provided to the viewers is given in Latin. Titled '*Arundo saccharifera*', this serves as the only description that could aid a viewer in correctly identifying the species of plant. Sloane's choice of Latin as the only descriptor of the image becomes highly problematic especially when one considers that all the written accounts of his experiences in the West Indies are presented to the reader in English. As such, Sloane's text as a whole can be viewed as a constant

negotiation of the tensions brought about by the competing English text, Latin descriptors and life sized engravings of the collected specimens. These inherent tensions found throughout Sloane's *Natural History of Jamaica* would have produced very different reading experiences depending on the levels of knowledge of each individual reader. In order to understand Sloane's publication in its entirety, a reader would have had to have the ability to read the body of the text written in English, have a sufficient visual vocabulary to carry out these readings in conjunction with the accompanying engravings, be aware of the actual sugar cane plant in order to recognize it in the manner presented or have a command of the Latin language and the knowledge of plant descriptors in Latin. These extensive requirements of the reader/viewer thus produced a public with varying degrees of comprehension about the natural life of the West Indies that acted to further distance this natural object from its status as commodity and the key role it played in the financial riches of the imperial centers. It is in light of this constructed representation of the sugar cane plant that we are able to see the ideologies of empire manifest itself in the representation of natural life of the West Indies.

In his essay entitled "Slavery in the Cabinet of Curiosities: Hans Sloane's Atlantic World", James Delbourgo explores the relationship between curiosity and empire in Sloane's engagement with slavery and considers the kind of ordering curiosity imposed on the traffic in goods and people around the Atlantic world or whether curiosity was in fact a way of collecting the world without ordering it.[75] Delbourgo notes that what took Sloane to Jamaica in the first place was curiosity, as he himself claimed in the opening lines of his preface quoted earlier. The pursuit of curiosity, argues Delbourgo, was also the pursuit of advancement since the Jamaican voyage and the specimens brought back to England helped to consolidate Sloane's reputation as a botanist and cemented his relationship with the leading naturalists in England at that time.[76] Delbourgo's concerns with Sloane's publications are mainly textual and he considers Sloane's representations as "neither anti-slavery nor pro-slavery because the moral economy of curiosity demanded no such stance...[and]

[75] Delbourgo, James. pp 3.
[76] Ibid. pp 5.

instead of seeing this kind of curiosity as a lack..[we need to] see the positive work curiosity performed in bringing slavery before the public in the absence of the moral or political."[77] While Delbourgo's analysis of Sloane's text in relation to its overt treatment of slavery and his stance on the issue be it pro or anti-slavery has validity, we would be amiss to read Sloane's *Natural History of Jamaica* as not reflecting imperial ideologies and playing a critical role in the European construction of the West Indies. As Delbourgo goes on to note, Sloane's curiosity about slavery "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"." While no definitions are ever stable and continually change based on context, historical period and specific circumstance, there were already entrenched notions of these concepts in place during Sloane's time. Delbourgo continues, "Colonialism clearly enabled curiosity... and curiosity drove colonization, as expanding botanical knowledge increased the profits of cultivation."[78] These statements can be read as accurate assessments but I believe it is in his final lines that Delbourgo's arguments need to be challenged. Instead of seeing the collecting and display of objects from the West Indies "as reflecting an imperial ideology already in existence, we should recognize it as an early movement when the link between commerce, colonies, and power over exotic peoples was beginning to be forged for a metropolitan public."[79]

This final statement seems to require further consideration when regarded in light of van der Gucht's sugar cane plant engraving. As previously noted, Sloane took plant specimens back with him to England and the actual specimen of the sugar cane plant still exists among the collections held at the Natural History Museum in South Kensington. As Kay Dian Kriz has pointed out, the sugar cane's most identifiable and important feature, the cane stalk, was eliminated by an amputation that was performed in the process of translating the specimen into image.[80] The actual specimen brought by Sloane from Jamaica, from which van der Gucht's image is

[77] Ibid. pp15.
[78] Ibid. pp 16-7.
[79] Ibid. pp17.
[80] Kriz, Kay Dian. pp 97.

based, boasts a stalk that is over six inches long. This must be representative then of a specific decision made by the engraver and Sloane, since Sloane was very much involved in overseeing the accompanying illustrations to his text, to present the sugar cane plant without its most identifiable physical characteristic. An analogy can be made between the removal of the sugar cane stalk from the engraving of the publication and the removal of traces of the exploited labor used to cultivate, harvest and produce sugar in its consumable form as well as the other by-products such as rum and molasses.

An argument cannot be made that the removal of the stalk from the engraving was for the practical consideration of the physical limits of the page size as can be supported from another engraving that appeared in the same volume. In the case of the grass labeled '*Gramen dactylon bicorne tomentosum*' (Fig. 6) the long stem of this plant is fit onto a single page by showing a segment of stem beside the foliated top. This solution could also have been employed in the representation of the sugar cane but was instead disregarded in favor of completely truncating the stalk of the plant, the very reason for its cultivation. These decisions made by Sloane and van der Gucht cannot be dismissed as not being representative of an imperial ideology concerning the West Indies that was already in place. As such, we need to reconsider the belief that the early eighteenth-century, according to Delbourgo, was the time when the link between commerce, colonies and power were being articulated and fully realized. There is evidence that in regards to plants like the sugar cane which already had an established tradition of economic profitability, there already existed a system to deal with the visual and textual accounts by travelers and botanists to the Atlantic world.

The concept of 'curiosity' as it relates to Sloane's publications is indeed a complex issue, one which when more fully analyzed, can lead to some insight on the manner of representation of the sugar cane plant by van der Gucht and Sloane. Sloane's *Natural History of Jamaica* reads as a cluster of contradictions and incoherencies. In the case of the sugar cane, the engraving of the plant and the lack of importance placed on this resource seems to be in stark contradiction to the key role sugar played in driving and maintaining the economy of seventeenth and eighteenth

century Europe. Sloane was determined for his publication to appeal to a wide range of the public that included people of varying degrees of scientific knowledge, aesthetic vocabularies as well as always bearing in mind the commercial interests of his publisher. As such, Sloane's *Natural History of Jamaica* as a whole is "marked by incoherencies that attests to the diverse interests, desires and fears of its producers and readers."[81] It is these often contradictory demands on Sloane and others like him who produced natural histories of the West Indies that results in the inability of such projects to fix a set of secure meaning around the natural specimens they depicted. This, in the case of Sloane, resulted in part because of the violence and immorality of the colonial enterprise and slave plantation system on the islands. Sloane needed to find a balance between the presentation of a scientifically accurate specimen and the demands of the larger European audience for exotic and unknown natural specimens. As such, if the curiosities represented – in this instance, the sugar cane plant - was done so in too comprehensible a manner, its ability to arouse fascination and desire of the exotic in the viewer would be compromised. At the same time however, if the threat of the unknown and exotic was not pacified and diminished enough, it would raise a sense of fear for the 'other' and unknown which could not be physically contained and ordered into European systems[82] – the very purpose, it was believed, of natural history.

Yet another issue that pertains to the representation of West Indian nature and the issue of curiosities is that, according to Kay Dian Kriz, "curiosities lose their status as rarities once their images and descriptions are reproduced and circulated in texts such as Sloane's or once they themselves are transformed into commodities such as sugar."[83] As such, both Sloane and van der Gucht distance the sugar cane plant engraving from its status as commodity and source of immeasurable wealth to the European imperial powers in order to maintain its ability to be considered a curiosity. The commodity status and the physical demands required by the African slaves to cultivate the sugar cane plant is thus downplayed in favor of maintaining imperial agendas which suppressed the realities if African slave labor which resulted in

[81] Ibid. pp 100.
[82] Ibid. pp 101.
[83] Ibid. pp 101.

fascination and desire of the exotic plant life, specifically the sugar cane of the West Indies.

By considering Hans Sloane's *Natural History of Jamaica* as a case study for the botanical and scientific representation of the West Indian sugar cane plant, this chapter has demonstrated the ways in which botanists and their illustrators removed the presence of African slave labor which was an integral part of the cultivation and production of this valuable seventeenth and eighteenth century commodity. The removal of the sugar cane stalk from the engraving produced by van der Gucht, acts, in essence, as the removal of the slave body and a denial of the extreme conditions of labor that were endured as a result of the expansion of colonial power in the West Indies. This analysis has also addressed the ways in which the science of botany was used to inform European audiences about the distant and exotic region of the Caribbean, while maintaining elements of the curious to generate interest in the unknown. Finally, consideration of the use of accurate and exact observation as the defining characteristic of scientific explorations to classify nature in the New World has been shown to be merely a construct, as travelers, writers and artists were always influenced – be it intentionally or not – by existing social and political situations of their time. In the case of Sloane, imperial agendas and goals of colonial expansion of sugar cultivation were the factors behind the suppression of the hardships endured by African slaves in the West Indies. While we have discussed natural history images of the sugar cane that have made African slave labor absent, the chapter that follows turns attention to the representation of British West Indian sugar plantations and considers the artistic and aesthetic devices employed by artists in the representation of the African laboring body in relation to the West Indian plantations.

CHAPTER THREE

Planting Sugar, Producing Art: The Picturesque West Indian Sugar Plantation

Chapter Two analyzed the representation of the sugar cane plant in natural histories and travel narratives produced in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. By considering Hans Sloane's *Natural History of Jamaica* as a case study, it showed the ways in which botanical images of the sugar cane plant, that were presented as objective scientific observations, worked to erase the presence of the African labor required for its cultivation and production. This erasure of the laboring slave body served to maintain elements of the curious, a concept that appealed to the consuming public of these botanical publications who were dominantly white and non-West Indian. This chapter turns attention from botanical representations of the sugar cane to consider the artistic and aesthetic devices employed by writers and artists in transforming the West Indian sugar plantation into a picturesque intermixed landscape. It considers how the promotion of the concept of variety was employed to transform the sugar plantation into a picturesque landscape, and in so doing, denied the realities of the condition of slavery and suppressed the picturing of the laboring slave body in favor of images of leisure, rest and happiness.

Promoting Non-British Imperial Expansion

Considering the representation of the body – of both the African slave and white plantation owner – in relation to sugar in the West Indies, Hans Sloane's *Natural History of Jamaica* is again a productive point of departure from which to begin such an analysis. Of interest in this text is an engraving by Michael van der Gutch depicting Indians[1] at work harvesting cochineal beetles in Mexico that

[1] My use of the term "Indian" is in keeping with terminology used during the eighteenth-century to refer to the native population encountered by Europeans in the West Indies. The use of this word to describe the indigenous population of the West Indies derives from Christopher Columbus mistakenly believing that he had landed in the Indies, which at the time referred to all of south and

appeared in volume two of Sloane's *Natural History of Jamaica*. This engraving is of particular interest because it engages with many issues that have been discussed by scholars of race and representation in terms of the portrayal of the body of the 'other' in the history of colonial rule.[2] While the engraving in question does not deal specifically with the African slave body on one of the many sugar plantations in the West Indies during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it does provide a framework to consider the visual vocabulary employed by artists in relation to representations of the African slave and sugar cane. Sloane's two-volume publication, while not including any images or engravings of a West Indian sugar plantation, is of interest precisely because of this absence especially when considered in relation to what was represented instead. In fact, there was an overwhelming absence of depictions of African slaves at work on plantations in the West Indies in other eighteenth century publications such as Sloane's, especially when considered in light of the overwhelming presence, in reality, of African slaves laboring on plantations throughout the Caribbean. With the exception of one, all the engraved plates of Sloane's *Natural History of Jamaica* do not depict human beings. Because the engraving of the Indians in Mexico deviates from all others in both volumes of Sloane's text, it requires special attention and analysis.

Appearing in volume two, the engraving produced by Michael van der Gucht that depicts human subjects is entitled *The manner of propagating, gathering & curing the Grana or Cochineel* (1725) (Fig. 7). The engraving shows Indians in Oaxaca harvesting cochineal beetles from pear cactus plants to produce a highly prized rich scarlet dye. The highly prized dye was made from the dried, pulverized bodies of the female cochineal beetle that was indigenous to Mexico and fed parasitically on two genera of cacti – the nopal and the prickly pear.[3] This Mexican landscape included in Sloane's publication, depicts the relation of the

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east Asia. As such, he referred to the indigenous inhabitants as Indians in reference to their place of residence.

[2] See Introduction for more on the dominant focus in art historical scholarship on race and representation in the colonial context.

[3] Schiebinger, Londa. Plants and Empire: Colonial Bioprospecting in the Atlantic World. Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2004. pp 39.

Indians who are shown as the producers of cochineal dye and the Spanish who oversaw this venture and were the direct recipient of the profit produced from the Indian labors.[4] Why would Sloane choose to have his only engraving with humans represent an act of colonial domination over the Indians by the Spanish in Mexico? Sloane would have no doubt been witness to such scenes of cultivation and production of a natural commodity on one of the many British colonized islands he visited while in the West Indies. In fact, Sloane would have been surrounded by displays of British power over the African slaves who populated the Caribbean (especially Jamaica, the island on which Sloane spent the most time) as they toiled on the hundreds of sugar plantations that formed the basis of the agricultural system since the middle of the seventeenth-century.[5] Sloane's decision to commission an engraving in a Mexican setting cannot be dismissed without further investigation especially when we consider the more accessible alternatives that surrounded him throughout his time in the West Indies.

The engraving of the cochineal harvesting and production combines various compositional techniques without a consistent type of perspective throughout. In the background of the engraving a classicized landscape is depicted, which, according to Kay Dian Kriz, "loosely follows European conventions, based on academic seventeenth-century Franco-Italianate painting, for rendering the landscape as a series of receding planes framed by side screens of tress and hills."[6] Placed before this classical backdrop is a spatial and temporal conflation of the stages required for the production of the dye from the cochineal

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[4] European viewers of this engraving would have been well aware of the importance of cochineal in generating wealth for the Spanish. In fact, cochineal earned the Spanish profits in Mexico second only to gold and silver. The Spanish held a 250-year monopoly on cochineal production and in the 18th century, the Spanish produced 1.5 million pounds of the insect per year and by 1784 were receiving five hundred thousand pounds annually for the dye in Europe. For more information on cochineal in relation to its production by Native inhabitants of the New World, see Donkin, R.A. "Spanish Red: An Ethnogeographical Study of Cochineal and the Opuntia Cactus." *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*. Vol. 67. No.5 (1977), pp 1-84 and Fairlie, Susan. "Dyestuffs and the Eighteenth century." *Economic History Review*. 17:3 (1965), pp 501.

[5] By the early eighteenth-century, around the time Sloane's Natural History of Jamaica was published, the slave population of Jamaica was 74,000 persons making it the most populous slave colony in the British West Indies.

[6] Kriz, Kay Diane. "Curiosities, commodities and transplanted bodies in Hans Sloane's *Voyage to....Jamaica*." An Economy of Colour: Visual Culture and the Atlantic World, 1660-1830. Geoff Quilley and Kay Dian Kriz eds. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2003. pp 99.

beetles, a device that derives from a pictorial tradition of representing agricultural production.[7] In contrast to the traditional Albertian perspective of the background, the middle of the composition shows the Natives gathering beetles from the cactus plants and is steeply tilted forward in an almost documentary manner so that the viewer can observe the specific processes being undertaken in the manufacture of the final product. In similar fashion to the perspective of the engraving, the human figures represented are also depicted in an inconsistent manner as they undergo unconvincing changes in scale depending on their positions within the composition. The entire composition is broken into separate entities through Sloane's use of numbered tags to identify each item represented and the details of each process of conversion from the raw product into the 'refined' dye. The mixture of scales of human figures, perspectives and artistic traditions within the composition, all work in support of Sloane's claim which is noted at the bottom of the engraving, along with the title of the image. According to Sloane the original drawing of the engraving that appears in his *Natural History of Jamaica* was "done by an Indian in the Bishoprick of Guaxaca in the Kingdom of Mexico in America"[8] even though the engraving was not made from the original, but rather a copy that had been sent to the South Sea Company.[9]

While there is no way to know for certain if the engraving produced by van der Gucht was based on a drawing actually executed by a Native inhabitant of Mexico, the claim that Sloane makes serves to enhance the value of the image as a curiosity and an object of exotic appeal.[10] The naming of an Indian as the original producer of the image can be seen as a device employed by Sloane to further distance himself and the entire British empire by extension, from the atrocities and mistreatment of slaves practiced on plantations. It also demonstrates the Indian's assimilation of Western artistic technologies that suggests the artists' colonization by European powers. This adoption of the Western artistic tradition

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[7] Ibid. pp 99.
[8] Sloane, Hans. Natural History of Jamaica. Vol 2.
[9] Sloane, Hans. pp vi. Qtd. in Kriz, Kay Dian pp 99.
[10] See Chapter Two, which discusses the issue of 'curiosities' in relation to how the concept is used to incite wonder and notions of exoticism in readers of travel narratives and natural histories such as Sloane's.

employed to produce the original drawing alternatively demonstrates the ability of the Indians to adapt under oppressive systems of rule through this transfer of visual normalcy. The Native of Mexico under the Spanish rule, not the British plantation owner, is the person who originally documents the scene presented for the viewer. In fact, this is further highlighted by Sloane in one of the accompanying texts to the identification tags dispersed throughout the composition. The description for the two men at the forefront of the composition identifies them as "A Gentleman Indian Descendent of the Family of Montesuma called a Casique who beareth command over the rest" and "A common Indian man receiving Orders...[from the] Casique being his Superior."[11] The common Indian is depicted removing his hat from his head as he bows before the Casique (chief) in a display of supplication toward the man who commands the other laborers. This interesting inclusion of display of power and control between the two Natives in the foreground overtly ignores the more oppressive control and exploitation that would have been experienced by all the Native population, regardless of their internal ranking or lineage. The white body does not get visualized as the powerful force of control and domination over the Native inhabitants of the West Indies, and even more accurately for the period, the African slaves who actually provided the majority of labor on plantations in the British empire. As noted previously, the only natural product represented as a commodity in Sloane's *Natural History of Jamaica* was not associated with any of the West Indian islands Sloane actually visited. Instead, the only commodity depicted in its stages of growth, harvest and production on a plantation was set in Mexico and thus removed from the British colonial legacy to which Sloane belonged.

This act of deflecting to the Spanish, the negative consequences of colonialism, had a long tradition that predated Sloane's publication. The concept of the 'Black Legend' for example, was frequently directed toward the Spanish by other European countries in an attempt to deflect negative attention and criticism about their own colonization practices in the Caribbean. As the "discoverers" of

[11] Sloane, Hans.

the New World, the Spanish were implicated in all aspects of the conquest of the Caribbean as well as the subsequent slave trade that was established. The Black Legend promoted the sixteenth-century narrative that the Spanish slaughtered most of the indigenous people on islands such as Jamaica and Mexico when they resisted attempts of enslavement.[12] Employing the concept of the Black Legend, the British, French and Dutch rivals of Spain emphasized the differences between the Spanish militaristic style of conquering which brought about the overwork, disease and ultimate death of the Native Caribbean populations.[13] They focused instead on the differences between their methods of colonization and that of the Spanish by promoting their values of settler colonialism.[14] The Spanish founded colonies based upon conquest rather than through planting - a value of settler colonialism. While the British, Spanish and French all conquered the West Indian islands, they employed different methods of extracting wealth from the islands which was the focus for defining differences among them. For instance, the Spanish usually prospected for semi-sacred precious metals and as a result, their colonies were invariably described as 'kingdoms' or the 'Kingdom of the Indies'.[15] As opposed to this prospecting for semi-precious and precious metals and gems practiced by the Spanish, the British extracted wealth by directing efforts and labor toward cultivation of plants such as the sugar cane that could be traded and sold as a commodity.

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[12] Doggett, Rachel ed. New World of Wonders: European Images of the Americas, 1492-1700. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1992. pp 164-5.

[13] O'Brien, Karen. "Imperial georgic, 1660-1789." The Country and City revisited: England and the Politics of Culture, 1550-1850. Eds. Gerald Maclean et al. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999. pp 166.

While the rivals of Spain united in their promotion of the Black Legend, there were also differences that were promoted among the French, British and Dutch. For example, Karen O'Brien notes that seventeenth-century commentators expressed pride in the fact that the British Empire was not, like the Dutch Empire, simply an affair of exports and trading bases, but a process of agricultural improvement overseas.

[14] This however, was and still remains to be unsubstantiated propaganda as there is no evidence that there was any difference in the quality of life of the Natives and slaves between the Spanish occupied colonies and other imperial powers.

[15] Pagden, Anthony. Lords of All the World: Ideologies of Empire in Spain, Britain, and France, c. 1500-c.1800. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995. pp 79.

While the act of conquering remained the same, the nature of the labor that resulted from colonization differentiated the European imperial powers.[16] This attempt to conjure, in the minds of viewers of the engraving, an association between the Spanish and their role in the plantation system, forced labor and eventual demise of the Native population of the West Indies, demonstrates Sloane's attempt to suppress the realities of British colonization activities in the Caribbean. He explicitly calls attention to Spain's difference in colonization practices as compared to the British through his use of the word 'kingdom' in the title of the engraving – "in the Kingdom of Mexico in America."[17] Other British writers about the New World also commonly used this strategy employed by Sloane in an attempt to remove the blame for the many deaths brought about from the colonial project from British hands.[18] Sloane's attempt to suppress the realities of the plantations in British colonies also effectively worked to erase the African body from the British West Indian landscape in similar ways as his denial of the slave labor required for the cultivation of the sugar cane.[19] This absence of visual representations of sugar plantations and the African bodies that maintained these systems now provides a suitable backdrop from which to consider how these sugar plantations and the bodies that both worked and oversaw the operations of the plantation, were visually constructed by European artists and engravers.

Plantations of the British West Indies

The majority of images of the West Indies produced during the period were landscape images, in the form of illustrations, engravings and in some instances, paintings, that played a significant role in constructing the concept of the picturesque land of the Caribbean to the European audience for which they were intended. While these landscape views of the Caribbean islands were widely

[16] Interestingly, there was a desire by the Spanish in the mid-seventeenth century to diminish the role of conquest in the ideological image of the origins of the Spanish colonies in the West Indies. In 1680, the New Code of the Laws of the Kingdoms of the Indies required that the word "conquest" should not be used. See Pagden, pp 101.

[17] Sloane, Hans. See Fig. 7.

[18] For more examples of English writers adoption of this strategy, see Anthony Pagden's Lords of all the World, especially his chapter entitled. "Conquest and Settlement".

[19] See Chapter Two for discussion about the engraving of the sugar cane included in Sloane's *Natural History of Jamaica* Volume 1.

circulated throughout Europe and informed the European imagination about these 'exotic' islands, there are surprisingly few images that included the African slave body at work in the composition. This exclusion, as we have seen in the only engraving that depicts human subjects included in Sloane's *Natural History of Jamaica*, worked to distance the realities of labor and exploitation of the transplanted African slaves who produced the sugar that was being increasingly demanded by Europe. Instead, Sloane chose to represent Natives in Mexico engaged in producing a commodity that was significantly less labor intensive than what was required for sugar cultivation.

In fact, sugar proved to be an incredibly cumbersome, difficult and labor-intensive staple to cultivate, produce and transport. Sugar cultivation in the West Indies served to transform this region of the world into a carefully regulated system in which wilderness was transformed and converted to the fruitful and profitable production of crops. As the economic importance and demand of sugar began to rise, more and more of the land of the West Indian islands were brought into cultivation and the islands were transformed into a completely new agricultural face with the orderly arrangements of man-made systems and acre after acre of sugar cane.[20] The region was transformed by a drive toward managed tropical agriculture and of all the agricultural systems that were tried, plantations left the most indelible mark on the West Indian landscape and history.[21] The plantation was seen as a means of settlement, economic development, labor management and political control which in a short space of time began to yield immense material returns that profited European settlers, traders and sailors in the West Indies as well as enriched their backers at home and the governing circles in the European centers.[22] The plantation proved to be an ideal system for the Caribbean as it represented a perfect means of conquering the land, overawing local peoples and creating wealth. The plantation system however, required more labor than could be provided by the indigenous populations, pioneering settlers and European travelers which resulted in looking outside the boundaries of the

[20] Walvin, James. pp 135-6.
[21] See Chapter One for information on the early British West Indies.
[22] Walvin, James. Fruits of Empire. pp 132.

West Indies and Europe to supply the ever increasing labor demand. When the West Indian islands were initially conquered, overwork by and the diseases of the Europeans effectively destroyed the indigenous inhabitants. To make this cultivation of sugar possible, millions of African people were transported to the Caribbean with this vast and intricately designed structure being held in place by military power on both the sea-lanes and the islands. Sweetness, according to Walvin, flowed from military and commercial strength.[23]

Caribbean slavery began around 1503 and ended in 1886 having an official lifespan of about four centuries. During the course of the slave trade historians and scholars have estimated that about nine and one half million enslaved Africans reached the Americas.[24] The first enslaved Africans brought to the Caribbean region in 1503-05 worked on sugar plantations, and the last enslaved Africans smuggled into Cuba in the 1860's or 1870's worked on sugar plantations – a depressingly enduring continuity according to Sidney Mintz.[25] The life these transplanted Africans encountered on West Indian plantations was one of unending labor and great physical, emotional and psychological hardship and trauma. According to James Walvin,

> It [sugar] required labor which was itself shipped across the Atlantic (after having been kidnapped and herded together in Africa), labor which was alien, which did not (at first) speak the Europeans' languages, was unaccustomed to the stinging peculiarities of sugar's laboring system; it was a labor which died in horrifying numbers, which rebelled and resisted as a matter of course.[26]

Walvin's description succinctly captures the realities that the plantation labor (African slaves) who were transplanted from Africa to the West Indies were

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[23] Walvin. pp 194-5.

[24] Curtin, Philip. The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census. Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1969. pp 87.
This figure while remarkable, also does not account for the number of slaves that perished in the Middle Passage during the journey from Africa to the New World.

[25] Mintz, Sidney W. Tasting Food, Tasting Freedom: Excursions into Eating, Culture, and the Past. Boston: Beacon Press, 1996. pp 37.

[26] Walvin, James. Fruits of Empire: Exotic Produce and British Taste, 1660-1800. Washington Square, New York: New York University Press, 1997. pp 127.

forced to endure in the ever increasing desire for more production to supply the demands of Europe. In addition to the intensive manual labor associated with the planting, maintenance and cultivation of the sugar cane, it still remained to be turned into a form that would allow transportation to Europe. After harvesting the canes, they were crushed in mills and the sugar was then boiled out of the cane in a series of open vats in a sugar house. Refining sugar was similar to refining oil, with the heavier and blacker fractions coming off first, followed by the whiter and finer ones. On West Indian sugar plantations, the heat of the process would have been fierce since there was no means of cooling the sugar house. Temperatures of one hundred and forty degrees Fahrenheit were recorded, and even at night the temperature near the vat would be well over one hundred and twenty degrees.[27] The humidity of the islands would have also been very high, adding to the physical demands of the plantation slaves and the extreme conditions they were forced to endure. There were also countless deaths of slaves as a result of overwork and exhaustion as well as various types of injuries suffered such as burns and loss of limbs as a result of the working conditions on the plantations. As such, the plantations required a large number of strong manual workers who could withstand a hot, humid climate and were not as easily affected by European diseases as the indigenous populations found in the West Indies.

According to Jill Casid, the written and visual accounts produced in the seventeenth and eighteenth-centuries about West Indian plantation culture, "acted primarily as vehicles for the dissemination and production of imperial power."[28] In addition to this promotion of imperial agenda, they also represented personal opinions about how West Indian plantation systems should be represented since the majority of texts and illustrations were either completed by plantation owners or individuals invested in the plantation system. As we have seen in Sloane's *Natural History of Jamaica*, there was a resistance by writers and artists to promote the importance of sugar to the culture and fortunes tied to the West

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[27] Hobhouse, Henry. Seeds of Change: Five Plants that Transformed Mankind. London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1985. pp 58.

[28] Casid, Jill H. Sowing Empire: Landscape and Colonization. Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 2005. pp 2.

Indies. In the case of Sloane, the device he employed was to deny the importance of sugar and the resulting brutalities of the plantation slave culture by choosing to include an engraving of the Spanish presence in Mexico, removed from the British system of colonization. This strategy worked effectively to avoid dealing with the representation of the black enslaved body but other artists and writers who could not use this technique of distance, embraced other conventions to address the issue of the slave body in relation to the sugar cane plantation.

Promoting Variety

The tradition of British writing and engravings that deals directly with the slave body in the sugar plantation sought to present an idea that the sugar cane represented only a small fraction of the plants and natural life cultivated and introduced in the West Indies. Through emphasizing the variety of flora and fauna to be found in the Caribbean, the landscape of the sugar plantation became transformed into a paragon of managed diversification.[29] The species of natural life that, even today, are symbolically evocative of the Caribbean were in fact transplanted plants from Europe, Asia, Africa and the South Pacific. Plants such as the coconut palm, mango, breadfruit and banana that are now almost exclusively associated with the West Indies were colonial transplants introduced to the region by the various colonial powers since the fifteenth century.[30]

This introduction of new specimens of natural life to the Caribbean is illustrated in a table complied by a British physician, Arthur Broughton, and catalogues over five hundred plants which were transplanted from various parts of the world and introduced to the island of Jamaica.[31] The plants were introduced to the garden of Hinton East located at Spring Garden in the mountains of Linguanea and Broughton's list was intended to advertise the colonial government's recent purchase of East's botanical garden. The Jamaican planter and historian Bryan

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[29] Ibid. pp 8.
[30] Storer, Dorothy P. Familiar Trees and Cultivated Plants of Jamaica. London: Macmillian Press, 1958.
[31] Broughton, Arthur. *Hortus Eastensis*. Kingston, 1792. reproduced in Bryan Edwards. The History, Civil and Commercial, of the British Colonies in the West Indies. Dublin: Luke White,1793. pp 367-407.

Edwards published *The History, Civil and Commercial, of the British Colonies in the West Indies* in 1793 and included in his text, Broughton's list entitled *Hortus Eastensis*: or *A Catalogue of Exotic Plants, in the Garden of Hinton East, Esq. in the Mountain of Liguanea* (Fig. 8). The list compiled by Broughton groups the exotic transplants according to class and are then further separated out by name, place of origin, date of first introduction to Jamaica and the colonial planter or gardener credited with introducing the new species to the island.[32]

While the botanical garden served a specific symbolic function in the 1790s, Jill Casid argues that, "the mythic image of the plantation landscape dominated by sugar cane as, instead, a prodigious variety of introduced flora held in place by an ordering system of careful segmentation spanned the century as a means to justify colonization."[33] This list is also illustrative of the way diversity of nature was promoted in an effort to suppress the importance of the sugar cane as a commodity and the most important economic source to the British Empire in the eighteenth-century. This focus on diversity and variety played a significant role in the European conception of the West Indies since, from the early modern period, the aesthetic principle of variety was widely understood to add visual interest and value to land or a garden which was the requirement to transform it into a "landscape".[34] Through the promotion of this concept of variety the West Indies was transformed into a "landscape" that was able to serve both the imperial and personal agendas of those invested in the plantation system. This transformation of plantations into landscapes is the device that was used to deny the realities of the condition of slavery and suppress the presence of the laboring African body under the hardships of the sugar plantation.

Before we look in more detail at specific images that illustrate the promotion of variety underpinning the idea of landscape in the natural life of the West Indies, it will be beneficial at this juncture to consider some of the other underlying reasons for the complete transformation of the West Indian land and nature through introduction of foreign species, and the ways in which this concept

[32] Ibid. pp 367-407.
[33] Casid. pp 4.
[34] Ibid. pp 4.

of transplanting and variety worked to promote and justify the process of colonization. At the time of British colonial settlement in the West Indies, an agriculturalist argument based on Roman legal principle emerged in support of the colonial settlement and rule. According to the Roman imperial legal principles of *res nullius*, "All empty things, which included unoccupied lands, remained the common property of all until they were put to some, generally agricultural use. The first person to use the land became its owner."[35] This Roman rule was applied with very few exceptions by many British colonists and their champions from the 1620s onwards[36] and worked in support of the system of plantation rule established in the West Indies.[37]

The very use of the term "empty" is one that requires some consideration as the concept of emptiness reflects a European understanding that is connected to ideas of development and progress. This then raises issues concerning the meaning and implications of development since the West Indian islands had been inhabited by Natives when Europeans first 'discovered' them, and the land had no doubt, been in use to provide food and shelter for daily sustenance. Because the Native inhabitants of the West Indies conducted their farming and extracting of natural resources in a sustainable fashion, the look of their habitation differed from that of European civilization. This difference in appearance between Native and European use of the land did not mean that when it was first encountered, it was empty and unused. Rather, it reflects the difference in approach to concepts of development and progress, a difference that was exploited for the benefit of European colonization of the Caribbean.

The construction of sugar plantations involved vast deforestation, the clearing of all undergrowth and the burning of any remaining roots before the process of planting the sugar cane plant could proceed.[38] This process of land

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[35] Qtd in Pagden, Anthony. Lords of All the World: Ideologies of Empire in Spain, Britain, and France, c. 1500-c.1800. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995. pp 76.
[36] Pagden, Anthony. pp 77.
[37] According to Pagden, the *res nullius* argument was also widely used by the French. Often, the French and English would initially settle in areas that the native inhabitants used only for hunting and thus acquire the rights of possession through the 'improving' of the land through agriculture – in essence, the formation of the plantation system.
[38] Walvin. Fruits of Empire. pp 135-7.

preparation that was required for the formation of sugar plantations, on which the economy of the British Caribbean was based, made a majority of the islands the virtual *tabula rasa* required by the agriculturalist argument based on the principle of *res nullius*.[39] This concept of "*tabula rasa*" was also applied as a means of justification for the forced migration of the thousands of African slaves to supply the labor for the sugar plantations, an issue that will be explored in more detail as it relates to some of the images produced about plantation culture in the West Indies. Ideologically and discursively then, as Jill Casid points out, plantation was often used as a synonym for colony and the two terms were interchangeable "precisely because effective colonization with 'justification' depended on disindigenating, transplanting, and relandscaping the British West Indian island[s] such that the land was made empty and then (re)possessed by its ostentatious cultivation, its agriculture."[40] The use of the terms plantation and colony as synonyms by many English writers of the period, even took on real legal significance and both terms were closely tied to the kinds of community the colonies in practice were, as well as the arguments used for the legitimacy of their existence.[41] The main cash crops of the plantation systems were not only transplants from other parts of the world and were used to justify colonial occupation in the West Indies, but they also served to radically alter the landscape of the Caribbean, thus serving to construct a symbolic association of the West Indies through the flora and fauna (such as coconut and palm trees discussed previously) that was introduced and regulated by the British (and to a large extent French) desire to re-imagine and envision the landscape to suit imperial goals. As such, the whole concept of "tropical landscape" can be viewed as both a material and aesthetic invention of colonization of the Caribbean that was put in practice by a mixture of the Roman imperial law of *res nullius* and an idea of "enlightened scientific rationalism" which was based on political and economic considerations.[42]

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[39] Casid. pp 7.
[40] Ibid. pp 4.
[41] Pagden, Anthony. Lords of All the World. pp 79.
[42] Casid. pp 8.

Extending the analysis of the ways British imperial power was constructed, produced and justified through the large-scale relandscaping of the British colonies of the West Indies, Jill Casid introduces the concept of the "picturesque intermixed landscape" as the device employed by writers and artists presenting the plantation system to local, metropolitan, and international readers and viewers. According to Casid, the plantation was transformed into an intermixed colonial landscape as an attempt to articulate an imperial discourse of hybridization as both a sign and tool of a colonial power bound to its site.[43] The term 'hybrid' developed from biological and botanical origins and its recorded first use was in the seventeenth century.[44] While the Oxford English Dictionary claims that the term was scarcely in use before the nineteenth century[45] the term was actually used to describe experiments in crossbreeding of plants, which was a subject of fascination in the eighteenth century, and a mark of highly progressive scientific rationalism and experimentation in the service of empire.[46] In fact, writers who extended the ideas introduced by the Linnaean sexual system of botanical classification often took up this concept of hybridization.[47] By applying devices of picturesque aesthetics to the engraved views as well as descriptive and natural histories that claimed to represent the Caribbean, transplantation was presented not as an unnecessary and violent act, but rather as an improvement to the land that worked harmoniously and effectively for the improvement of the natural terrain of the islands. More specifically, colonial print culture, argues Casid, "around and over the monocultural machine of the sugar plantation... elaborated a dazzling and mouthwatering cornucopia of seemingly endless multiplicity...[and these prints] labored to transmute the monocultural plantation

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[43] Ibid. pp 8.
[44] Young, Robert J.C. Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race. London and New York: Routledge Press, 1995. pp 6.
[45] Oxford English Dictionary. Qtd in Young, Robert J.C. Colonial Desire. pp 6.
[46] Casid. pp 2.
[47] Koerner, Lisbet. Linnaeus: Nature and Nation. Cambridge, Massachusetts, London: Harvard University Press, 1999. pp 122.
See for example, popular eighteenth century texts such as Erasmus Darwin's "Loves of the Plants" published as part of The Botanic Garden; a poem, in two parts. Part I containing the economy of vegetation. Part II. The loves of the plants. With philosophical notes. London: Printed for J. Johnson, 1789-1791.

machine from an engine of impoverishment and devastation into an organic agent of enrichment."[48] As such, media such as reproductive prints, images and texts served as prototypical models for the concept of colonial relandscaping as well as acted as the primary vehicles for the dissemination and production of imperial power.[49]

The Picturesque Intermixed West Indian Landscape

Illustrative of this dissemination of imperial power through the visual representation of the Caribbean landscape, the British landscape painter George Robertson[50] provides an informative case study for the complex relationships that emerged in the process of suppressing the realities of the monocultural plantation and the transported slaves in the West Indies. Under the patronage of William Beckford of Somerley, Robertson traveled to Jamaica in 1772 where he produced paintings and drawings that were later displayed for a London audience upon his return in 1774 from the West Indian island. While in Jamaica, Robertson produced several landscape scenes of the country and more specifically, scenes of the sugar plantations on the island that were owned by his patron.[51] Thomas Vivares, J. Mason and Daniel Lerpiniere are some of the engravers who later produced engravings of the drawings produced by Robertson during his time on the Beckford sugar plantations. George Robertson then, stands as the central figure that links all these men who collectively constructed a view of Jamaica that was in keeping with the desires of the sugar plantation owner and patron, William Beckford of Somerley.

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[48] Casid. pp 9.
[49] Ibid. pp 2.
[50] Born in London in 1748, Robertson was the son of a wine merchant and started off in his father's trade before studying art at Shipley's drawing school. While at Shipley's he was noted for his skills in drawing and received a premium from the Society of Arts in 1761. After his time at the drawing school he took the traditional tour of Europe and went to Italy, remaining in Rome for three years where he completed further studies in drawing. During this time he also visited Germany and Holland eventually returning to England in 1771.
[51] Dias, Rosie. "Robertson, George (c. 1748-1788)." Oxford Dictionary of National Biography. Oxford University Press, 2004. < http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/23793?_fromAuth=1 > April 19th 2007.

Beckford of Somerley was born in Jamaica in 1744 and was the son and heir of Richard Beckford and Elizabeth Hay, his common law wife. Sometime before 1762 he went to England, because in that year he matriculated from Balliol College, Oxford and three years later was designated a Master of Arts.[52] By Beckford's own account, he and his wife are believed to have returned to Jamaica in 1764 and spent a total of thirteen years there until returning to London in 1777.[53] His return to Jamaica was brought about when he co-inherited, along with his cousin William Beckford of Fonthill, twenty-two sugar plantations, which he personally supervised and which generated income for both men. Upon his return to London in 1777, Beckford of Somerley was arrested and imprisoned for debt in Fleet prison.[54] Beckford's imprisonment was a result of financial mismanagement as well as a devastating hurricane that destroyed most of his plantations in Jamaica.[55] The other inheritor of the Jamaican plantations, William Beckford of Fonthill never even visited Jamaica and remained in England living a life of decadence and luxury partially supplied by the wealth from the Jamaican sugar plantations overseen by his cousin. In addition, Beckford of Fonthill was also the sole legitimate heir of Alderman William Beckford, the lord-mayor of London and thus inheritor of what was reputed to be the greatest single fortune to be extracted from the sugar plantations of the British West Indies.[56]

The images commissioned by Beckford and produced by Robertson are exceptional for many reasons, most obviously for simply providing visual representations of plantation life of the British West Indies, of which there exist very few. This paucity of visual material about plantation culture in the

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[52] Sheridan, Richard B. "Planter and Historian: The Career of William Beckford of Jamaica and England, 1744-1799." *Jamaican Historical Review*, 4 (1964): 42.
[53] Sandiford, Keith A. The Cultural Politics of Sugar: Caribbean Slavery and Narratives of Colonialism. Cambridge, U.K: Cambridge University Press, 2000. pp 118.
[54] Ibid. pp 118.
[55] Quilley, Geoff. "Pastoral Plantations: The Slave Trade and the Representation of British Colonial Landscape in the Late Eighteenth Century." An Economy of Colour: Visual Culture and the Atlantic World, 1660-1830. Eds. Geoff Quilley and Kay Dian Kriz. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2003. pp 108.
[56] From this point, unless otherwise noted, all mentions of "Beckford" refer to William Beckford of Somerley and not his cousin, William Beckford of Fonthill who, as a point of interest, is the more famous of the two cousins as the author of the Gothic novel Vathek (1782) and as the builder of Fonthill Abbey.

Caribbean, argues Geoff Quilley, reflects the lack of artistic patronage by the plantation owners and individuals with interests in West Indian crop cultivation.[57] The absentee planter classes, of which William Beckford of Fonthill was a member, continues Quilley, usually employed the fashionable artists of the European social scene, thus "dislocating their display of cultural refinement from the source of their prosperity".[58] On the other hand, the West Indian planters and slave traders who resided in the Caribbean, were not usually concerned with issues of aesthetics and artistic pursuits, so they very rarely commissioned artists to capture the environment in which they lived.[59] In fact, many seventeenth and eighteenth-century literary accounts about the Caribbean usually focused considerable time and detail on the excesses of the slave-owning English planters, noting their materialism, quarrelling, drinking, whoring, negligence, swearing, and deceptive business practices.[60] The planters were typically portrayed not only as grasping capitalists intent on getting rich quickly by exploiting their slaves and servants, but also as ill-mannered and immoral[61], lacking the culture and refinement that were required for an interest in the arts and a desire to become patrons of practicing artists. Beckford however, is an exception to this tradition of the plantation owners having no interests in artistic patronage since he was personally involved in presenting an image of Jamaica and the plantation culture that he inherited. In fact, in 1790 Beckford published a written account of the West Indian island he resided on for many years entitled *A Descriptive Account of the Island of Jamaica.*[62] The book was actually written while Beckford was in confinement in the Fleet Prison and based on several allusions made to personal

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[57] Quilley, pp 107.
[58] Ibid. pp 107.
[59] For more information on the white planter class in the West Indies, see Craton, Michael. Sinews of Empire: A Short History of British Slavery. London: Temple Smith, 1974. pp 199-207.
[60] Gragg, Larry. Englishmen Transplanted: The English Colonization of Barbados, 1627-1660. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003. pp 7.
[61] Ibid. pp 8.
[62] Full title of publication: Beckford, William. A Descriptive Account of the Island of Jamaica: with remarks upon
the cultivation of the sugar-cane,...also observations and reflections upon what would probably be the consequences of an abolition of the slave-trade, and of the emancipation of the slaves. Vols. 1 & 2. London: Printed for T. and J. Egerton, 1790.
For ease, the text will be referred to as Descriptive Account from this point.

financial insolvency and loss of freedom throughout the text, may be assumed to be one of the motivations for writing this text.[63]

When we consider Beckford's text, the paintings and drawings produced by Robertson and the subsequent engravings made by the three engravers mentioned earlier, a complex relationship between the written and visual representations presented of Jamaica emerge. Beckford's publication is a substantial work of over eight hundred pages and comprising of two volumes. According to the title page of *Descriptive Account*, Beckford's aim was to offer a treatise on the cultivation of sugar cane as well as to address the consequences of the abolition of the West Indian slave trade and system. Beckford notes that his descriptive account of Jamaica also features, "Remarks upon the Cultivation of the Sugar-Cane....[and] Observations and Reflections upon what would probably be the Consequences of the Abolition of the Slave Trade, and of the Emancipation of the Slaves"[64] (Fig. 9). Beckford's publication in essence, is an anti-abolitionist text that seeks to promote the interests of the plantation class and those with economic ties and interests in the perpetuation of the West Indian plantation system that was completely reliant on the continuation of the slave trade. What is of most interest to this current project, are the devices employed by Beckford to promote these agendas and the ways that these same devices are manifest in the views of Jamaica completed by Robertson. Both the text and images are representative of the concept of the picturesque and present inaccurate and contrived views of the sugar plantation systems in operation in Jamaica. Beckford's application of aesthetic terms to celebrate colonial agricultural production is clearly evident in his pictorialized description of the sugar cane plant itself.

Following a discussion of how to cultivate sugar in his *Descriptive Account*, Beckford describes the sugar cane as a "rich and singular exotic."[65] He

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[63] Sandiford. pp 118. As noted previously, Beckford was in Fleet Prison as a result of money owed to creditors when a hurricane in Jamaica wiped out all his sugar plantations.
Beckford was also the author of Remarks upon the Situation of Negroes in Jamaica, published in 1788.

[64] Beckford. Vol.1, Title Page.

[65] Ibid. Vol 1. pp 48.

continues his description noting, "A field of canes, when standing, in the month of November, when it is in arrow (or full bloom), is one of the most beautiful productions that the pen and pencil can possibly describe."[66] Following this written description is a visual representation seen in the *View of Roaring River Estate, Westmoreland* (Fig. 10), engraved by Thomas Vivares and published in 1778. Vivares based this engraving on one of the paintings completed by Robertson during his visit to the sugar plantations owned by Beckford. In fact, Robertson's original view of the Beckford estate of Roaring River was initially exhibited twelve years before the publication of *Descriptive Account.*[67] None of Robertson's views were actually reprinted to accompany the publication but John Boydell published two series of engravings of Robertson's views of Jamaica during the 1770's and 1780's.[68] Beckford addresses this absence by tying his textual account of Jamaica with the previously released images. According to Beckford in the introductory pages to *Descriptive Account*,

> It was my wish, as a confirmation of the fidelity of the scenes which I have attempted to delineate, to have introduced engravings from some particular views of the Island that were taken on the spot; and their accuracy cannot surely be doubted when I quote, as the artist, the respectable name of Mr. Robertson.[69]

By referencing Robertson's views, Beckford rebinds the landscape views that had previously circulated in London with his textual account of the Jamaican landscape. Beckford also ensures the believability of Robertson's images by reminding the reader that they were "taken on the spot" thus confirming their accuracy as a true representation of the Jamaican landscape.[70] This assurance to the reader that the artist was actually present on his Jamaican plantations acts to further reinforce the agenda of Beckford's account – that of promoting his anti-

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[66] Ibid. Vol. 1, pp 50-51.
[67] Casid. pp 9.
[68] Quilley. Pp 106.
[69] Beckford.Vol. I, pp x.
[70] This recalls issues discussed in Chapter Two in relation to the Western primacy placed on vision as the most important sense as well as the allusion to exact observation through reference to being 'on the spot'.

abolitionist sentiment as well as promoting the economic interests of the plantation owners.

In fact, Beckford repeats his lament about the absence of Robertson's views at crucial junctures in his text, thus serving, according to Casid, to conjure "an absent presence that might serve to verify the purported authenticity of Beckford's colonial relandscaping."[71] By continually referencing the images of Robertson, Beckford employs the visual to confirm his claim about transplantation, which he presents as a harmonious integration of the Jamaican landscape that acts to transform it into a picturesque spectacle of overwhelming variety. According to Beckford, "The variety and brilliancy of the verdure in Jamaica are particularly striking; and the trees and shrubs that adorn the face of the country are singular for their richness of tints, the depths of their shadows, and the picturesque appearance they make."[72] Beckford's text describes the Jamaican landscape as being a perfect scene of art that is painted and planted with "tints" and "shadows"[73] thus further solidifying the association with the visual traditions of the picturesque and its precondition, variety. This continually articulated fiction that both the artist and writer are simply producing faithful copies of what actually exists in nature acts to make the colonial landscape always already like a painting or engraving.[74] It is ironic that Beckford insisted upon the repetition of the term "picturesque" to situate his text and Robertson's images as authentic representations of the Jamaican landscape. The reflections he provides, claims Beckford, are "chiefly considered in a picturesque view"[75] (see Fig. 9).

The theory of the picturesque was formally articulated in the eighteenth century in the writings of, among others, William Gilpin and Uvedale Price, which placed a certain value on roughness and irregularity as well as aimed to establish the picturesque as a critical category somewhere between the beautiful

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[71] Casid. pp 9.
[72] Beckford. Vol I, Introduction.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Casid. pp 13.
[75] Beckford. Vol I, Title Page.

and sublime.[76] However, before these writers articulated the concept of the picturesque in their publications, the theory itself was already in place and frequently practiced, serving to materially transform and translate the colonial periphery for consumption by the center.[77] An eighteenth-century neologism, the word "picturesque" occupies the space of translation and mediates between art and nature.[78] The word came into usage as a translation of the French adjective *pittoresque* which was itself an eighteenth-century adaptation of the Italian *pittoresco*.[79] The picturesque focused on the representation of idealized and imaginary landscape paintings and rather than striving for absolute accuracy, the artist was instructed to select the more painterly aspects of a given view and to arrange them into aesthetically pleasing sketches and descriptive accounts by relying on imagination.[80]

In essence, the artist aimed at creating a "specific but elevated landscape in which the essential character of the topography was retained, with subordinate and inconsequential parts modified or redistributed to meet the compositional requirements of the classical landscape and thereby assisting in the generation of mood." [81] Signifying that a select view was like a picture, the picturesque, by translating terrain into an established compositional type, was a way of seeing that served to transform land into landscape.[82] Beyond the definition of the concept of picturesque, the fashionable theory and practice of landscape aesthetics was governed by the master concept of taste, which was a powerful discursive marker of both class and gender. Whether by birth or through education and opportunity that came about because of privilege, the man of taste possessed the qualities necessary to appreciate the beauty and sublimity of natural scenes.[83] These

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[76] Farzaneh, Shahin. "Artistic Context." Mont-Royal-Ville Marie: Early Plans and Views of Montreal. Ed. Conrad Graham. Montreal: McCord Museum of Canadian History, 1992. pp 31.
[77] Casid. pp 47-8.
[78] Ibid. pp 45.
[79] Ibid. pp 45.
[80] Farzaneh. pp 31.
[81] Spender, Michael. The Glory of Watercolour – The Royal Watercolour Society Diploma Collection. Newton Abbot , London: David & Charles Inc., 1987. pp 45. Qtd in Farzaneh. Mont Royal-Ville Marie. pp 31.
[82] Casid. pp 45.
[83] Bohls, Elizabeth A. "The Gentleman planter and the Metropole: Long's *History of Jamaica* (1774)." The Country and the City Revisited. pp 183.

qualities enabled access to "the pleasures of the imagination"[84], a necessary condition for capturing and appreciating the idealized picturesque landscape. Taste then, as Elizabeth Bohls notes, "both expressed and fostered the immense sense of entitlement that pervades eighteenth-century writings on aesthetics: a consciousness of distinction from the majority who lacked access to these rarefied sensations."[85] The aesthetics of land, and picturesque landscapes in particular, were infused with a proprietary tone which suggested that landownership could take on the symbolism of high culture as distinguished from the landless and thus tasteless and vulgar.[86] As such, the aesthetics of picturesque landscape were well suited to the political and imperial agendas of Jamaican plantation owners such as Beckford. By employing the theories of the picturesque in his *Descriptive Account* and the views he commissioned by Robertson, Beckford both presented and identified himself as a colonial gentleman planter while erasing traces of African slave labor from the represented Jamaican landscape in order to advance his pro-slavery agenda.

As is clearly evident, Robertson's composition of *View of Roaring River Estate, Westmoreland* (Fig. 10) follows traditional conventions of picturesque composition with, for example, contrasts between light and shade and a winding path that leads the eye from the foreground to the background of the composition. Depicted in the foreground of the engraving is a variety of carefully rendered vegetation with partial tree trunks inserted on the far corners of the composition, serving almost as a framing device for the entire image. A pathway runs across the foreground and wraps its way around a partial view of a mountain thus serving to guide the viewer's eye toward the background of the composition. Adding to this guiding effect is a river that mimics the direction of the path and gushes directly in front of the small elevation that marks the beginning of the background composition. On top of this elevated portion of land in the background are the main plantation buildings, some of which are nestled behind even more varied vegetation while others are exposed to full view. The buildings are comprised of a

[84] Addison, Joseph. Qtd. in Bohls. pp 183.
[85] Bohls. pp 183.
[86] Ibid. pp 183.

mill and a refinery with smoke shown billowing from its chimney stacks. At the right of the refinery, a black slave leads a group of oxen drawing a cart behind them in the direction of the river, perhaps to allow the animals to have a drink. There is the vague impression of slaves working in a cleared field between the buildings but these bodies are dominated by the signs of the fruits of their labor being transported by the more visible oxcart to the right. The slaves working in the clearing between the buildings are abstracted to the almost imperceptible distance.[87] At the center of the composition, in the exact midpoint of the scene is a seated black male slave, a horse and a black female slave who is pointing to another black man who carries a load on his back while a black woman with a child holding onto her skirt emerges from the hidden portion of the path behind the mountain and walks toward the load bearing man and the two slaves at the center of the composition.

This image presents a very striking view of plantation life on Beckford's sugar estate and promotes carefully rendered fallacies of slave life and the black slave body's relation to the land. Most striking is the notorious fiction highlighted through placement at the center of the composition. The black male slave is shown seated and at rest while the woman beside him directs attention to other figures that are moving freely along the path. This constructed view promoted the belief in the viewer that slave life was easy and not potentially fatal as a result of the demanding work requirements. The inclusion of the small child hanging onto the skirt of a female slave suggests that births among slaves outnumbered deaths and that the colonial plantation system of slave labor could not only produce but reproduce itself.[88] The presence of the woman and child also represents the fiction of the possibility of a whole, safe slave family existing on a West Indian sugar plantation. In Robertson's entire view of Beckford's sugar plantation at Roaring River Estate, there is no representation of a white body in the entire composition. The entire landscape is only pictured with black slaves that symbolically represent the stages of man – as the old man who carries a load on his shoulders walks

[87] Casid. pp 13.
[88] Ibid. pp 13.

along the path, another young black slave is born to take his place (as seen in the child holding onto the skirt of the female slave) thus maintaining the "natural" system of plantation culture.[89] The "naturalness" of the mother-child relations pictured in the composition also works to disavow the endemic sexual violence and abuses that were commonly practiced against slave women since they were considered the property of their owners and as such, subject to their whims and desires.

Jill Casid convincingly argues that, "the visual and textual discourse of the picturesque intermixed landscape distinguished by its purported variety and yet harmony attempted to naturalize slavery as part of a georgic plantation Eden of slave labor, 'peace and plenty' "[90] Variety in the landscape is clearly evident throughout the composition but interestingly, there is no representation of the sugar cane plant or fields that would have certainly existed over vast acres of land on the plantation. The only evidence of sugar production and cultivation could be the refining of the harvested plant as suggested by the billowing smoke from the refinery located on the elevated portion of land in the background of the composition.

Engravings such as those produced by Thomas Vivares after George Robertson's views of Jamaica circulated in Europe and served to formulate the concept of variety rather than monoculture on West Indian plantations. They also presented the lives of African slaves in the West Indies as one of happiness and contentment rather than hardship, torture and never-ending labor that was the reality of their existence on sugar plantations such as those owned by Beckford. Visual representations that refused to clearly show, if at all, slaves employed in the structured process of sugar cultivation and refinement in favor of depicting them at rest and during moments of leisure, acted to naturalize the African body in the West Indian landscape. For a viewer of such an image, the movement of the slaves from Africa to the West Indies represented a better life than could be attained if they remained in Africa since there is a sense of unity with the natural

[89] Ibid. pp 14.
[90] Ibid. pp 13.

life and landscape that is implied. Through the concept of the picturesque, claims Casid, George Robertson "endeavored to produce and reproduce the sugar plantation colony as an intermixed garden with a diverse and extensive variety of vegetation from tropical, subtropical, and temperate climates around the globe, the emblematic sign of a colonial power rooted to its appropriated place now ostensibly improved."[91] Extensive variety of vegetation is promoted which effectively erases the sugar cane from the landscape – a denial of the slave labor relation to the one commodity that generated the fortunes of Beckford and the Jamaican plantation system more generally.

Another such image produced by Robertson is *View of Fort Williams Estate, Westmoreland* (Fig. 11). Engraved once again by Thomas Vivares from a painting of one of Beckford's sugar plantations, it was published by John Boydell for the metropolitan market in 1778. The plantation buildings are shown nestled at the left of the image with Beckford's grand white house set into the mountains in a customary position that ensured complete surveillance of the lands and people below. The mountains in the background are completely covered with dense vegetation – an area that still remains to be cultivated and relandscaped. In the foreground of the composition, a river flows beneath a bridge where black slaves walk or ride over engaged, it appears, in casual chatter. The slaves are shown traveling back and forth over the bridge and along the road to the plantation suggesting freedom of moment for the slaves to leave and enter the plantation without question or control. Identical to the other view produced by Robertson and discussed above (Fig. 10), gates, barricades or any sense of confinement is excluded from the composition suggesting that the concept of controlled plantation life of the slaves was not a reality of their existence.

At the center of the composition, on a rock formation and surrounded by more carefully delineated vegetation are two black males. A basket of produce is balanced on the head of one of the men while the other man is seated and reaching up to the basket of produce to partake of what was collected. Once again, leisure, freedom and relaxation of the black slave body is presented to the viewer all the

[91] Ibid. pp 207.

while serving to naturalize the presence of the African slaves in the West Indian landscape. Also, no white body is incorporated into the landscape so that the image constructs a concept of an unsupervised and harmonious life of the slaves who are able to consume the varied produce of the plantation at any time and without consequence. The only reference to the white owner and master is the grand house that is depicted on the mountain in the background. While the lands directly in front of the plantation buildings are cleared, there is no effort to depict the type of plant that would very possibly have been cultivated in mass scale on that very site. Instead, Robertson uses an abstract rendering of the land in the cleared area so the viewer is unable to identify any specific plant or vegetation present. However, painstaking detail is used to represent all the other elements in the composition so that a careful study of the varied natural life and the leisured and unrestricted activities of the slaves can ensue. Beckford's commissioning of Roberston to paint his sugar plantations in Jamaica, suppresses the actual sugar cane plant in any of the images produced in order for the patron to distance the source of his material wealth.[92] In turn, this act of suppression also works to deny representation of the laboring African body under the conditions of sugar production and refinement.

Reading Beckford's text in conjunction with the views of Jamaica produced by Robertson, it is evident that Beckford is attempting to present his account of the Jamaican landscape in a similar manner to an artist. Beckford's writings about Jamaica are not only like paintings through continual reference to artistic terminology and concepts, but they also help to promote a colonial transformation of the landscape and formulate it as art.[93] Beckford takes artistic license to transform the Jamaica he describes into a hybrid land of varied places that becomes a condensed picture of imperial control. This strategy of conflation and condensation of various colonies into one unifying theme helped men like Beckford and the agenda of the planter classes more generally, to manage the

[92] Quilley. pp 107.
[93] Casid. pp 60.

image of their possessions in ways that would prove beneficial to their interests. Beckford stated that,

> There are many parts of the country that are not much unlike to, nor less romantic than, the most wild and beautiful situations of the Frescati, Tivoli, and Albano; and the want of those picturesque and elegant ruins which so much enoble the landscapes of Italy, are made some amends for, in the painter's eye, by the appearance, the variety, and the number of buildings.[94]

Jamaica has become abstracted, anesthetized and transformed by Beckford into a colonial hybrid of Italy and the Caribbean in order to justify the colonial plantation system.[95] These metaphors in Beckford's picturesque travel writing act to conflate one foreign place with another. The "beautiful situations" of the foreign Italian landscape become interchangeable with the views of Jamaica and thus the West Indian island becomes less unknown and more naturalized through metaphorical linking with Italy. The Italian landscape, while still foreign to a British audience, would have been far more familiar as a result of the tradition of the grand tour, a customary practice for eighteenth-century British society. This metaphorical construction of a colonial hybrid of Jamaica and Italy also extended to other colonial islands, serving to formulate a perfect and innocent Eden – a return to a prelapsarian state of being.

Many eighteenth-century writers, including Beckford, also turned to the South Sea island of Otaheite or Tahiti in order to graft an idea of island paradise onto an island like Jamaica.[96] According to Beckford in one of his descriptions of a landscape view of Jamaica, he could "fancy an exact resemblance, as given us in the prints, of the Island of Otaheite."[97] On Captain James Cook's third voyage of "discovery" around the Pacific in 1776, he took with him an officially appointed artist, John Webber, who provided upon their return, arguably " the most

[94] Beckford. Vol I, pp 8.
[95] Casid. pp 60-1.
[96] Ibid. pp 61.
[97] Beckford. Vol I, pp 83.

comprehensive and unprecedented visual record of any of Cook's voyages."[98] These images by Webber, most notable those produced of Tahiti, circulated throughout Europe and influenced many writers and artists who wanted to exploit the similarities in landscapes (for example, see Fig. 12, *A View in Matavai, Otaheite*) in promotion of certain pro-slavery ideologies. While George Robertson's views of Beckford's sugar plantations was published by John Boydell in 1778, just after Cook's third voyage and before the final publication of the illustrations produced by Webber, Beckford retrospectively overlays the views of Tahiti which were available around 1790 onto Robertson's views of the Jamaican sugar plantations.[99] The prints of the Island of Otaheite to which Beckford refers, were most likely Webber's since they were first published in 1784 and reproduced quite frequently in the following years. Both sets of images share many similarities, most notably their foregrounding focus on specific botanical specimens.[100]

The vegetation of both Jamaica and Tahiti were indeed very similar since coconut tress, breadfruit, bamboo and plantain for example, were also found on the shores of Tahiti and were actually transplants to Jamaica as discussed previously.[101] By conjuring these similarities with Tahiti in his writings about the Jamaican landscape, Beckford aimed at reproducing a focus on variety about his West Indian sugar plantations. This focus on the similarities of vegetation between Jamaica and Tahiti resulted in a denial of the forced African slave transplants that was the peculiarity of Jamaica, the thing that made it very different from Tahiti. The laboring African body was actively being erased from

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[98] National Library of Australia Website. "Travellers Art: John Webber and William Ellis on Cook's Third Voyage." June 25th 2007. < http://www.nla.gov.au/exhibitions/travellersart/cook.html >

[99] Casid. pp 62.

[100] Ibid. pp 62.

[101] Plantains were actually transported from Tahiti to Jamaica by the Spaniards in the sixteenth century. Breadfruit also originated in Tahiti and was transplanted by Captain Bligh in 1794. The case of the breadfruit is a very interesting one since it was initially introduced to the West Indies to serve as a cheap source of food for the African slaves who were starving by the thousands due to the interruption in the flow of foodstuffs from the thirteen colonies during the American Revolution. For more about the transplant of the breadfruit plant to the West Indies see, for example, Richard Howard. "Captain Bligh and the Breadfruit." *Scientific American* 188, no. 3 (1953): 88-94.

the West Indian sugar plantations through Beckford's metaphorical linkage of the two tropical islands. This concept of erasure was a commonly occurring theme in anti-abolitionist rhetoric and resulted in numerous justifications for the suitability and necessity of the mass African displacements to the Caribbean. The West Indies was often referred to as a tropical paradise and slavery as a vast civilizing mission through which the Africans were given a better life than could be possible if they remained in their homeland. As such, maintaining this concept of an island paradise through conflation with other similarly vegetated places like Tahiti was a way of constructing a new Eden. The West Indies as a type of Eden then suggested that the African slaves benefited from their transportation to the Caribbean because in their new home they would be able to enjoy a life of happiness that would not have been possible in Africa. According to this constructed theory, those who lived in the tropics had nothing more to do than to gather nature's bounty that existed all around them. Tropes of Arcadia, Eden, Paradise and the Golden Age were used in the writings of natural and civil historians as well as travel writers and artists to describe the tropical islands of the Caribbean as a site of unlimited natural resources. These writers and artists, in portraying tropical islands as naturally bountiful, minimized or even actively ignored the skilled labor and agronomic knowledge of enslaved Africans who ultimately produced the agricultural abundance that existed.[102] In addition, the aesthetic rendering of cultivated landscapes and the slave body naturalized in a West Indian setting and at rest, obscured the unsettling economic relations of exploitation that under-grid such images.[103]

Transformation of the West Indian sugar plantation into a picturesque intermixed landscape effectively denied the realities of the condition of slavery. This chapter has explored the ways in which writers and artists employed the concept of variety and the transplantation of flora and fauna to transform the West Indian land into landscape. This transformation suppressed the picturing of the laboring slave body on sugar plantations in favor of images of leisure and

[102] Tobin, Beth Fowkes. Colonizing Nature: The Tropics in British Arts and Letters, 1760-1820. Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 2005. pp 22.
[103] Ibid. pp 21.

happiness. It also worked to naturalize the African body within the landscape of the West Indies, thus projecting a sense of well being and contentment with the new environment that these slaves now occupied. Chapter Four now changes geographical locations to consider the motivating factors behind the ever increasing production of sugar in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries – increased consumption and demand by Europe.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Politics of Consumption: Sugar Usage in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries.

This chapter explores the visual representation of West Indian sugar consumption in Europe, with particular emphasis on British consumption habits of this extremely valuable seventeenth and eighteenth century commodity. Considering the sugar consumption habits of the British and European population during the period provides a more detailed and comprehensive view of the economic, social and cultural trajectory of the object of focus of this analysis – British West Indian sugar. In my first chapter, I provided a brief historical background of sugar and the rise of European imperialism in the West Indies. Chapter Two discussed the representation of the sugar cane plant within the visual discourse of the natural sciences and botany. That chapter addressed the ways in which European travelers who produced natural history treatises and narratives of their journey to the West Indies employed the representation of the sugar cane plant in their publications in promotion of specific imperial agendas. My third chapter focused on the construction of the concept of variety and the picturesque in the representation of the West Indian sugar plantations which was a strategy employed to deny the laboring slave body from the process of sugar cultivation and production. This chapter then, provides the missing link to complete the cycle of classification and cultivation previously considered since it explores the driving force behind the desire to suppress, through visual representation, the realities of the sugar cane plant, both as an object of scientific curiosity as well as an object for large-scale cultivation as seen through the formation of the plantation system. By turning our attention to sugar consumption in Europe, this chapter will consider the ways in which the demand for sugar increased over the eighteenth century and the ways that this increased consumption was first a sign of privilege and then later became normalized in visual representations. In addition, this chapter provides a framework from which to consider the productive and laboring bodies of the African slaves in relation to the consuming bodies in Europe via issues such as class, race, access and politics. By turning now to issues of sugar consumption in England, the center of the British colonization project, we can more fully understand

how the sugar derived from the sugar cane plant came to be one of the most important factors to the lives of the millions of forcibly transplanted African slaves laboring on sugar plantations throughout the West Indies.

Sugar produced in the British West Indies by African slaves in the eighteenth century was meant primarily for export to Europe to supply the growing demands and taste of the population.[1] According to Ralph Davis, "Sugar was the largest import for a century and a half.... [and] during the eighteenth century the slave worked plantations of the British Caribbean colonies were virtually the only suppliers..."[2] The relationship between the British colonies and metropolitan center are thus inextricably linked as West Indian production had a major impact on English sugar consumption. The increased imports of sugar from the West Indies were a result of the establishment of plantation based cultivation and production which was enabled by the labor supplied by African slaves. As the volume of imports of sugar increased, sugar prices in England began to fall serving to transform sugar from a luxury consumed primarily by the wealthy in the mid seventeenth century to a commodity consumed by even the poor in the eighteenth century.[3] The increase in the use of sugar in England was dramatic and estimates of per capita consumption suggest a fourfold increase between 1660 and 1700, and a further doubling between 1700 and 1725.[4] This dramatic increase in sugar consumption was a result of a major change in diet of the English population. The increased use of sugar was closely tied to the rise of consumption of other imported products, most notably tea and coffee in the eighteenth century.[5] As such, any analysis of British sugar consumption cannot be detached from a discussion of the products that sugar was used with as a necessary ingredient to enhance taste, enjoyment and palatability. In addition, it should be noted that while sugar was predominantly used in a refined, granular form that is similar to how we know it today, there were also many valuable by-products such as rum and

[1] See: Deerr, Noel. The History of Sugar. Vol. II. London: Chapman and Hall Ltd., 1950 and Sheridan, Richard B. Sugar and Slavery: An Economic History of the British West Indies, 1623-1775. Barbados: Caribbean Universities Press, 1974.
[2] Davis, Ralph. The Industrial Revolution and British Overseas Trade. Leicester, England: Leicester University Press, 1979. pp 43.
[3] Sheridan. Sugar and Slavery. pp 26.
[4] Galenson, David W. Traders, Planters, and Slaves: Market behavior in Early English America. Cambridge, London: Cambridge University Press, 1986. pp 6.
[5] Ibid. pp 6.

molasses that were produced as a direct result of sugar cane cultivation. Exploring the full impact of sugar on the consumption habits of the British thus requires consideration of all of the various forms it would have taken and how it became gradually normalized in the everyday diet of the British population.

Early Sugar Consumption

Sugar was first introduced to Europe in the twelfth century and was considered a spice, similar to products like pepper, nutmeg and cardamom.[6] As rare and expensive tropical imports, these spices were used sparingly and by very few people because of their restrictive cost. Since at least the Crusades, sugar as a spice was prized among the wealthy and powerful of Western Europe.[7] The place of sugar as a flavoring or spice can be traced to some of the earliest English cookbooks and through these sources, its usage can be documented in some detail.[8]

By the thirteenth century, sugar was sold by the loaf [9] (Fig. 13) as well as by the pound, and was available in varying stages of refinement which resulted in colors such as dark brown (least refined) to bone white (almost one hundred percent purity). The whiter and thus more refined the sugar, the more desired and thus expensive it was since the purer the sugar, the more efficiently it combined with most other foods and the easier it was to preserve.

In addition to being considered a spice, sugar was also considered to have medicinal value – a belief that persisted for centuries and which has perhaps never been entirely lost. Before sugar came to be known by most North Europeans, sugar was in fact consumed in large quantities as both a spice and medicine in the Eastern Mediterranean, Egypt and North Africa.[10] According to Sidney Mintz, as a medicine, sugar's utility was firmly established by physicians who worked across the Islamic world from India to Spain and it is from this source that sugar entered European

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[6] The term "spice" according to Webster's Dictionary, is used here to mean a class of aromatic vegetable productions used in cooking to season food and flavor items such as sauces and pickles.
[7] Mintz, Sidney W. Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History. New York, Ontario: Viking Penguin Inc., 1985. pp 79-80.
[8] Ibid. pp 82.
[9] Sugar loaves were in the form of a tall, gently tapering cylinder with a conical top and pieces were broken off with special iron sugar-cutters. The loaves could be quite large – about three feet high and fourteen inches in diameter – and would have weighted about thirty pounds. See Fig. 13.
[10] Mintz. pp 80.

medicinal practice via Arabic pharmacology.[11] Sugar was an important ingredient in a host of pharmacological preparations and used on its own or in mixtures with other items, was to be found on apothecaries' shelves throughout Europe in the early modern period.[12] The most vigorous of sugar's medical advocates claimed that it was good for almost every part of the body, persons of any age and that it cured and prevented illnesses, refreshed the weary and invigorated the weak.[13]

Sweetened Beverages: A British Taste for Coffee, Tea and Chocolate

The three major beverages consumed by the English during the eighteenth century were coffee, tea and chocolate – all tropical goods that before the late seventeenth century were too rare and costly to have a popular appeal. All three beverages share a naturally bitter taste and began as competitors for British preference. Tea was imported from China and later India, coffee from the West Indies and cocoa to produce chocolate from Africa and Central America. What makes these three beverages of interest to this discussion is that all three shared a naturally bitter taste and the thing that made them palatable to Europeans was the addition of sugar. Interestingly, none of these three imports to Europe had been used exclusively with a sweetener in its primary cultural setting. While it is possible to date, with fair confidence, the appearance of coffee, tea and chocolate in England to the seventeenth century, documentation for the custom of adding sugar to these beverages during their early period of introduction is almost nonexistent.[14] However, in his treatise on beverages entitled *The manner of making coffee, tea and chocolate* published in 1685, the author, John Chamberlayn, asserts that sugar was

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[11] Ibid. pp 80.

[12] Walvin, James. Fruits of Empire: Exotic Produce and British Taste, 1660-1800. Washington Square, New York: New York University Press, 1997. pp 118.

[13] Ibid. pp 119. Medical opinion about the value of sugar soon became divided however, and to some, the increased use of sugar posed serious medical problems such as the rotting of teeth and bad breath. However, such views did not take hold of popular opinion and from the seventeenth century, the influence of the powerful West India lobby of merchants, shippers, manufacturers and planters with vested interests in the success of the sugar trade, helped to advance the belief that sugar was not merely enjoyable in itself, as an ingredient in other foods and drinks, but that it was also very healthy.

[14] Mintz. pp 109.

taken with all three beverages by the time he was writing.[15] As such, the introduction of sugar as a necessary component for British consumption of these beverages was established some years before the eighteenth century and within a short time from initial introduction to England. Interestingly, the historian James Walvin has noted that, " the invisible ingredient which placed these exotic goods [coffee, tea and chocolate] on tables throughout the western world was the toil of black slaves.....[and that] without the slaves there would have been no sugar and without sugar there would have been no national addiction to coffee and, later, to tea."[16]

In fact, the British used sugar in much more than these beverages. By the middle and upper classes, sugar was lavishly employed in the elaborate and extensive feasts that were a sign of prestige and privilege. Sugar also became equally important to the working classes and was used in breads, porridge, treacle[17] and puddings - which required prodigious amounts of sugar and which is a dish that is still considered as a distinctive British food.[18] The German historian, Arnold Heeren, writing about the influence of the mercantile system of the eighteenth century tells us that, "This [influence of the mercantile system] was a natural consequence of the ever increasing importance of colonies, from the time that their productions, especially coffee, sugar, and tea, began to come into more general use in Europe. The great influence which these commodities have had, not only on politics, but also on the reformation of social life, is not easily calculated."[19] However, by considering how beverages and foods that relied so heavily on sugar for palatability were visually represented during the eighteenth century, a more detailed understanding of Europeans and specifically British changing consumption patterns of sugar that resulted from the labors of Africans on West Indian sugar plantations will emerge.

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[15] Chamberlayn, John. The manner of making coffee, tea and chocolate. London, 1685. Qtd. Mintz, pp 110.

[16] Walvin. Black Ivory: Slavery in the British Empire. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 2001. pp 4.

[17] Treacle is made from the syrup obtained during the refining processes of sugar production and is thus a by-product of sugar refining. Treacle was originally the name of a medicinal mixture that was used as an antidote against poisons but over time the pharmacological meaning was replaced. Around the seventeenth century in Britain, the word took on its present day meaning, and was used chiefly as a cheap form of sweetener.

[18] Walvin. Black Ivory. pp 5.

[19] Heeran, Arnold. A Manual of the history of the Political System of Europe and its Colonies. London: Henry G. Bohn, 1846. pp 172.

The Rise of British Coffee House Culture

Until the seventeenth century, coffee remained a curiosity for Europeans, known mainly through mention in accounts of journeys to "exotic" lands. Europeans, according to Wolfgang Schivelbusch, "could not imagine consuming a hot, black, bitter-tasting drink – much less with pleasure."[20] However, this situation quickly changed when sugar was introduced as the ingredient that would aid in the pleasure of consumption of this naturally bitter tasting bean and by the mid seventeenth century, consumption of this exotic beverage became fashionable, not for the entire European population, but certainly among the trend-setting strata of society. Coffee became as fashionable as the young black African slaves that were kept as mascots in a courtier's retinue and the initial attraction to this beverage was no so much the drink itself, but rather how it could be consumed and the opportunities it afforded for displays of elegance, grace and high refinement.[21] Illustrative of this appeal of beverages such as coffee for self-display is this eighteenth century portrait of Madame Du Barry by the artist Decreuse (Fig. 14). Madame Du Barry, a courtesan in the highest circles of Parisian society eventually became the official mistress of Louis XV, King of France, which demonstrates her position as a fashionable and trend-setting member of European society. In this portrait, Madame De Barry is depicted in the process of stirring her coffee, perhaps to dissolve the necessary sugar that would make the beverage palatable. Standing at the lower left corner of the composition, with half of his body cut from view by the edge of the frame, a young servant attends to his mistress who looks out to the viewer, as if aware of herself being on display. Like the young servant, the coffee and rituals that accompanied the consumption of coffee were important as displays of wealth, status and elegance of members belonging to the court and upper classes of society in Europe.

Madame Du Barry's portrait is of particular interest to this analysis on sugar and the institution of slavery in the West Indies as a result of the growing

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[20] Schivelbusch, Wolfgang. Tastes of Paradise: A Social History of Spices, Stimulants, and Intoxicants. New York: Vintage Books, 1993. pp 17.
[21] Ibid. pp 19.

demand for labor on plantations, as it links this current discussion of consumption with issues of slavery and human exploitation. While very little scholarship exists about this image, the young servant in the lower left corner of the composition is quite obviously not of European ancestry and has been forced into a life of servitude from such a young age based on the color of his skin and his ability to signify status and prestige. Dressed in a red luxurious fabric with gold accents and decorated with jewels on his ear, the young slave looks up to his mistress as he holds out a tray that contains the utensils for the coffee and probably seconds before the scene depicted, also contained the coffee cup that is delicately being stirred by Madame Du Barry.

As a young slave, his inclusion in the portrait recalls the thousands of other such child slaves who were employed from birth as labor for the production of commodities such as coffee and the sugar that sweetens the beverage held in the hands of his mistress. In the case of the West Indies sugar plantations, sugar slaves were divided into gangs and each gang had their own distinctive but complementary function.[22] As a young child, Madame Du Barry's slave would have served in the 'Third Gang' comprised of the very young or very old, who serviced the other gangs and undertook simple field tasks. It is this context that such children as the one depicted in the portrait, would have served their laboring apprenticeship, learning the skills and routines needed for "promotion" to more onerous work.[23] In this context however, the reality of child slave labor, which was a common practice throughout the eighteenth century, is suppressed in favor of picturing forced servitude as a position that allowed the enjoyment of fine and luxurious clothes, jewels and surroundings as depicted in the image in question. The young slave, the coffee and the ability to consume sugar act as symbols of wealth and social standing but the child's inclusion in the composition dressed in such an opulent manner and appearing happily engaged in the service of his mistress also works to negate the realities of the continuous labor and hardship

[22] Walvin. Fruits of Empire. pp 82.
[23] Ibid. pp 82.

that was the reality of slavery on the plantations that produced the commodities that Madame Du Barry enjoyed.

Turning our attention back to the rise in popularity of coffee and coffee house culture in Europe, it should be noted that life in London in the mid-eighteenth century revolved around the city's coffee houses that could be found in most streets, alleyways and thoroughfares of the city. The first London coffee house appears to have been opened by a Turkish merchant in 1652, and the concept grew with great rapidity, both on the Continent and in England.[24] In fact, by the year 1740, there were at least five hundred and fifty coffee houses throughout London.[25] Coffee houses sometimes served other drinks such as hot chocolate and tea, but coffee remained the predominant drink.[26] These coffee houses were more than simply places to obtain refreshments as they provided a range of functions and pleasures from serving as reading rooms and places for business to a rendezvous for artists and a spot where people could mingle on terms of friendly relaxation. Coffee houses also served as the cross-roads of international trade and empire as news, personnel and gossip about colonies were discussed on a regular basis and auctions and repossessions of runaway black slaves even occurred within the walls of such establishments.[27] As a site for the public life of the eighteenth-century middle classes and a place where the bourgeoisie could develop new forms of commerce and culture, the coffee houses exerted influence in its role as a social center.[28] Linked by the circulation of customers, publications, and information from one establishment to another, these establishments were representative of the major social network in existence at the

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[24] Mintz. pp 111. The first coffee house in Western Europe was actually opened in the university city of Oxford in 1650, some two years before the first establishment in London. A Lebanese man named Jacob set up shop there and coffee houses became popular venues for academic discussions and intellectual activities.

[25] Walvin, James. Black Ivory. pp 3. Curiously, Wolfgang Schivelbusch claims that according to documents of the period, around the year 1700 there were about 3000 coffee houses in London. With a population of 600,000 at the time, this would have meant one coffee house for every 200 people. While Schivelbusch agrees that this figure seems greatly exaggerated, the fact remains that coffee houses played a central role to daily life in London.
See: Tastes of Paradise. pp 51.

[26] Standage, Tom. A History of the World in 6 Glasses. New York: Walker & Company, 2006. pp 143.

[27] Walvin. Black Ivory. pp 3-4.

[28] Schivelbusch. pp 59.

time, all brought about by the commodities from British colonies and the labor of slaves that enabled a wider access to such products. In fact, the significance of coffee houses to life in London is most apparent when one considers the fact that between 1680 and 1730, inhabitants of London and visitors to coffee houses consumed more coffee than anywhere else in the world.[29] London coffee houses, while scattered throughout the city, typically specialized in a particular topic or political viewpoint, depending on the interests of their customers. Coffee houses became associated with specific trades, acting as meeting places, for example, where specific types of people could go if they were looking for employment. Typically, coffee houses catering to a particular clientele, or dedicated to a given subject were often clustered in the same neighborhood.[30]

An aquatint produced by William Holland after 1769 (Fig. 15) provides an interior view of the *New Lloyd's Coffee House* located in Pope's Head Alley in London. This establishment became the recognized meeting place for marine insurers and they are shown in this image, engrossed in reading the daily newspapers and their various business records while an employee of the establishment serves them coffee. These marine insurers who enjoy their sweetened coffee made by the labor of millions of slaves are also further implicated in the traffic of African slaves who provided labor for both the sugar and coffee plantations in the West Indies. As marine insurers, these men would have no doubt provided insurance for the cargo ships that transported shackled Africans to the West Indies. By providing insurance for the cargo ships, this included the cargo being transported of which a major component included the African slaves themselves. Since the slaves were considered as cargo and thus insured as such, the captain and crew of vessels making the journey from Africa to the West Indies, often engaged in disposal of slaves when they were deemed 'spoiled' in order to obtain the insurance value on the life of the slave. If slaves

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[29] Standage. pp 156.

[30] Ibid. pp 152. For example, politicians frequented coffee houses around Westminster; those near St. Paul's Cathedral were frequented by clergymen and theologians; the literary set usually congregated at Will's coffee house in Covent Garden; and the coffee houses around the Royal Exchange were the location for businessmen who would keep regular hours at particular establishments so that their associates would know where to find them.

were in poor health and it became clear that they would die before the voyage was over or, if they survived, would fetch low prices in the West Indies, the loss would fall on the owner of the vessel.[31] However, if they were jettisoned on any pretext concerning the safety of the ship or if they perished due to providential circumstances, the insurers, the very men who are shown in the coffee house, would pay for the losses to the ship owner.[32] As such, we see a multi-layered involvement in the slave trade and use of slave labor on sugar plantations in this aquatint of *New Lloyd's Coffee House.* Not only do the men in the composition enjoy the products of the slave labor, they also do so while earning a living on the very lives of the African slaves that were transported from Africa to the West Indies. Reduced to being just another object being transported like the sugar that would have taken the place of the Africans once the ship arrived in the West Indies, the African slave body also took on the status of a commodity. As a commodity, certain circumstances would have made it more financially beneficial to sailors and owners of ships to dispose of the slaves through murder rather than continue the voyage with those who were uncertain to survive or reap additional financial benefit through sale to plantation owners in the West Indies.

The coffee houses of London, while coming to prominence in a relatively brief period[33], became an extraordinarily important institution that depended for its very existence on produce from the British colonies including the West Indies. The liveliness and sociability with which customers engaged with each other in these spaces is captured in the frontispiece to Part IV of *Vulgus Britannicus, or*

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[31] Boime, Albert. The Art of Exclusion: Representing Blacks in the Nineteenth Century. Washington, London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1990. pp 67.

[32] Ibid. pp 67. For example, on March 19th 1783, an African who escaped from the slave ship *Zong*, told the story of one hundred and thirty-two of his fellow African slaves being thrown alive into the sea from the English slaver because water supplies were running low on board the vessel and as a result of an epidemic, the slaves were in poor health and so many would die before the voyage was over and the survivors would fetch low prices in Jamaica because of their reduced state of health.

[33] This is not to suggest that the initial introduction of coffee and coffee houses in England during the seventeenth century was not met with objections on various grounds. For example, some medical practitioners of the period believed the new drink was poisonous while other British commentators worried that coffee houses encouraged time-wasting and trivial discussion at the expense of other more important activities. In fact, in 1675 King Charles II issued a "Proclamation for the suppression of coffee-houses" which resulted in public outcries and eventual concessions being made to reinstate these establishments.

The British Hudibras, a satire on London politics, published in 1710 by Ned Ward. This engraved frontispiece entitled *The CoffeeHous Mob* (Fig. 16) depicts a wide range of men assembled in a coffee house and engaged in a variety of activities. Some of the men read newspapers, others smoke tobacco pipes and many engage in conversation with each other. At the center of the composition a dispute is taking place and the image shows one man in the process of throwing a dish[34] of coffee at the man who is obviously the object of his anger. At the forefront of the composition a young boy who appears to be employed at the establishment is in the process of pouring coffee from a pot, seemingly oblivious to the confusion taking place behind him. In the background, in the far left corner and behind a bar is a woman who appears, because of her removed position from the general crowd in the main room, to be the proprietor of the entire establishment. On the walls of the coffee house hang landscape paintings that, while impossible to accurately identify, could be images of the British colonies similar to those discussed earlier – a reminder of the source of the commodities these patrons enjoy. Images such as these included in Ward's publication attests to the increased consumption of exotic produce that only some short years earlier, were unattainable to the majority of the British population because of limited availability and high costs. It should also be noted that several of the men depicted in the image are smoking tobacco while enjoying their sweetened coffee. Tobacco, like coffee and sugar, was also produced by enslaved Africans in large-scale plantation systems in the New World.

In a similar fashion to the frontispiece included in Ward's *Vulgus Britannicus*, this unattributed seventeenth century woodcut provides yet another view of the interior of a London coffee house (Fig. 17). Five men sit around a table engaged in conversation over cups of coffee sweetened and made more palatable by the addition of West Indian sugar, as what appears to be an employee of the establishment approaches them with another coffee dish and jug to replenish their supply. Again, one of the men seated at the table is depicted

[34] In the seventeenth and early eighteenth century, coffee was served vessels called "dishes" or "bowls". The development of "coffee cups" as we know them today took place later in the century.

smoking a tobacco pipe, yet another commodity produced by a British colony. It was only as a result of the slave labor used to cultivate these products on a mass scale – a labor that was repeatedly suppressed and denied - that enjoyment and consumption of products such as coffee and sugar came to play a critical role in the social customs and identity of the British in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

When coffee was first introduced to Europe, the consuming population drank it only in coffee houses and it took about half a century before coffee entered the domestic sphere as a breakfast and afternoon drink.[35] Breakfast coffee, argues Schivelbusch, when introduced into the domestic sphere, retained traces of the cultural-historical effects of the coffee house and marked the start of the working day.[36] Afternoon coffee (and tea, as will be discussed shortly) became a female affair and can be seen as an outlet developed in compensation for women's exclusion from other public domains in the eighteenth century. With the introduction of coffee drinking to the private life of European consumers, the motif of the family gathered around a coffee or tea table became a favorite of artists for family portraits. This practice of representing families engaged in consumption of these recently introduced exotic beverages that became popular throughout Europe and especially in England as a result of the incorporation of sugar as a necessary but invisible ingredient, represents the transformation of consumption habits as a result of the increase of sugar production and subsequent export from the West Indies. It is through the labor of the African slaves who toiled without financial compensation and always under the watchful eye of the plantation owner that sugar was able to become more available and affordable to Europe thus serving to transform the social patterns and motifs employed by artists in the execution of family portraits. In a painting done by Jakob Denner in 1749 (Fig. 18), a family is arranged as in a traditional group portrait, with the coffee table and accompanying utensils required for coffee consumption, included as additions around which the family is gathered. While this image was not

[35] Schivelbusch. pp 62.
[36] Ibid. pp 63.

produced in England, it is demonstrative of the wide appeal of coffee consumption throughout Europe since its initial introduction in the seventeenth century.

We find however, many similar compositions produced in England, that follow the motif of depicting a family gathered around a table, consuming these newly introduced imports from various British colonies. In this image produced by an anonymous English artist (Fig. 19), we find a similar formal arrangement of figures, combined however, in an interesting way with almost an instructional representation of the technical details required in the drinking ritual itself. On the table, we see all the components required for the preparation and consumption and each figure is shown holding their cup in a different way, as though giving a demonstration to the viewer of how to drink the beverage. It should be noted that depicted in the middle of the table, above the head of the dog and close to the edge of the table thus providing a clear and unobstructed view, is a sugar bowl containing the ingredient that made such displays and representations possible, as well as sugar tongs, a fashionable addition to the ritual of coffee and tea consumption in England. References such as the sugar bowl and tong were included in many such family portrait scenes, a reminder of the combination of people, places and labor that enabled the rise of coffee and tea drinking culture in Europe. The three figures depicted in this portrait are representative of the far-reaching influence of colonial goods in the lives of British consumers regardless of age and gender. The young girl seated behind the table in the left of the composition enjoys her sweetened beverage and is shown with her hand delicately supporting the bottom of the coffee dish as she is about to sip its contents. In contrast to the young girl, the woman depicted at the right foreground holds a saucer in her left hand resting on her lap in such a way that enables the viewer to study the pattern and quality of the china, yet another sign of status and privilege. The woman in the forefront also holds her dish of coffee in such a manner that makes it evident that this position is meant simply to demonstrate drinking technique as it would be impossible from that angle for her to comfortably consume the beverage. Finally, the adult male shown between the two females

demonstrates yet another way that the beverage in his hand can be consumed to reflect one's position in society.

This family portrait can be read as a very contrived scene, elaborately constructed to reflect the social ambitions of the figures portrayed. In the commissioning process of portraits of this nature in the eighteenth century, the sitter or patron of the artist had the greatest input in what and how the figures would be represented.[37] Up until the late eighteenth century in England, the historical function of portraiture was used as an aristocratic and bourgeois cultural tool of social distinction[38] and this example conforms to this usage. As such, if we consider this fact in light of the family portrait under discussion (Fig. 19), we can assume that these figures desired to be represented in their various displays of the 'proper' ways to hold and consume their beverages. This image does not simply present to the viewer a natural moment in the lives of this family, but is rather specifically constructed by the artist to reflect the desires of his patrons to display themselves in positions that enable their consumption of commodities produced by colonies, consumed in the most elegant way and accompanied by all the external signs of wealth and rank such as the sugar bowl, tongs and china.

Craving Chocolate

In a similar fashion to coffee, chocolate, while initially more expensive, was considered an "exotic drink" and became extremely fashionable throughout Europe. It should be noted however that in England, chocolate was, and continued to be more costly than coffee, and remained the drink of more prosperous people until dramatic changes in cultivation and production in the nineteenth century made it genuinely cheaper to produce and widely popular among all classes of people.[39] As with new tropical commodities, the alleged medicinal benefits and aphrodisiac qualities were paraded as part of the broader social and medicinal

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[37] For more on the tradition of eighteenth-century portraiture in England see: Pointon, Marcia. Hanging the Head: Portraiture and Social Formation in Eighteenth-Century England. New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1993.

[38] Nelson, Charmaine, "Slavery, Portraiture and the Colonial Limits of Canadian Art History." *Canadian Woman Studies – Women and the Black Diaspora.* Winter 2004, Vol. 23, No. 2. pp 22.

[39] Walvin. Fruits of Empire. pp 94-5.

discourse about chocolate and as it increased in popularity, chocolate was promoted by men of science in the eighteenth century for its beneficial health virtues.[40] The early history of chocolate in England differed from other tropical drinks like coffee and tea and while it took its place alongside these other beverages in the coffee houses and other such public institutions of the late seventeenth century, chocolate did not make the same impact of the other two drinks. Of the three drinks, coffee became the preeminent social drink in public (excluding of course alcohol – rum of which was a direct product of the sugar cane plant), and tea and chocolate were soon relegated to the social dominance of coffee.[41]

It is believed that chocolate was introduced to Europe via the Spanish court in the sixteenth-century when Dominican friars were said to have brought Mayan nobles to meet Prince Philip.[42] While this account may be more allegorical than factual, within a century of the arrival of the Spanish to Mexico, both culinary and medicinal uses of chocolate had spread throughout Europe. European consumers considered chocolate to be both exciting and exotic and the beverage was soon in competition with coffee and tea in the eighteenth-century. The cocoa plant, from which chocolate is derived, originated between the Amazon and the Orinoco, but was transported into other suitable growing regions of the world on the back of European exploration, trade and settlement.[43] In England, chocolate closely followed the route of other colonial produce, and was first served alongside coffee in the coffee houses that emerged in London in the seventeenth century. Chocolate was first advertised in London in 1657, " In Bishopgate St, in Queen's Head Alley, at a Frenchman's house, is an excellent West India drink called Chocolate to be sold..."[44] In similar fashion to the British coffee houses, chocolate houses also emerged as a fashionable spot where the British could

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[40] Ibid. pp 95.
[41] Ibid. pp 97-8.
[42] Grivetti, Louis E. "From Aphrodisiac to Health Food: A Cultural History of Chocolate." Karger Gazette. No. 68. July 13th 2007. < http://www.karger.com/gazette/68/grivetti/art_1.htm. >
[43] For example, the Spaniards took the cocoa plant to the Philippines in about 1670 and possibly to the Celebes and the Dutch took it to Indonesia, Sao Tome off West Africa, Venezuela and Amsterdam.
[44] 'Historicus." Cocoa. All About It. London, 1896. pp 46. Qtd in Walvin. Fruits of Empire. pp 95.

gather and debate politics, global affairs and trade over cups of chocolate drink.[45] A watercolor produced by Henry Rowlandson (Fig. 20) captures the similarities in environment between the coffee and chocolate houses of the period. In this image, men and women come together for discussion and enjoyment over cups of chocolate shown on the table and in the hands of many of the patrons of the establishment.

While, according to James Walvin, chocolate was already well-established in other European cities[46], it made its name in England as a West Indian product in the mid seventeenth century since it was in this time that the British were acquiring their own Caribbean empire.[47] As Walvin notes, in 1655, the British had taken Jamaica from the Spaniards, which enabled the island's sugar plantations which were established by the Spanish, to feed the growing British demand for chocolate.[48] This however, proved to be short lived as a disease in the year 1670 killed off most of Jamaica's cocoa in the south of the island, leaving only a small growth of crops on the north coast of Jamaica.[49] This fact is of particular relevance to this investigation as it further demonstrates the links between the consumption of commodities such as chocolate and sugar. As a result of the disease that killed most of Jamaica's cocoa plants, the island remained with only thirty two cocoa plantations as compared to two hundred and forty six sugar plantations, all worked with the unpaid and forced labor of slaves. Following this disease of the cocoa plants on the island, settlers in Jamaica turned to sugar on a massive scale, and the rise of sugar served to push aside any efforts at reviving cocoa production. Regardless of this change of plantation production in Jamaica, more and more chocolate found its way to London[50], and its acceptability was

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[45] Grivetti.

[46] A book written in 1631 described how chocolate was now "much used in Spain, Italy and Flanders" and in the next twenty years was to be found in courtly circles across Western Europe. In the 1650's about half a million pounds of cocoa was imported into Spain and four times that amount in the 1660s.

[47] Walvin. Fruits of Empire. pp 95.

[48] Ibid. pp 96.

[49] Dunn, Richard S. Sugar and Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624-1713. Virginia, Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1972. pp 168.

[50] Some people acquired chocolate from friends and relatives who had settled in various West Indian islands and the Dutch and Spanish dominated more large-scale import of chocolate to England.

promoted by the very same sugar that flowed from the hundreds of plantations established in the West Indies.[51]

As has been noted, in addition to the social pleasures afforded to patrons of chocolate houses, the medicinal uses of this beverage were also promoted by eminent physicians of the eighteenth century. Sir Hans Sloane, author of *Natural History of Jamaica*, discussed previously, recommended the drink "For its Lightness on the Stomach & its great Use in all Consumptive Cases."[52] Sloane made a considerable amount of money from the promotion of milk chocolate and as the trade card for "Sir Hans Sloane's Milk Chocolate" (Fig. 21) attests, he attempted to maintain this income by warning patrons of possible counterfeits of his brand of milk chocolate. Interestingly, Sloane's introduction to chocolate was during his stay in Jamaica and he initially found it to be "nauseous and hard of digestion."[53] However, after further experimentation with mixing the chocolate with milk and large amounts of sugar, Sloane demonstrated that it could be made much more palatable and thus desirable as a commodity for potential British patrons.[54] This sugar as well as the cocoa that were the primary ingredients for his recipe for milk chocolate was the product of the African slave labor on the plantations that surrounded him during his time in Jamaica. As noted earlier, the African slave body and the extensive amount of labor required to cultivate the sugar cane plant in order to produce sugar in its consumable and exportable form were two issues that were denied in the engravings produced to accompany Sloane's two volume *Natural History of Jamaica*. Sugar then, was the invisible yet critical ingredient that contributed to the rise of chocolate consumption in eighteenth century British society. In a similar manner as coffee, the popularity of chocolate depended on the labor of African slaves on the West Indian sugar

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[51] Walvin. Fruits of Empire. pp 96.

[52] MacGregor, Arthur ed. Sir Hans Sloane: Collector, Scientist, Antiquary Founding Father of the British Museum. London: British Museum Press, 1994. pp 15.
"Consumptive Cases" referred to illness of the stomach and body related to eating practices.

[53] Sloane, Hans Sir. Qtd. in MacGregor. pp 139.

[54] Upon his return to London, Sloane gave his recipe to Nicholas Sanders of Soho who manufactured chocolate and Sanders later passed on the trade and his recipe to his successor, William White. During the nineteenth century, Messrs Cadbury who also used Sloane's recipe continued the production of milk chocolate and to this day the Cadbury name is still associated with chocolate manufacture and sale.

plantations to supply ever-increasing demands – a fact that was not only denied by Sloane[55], but also often went unacknowledged by consumers of these beverages.

The necessity of sugar to the rise of chocolate consumption throughout Europe, can be observed in a painting completed by Jean-Etienne Liotard entitled *A Lady Pouring Chocolate* (c. 1744) (Fig. 22). In this image, a young woman is shown making drinking chocolate for herself and an unseen companion as evidenced by the two cups on the table. Seated at a table, the young woman appears engrossed in her task at hand, seemingly taking great care to perform the rituals associated with chocolate preparation in the prescribed manner. In the image, the artist has adopted a high viewpoint that enables him to show separately, the objects on the table in front of the young woman, and the way these objects and the table variously reflect light.[56] Of particular interest in this image, are the objects shown with great detail on the table. On the tray that holds the two cups of chocolate that the young woman has just prepared, is a small jug containing milk and a bowl with sugar. Once again, the easily overlooked presence of the sugar bowl on the tray, demonstrates the necessity of this British West Indian commodity to the rise in consumption of beverages such as chocolate throughout Europe. In the case of chocolate preparation, it was customarily drunk with both milk and sugar in order to dilute the naturally bitter taste of the cocoa bean and this painting by Liotard provides evidence for this practice and the centrality of sugar to consumption habits across Europe.

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[55] As discussed in the previous chapters, Sloane's denial took the form of the absence of the black slave body in his illustrations accompanying his *Natural History of Jamaica* as well as his manner of representing the sugar cane plant so as to deny the labor intensive nature of its cultivation and production.

[56] The National Gallery, London. "A Lady Pouring Chocolate." July 19th 2007. < http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/cgi-bin/WebObjects.dll/CollectionPublisher.woa/wa/work?workNumber=l928 >

A Nation's Taste for Tea

"As a rule they [the English] will refuse even to sample a foreign dish, they regard such things as garlic and olive oil with disgust, life is unlivable to them unless they have tea and puddings."
George Orwell, The Lion and the Unicorn:
"The English People"
Collected Essays (1941)

When we think, even today, of a national British drink, tea immediately comes to mind. Tea is first mentioned in European reports in the 1550s and small quantities may have been brought to Lisbon privately by Portuguese sailors, but it was not until 1610 that a Dutch ship brought the first commercial consignment of tea to Europe, where it was regarded as a novelty.[57] From the Netherlands, tea reached France in the 1630s and England in the 1650s.[58] Although tea was available in Europe a few years earlier than coffee, tea had far less impact during the seventeenth century, largely because it was more expensive and only became a popular commodity in the eighteenth century. As revealed by the East India Company's records, tea "took off" in England during the years 1700 to 1710, and by the 1750s over thirty seven million pounds of tea was imported by Britain.[59] Before the eighteenth century, tea was a commodity that was only enjoyed by royalty because of its limited availability and high price. However, as the slave trade increased, products, like sugar - a major ingredient in tea for the British in the eighteenth century - became more available and prices were more affordable for the common people.[60] By the time tea and its sister drinks coffee and chocolate were taken up by the working people of England, they were all being served hot and sweetened and tea eventually supplanted the consumption of home-brewed small beer almost entirely as well as contested the popularity of

[57] Standage. pp 185.
[58] Ibid. pp 185.
[59] Walvin, James. Fruits of Empire. pp 16. These figures, while remarkable, do not include smuggled tea, which probably doubled the volume of imports for much of the century until the duty levied on tea was sharply reduced in 1784.
[60] Ibid. pp 17.

other strong alcoholic intoxicants such as gin.[61] Tea soon emerged as the most economical of these three beverages under discussion and as the English drank more of these imports, the beverages themselves became more and more English through the process of ritualization and by being produced more and more in British colonies.[62]

Tea drinking among the working classes in England, is believed to have begun in connection with work rather than with the home. This tradition of the working classes is in distinction to the tea ritual of the higher class groupings and bears little resemblance to the formal displays of culture and refinement that was also associated with the upper class customs of coffee and tea consumption. Hot, heavily sweetened tea that was consumed by the laboring classes at work served to transform a cold and hurried meal and added to calorie intake because of the sugar content. In contrast, tea drinking among the upper and middle classes became an opportunity to display all the accoutrements of good breeding, manners and etiquette.

As Alan and Iris Macfarlane note, "In a class-conscious yet mobile society where tiny signs in language, gesture and objects were constantly being interpreted to place people socially, tea became an important mechanism for inclusion and exclusion."[63] The concept of the 'afternoon tea party' developed, for instance, and there was special tea equipment and a mass of writing devoted to the art of tea preparation and serving.[64] As the passion for tea grew, tea-serving equipment became more complex. The Chinese style teapot initially used, was modified so that tea could be poured through a sprout. Because the British decided to add sugar and milk to their tea, spoons became necessary and saucers were added to the cups to hold the spoons. The teacup with a handle was also another European adaptation as the Chinese did not put handles on their own

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[61] Mintz. pp 110.
[62] This ritualization of tea drinking in England has been attributed to Catherine of Braganza, the Portuguese bride of Charles II who reigned from 1649 to 1685. She was able to substitute tea as the fashionable beverage of the court in places of ales, wines and spirits. Because of her position and influence, the tradition of tea drinking was soon picked up by the upper class British and subsequently followed by the lower and working classes.
[63] Macfarlane, Alan and Iris Macfarlane. The Empire of Tea: The Remarkable History of the Plant that Took Over the World. Woodstock & New York: The Overlook Press, 2004. pp 83.
[64] Ibid. pp 84.

teacups and handles were specifically manufactured on cups made in China and meant for export to Europe after about 1750.[65] Sugar bowls and milk pots also accompanied the teapot and teacups and these objects became a way in which conspicuous displays of wealth and taste could establish status through the ceremony of tea. For instance, the exact shape and style of the tea-serving equipment, the flavor of the tea and the way in which fingers were used to pick up the teacup would indicate which social stratum a person came from.[66] These elaborate and highly ritualized displays of wealth that became associated with the consumption of tea and other such imported beverages, reveals the significance of the British colonial enterprise on shaping the lives of others throughout the world. As a result of the significance tea consumption played in the social lives of the British in the eighteenth century, changes in the specifications of manufacture of tea serving equipment, detailed guidelines outlining 'correct' ways of holding and consuming these beverages, and the increased exploitation of slaves that produced the necessary ingredients for such displays of privilege and social standing ensued.

This engraving by J Hall after E Edwards published in *The Rambler* in 1779 (Fig. 23) depicts this British custom of gatherings at the home that surrounded the custom of tea drinking. In this image, three women and two men are shown at a genteel tea party, engaged in conversation around a table containing all the objects required for tea consumption. In another such engraving by Isaac Taylor entitled *English Tea Party* (c. 1750) (Fig. 24), the seven figures depicted are again engaged in conversation surrounding the consumption of tea. At the center of this composition, a young woman is shown in the process of pouring hot water into a tea pot and both engravings include, once again, the obligatory sugar bowl on the table – a necessary ingredient for a successful tea party. All the figures shown are dressed in a manner that reflect their higher status in society and distinguishes them and the ritual in which they are engaged from the lower working classes. However, the enthusiasm of the poor and working

[65] Hobhouse, Henry. Seeds of Change: Five Plants that Transformed Mankind. London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1985. pp 109.
[66] Macfarlane. pp 83.

classes for the consumption of tea resulted in the imitation of tea consumption's associated rituals and was criticized as the poor imitating their betters in a pretentious way.[67]

In addition to these afternoon tea parties that emerged as a display of manners and breeding, there was also a tradition of consuming tea at pleasure gardens. In these gardens, Londoners were able to promenade, look at interesting objects or pieces of sculpture, and drink tea. Tea however, always remained the central focus and these gardens became another location where the gentry and middle classes congregated to 'take tea', gossip, exchange information and sometimes listen to music.[68] Of note is that these gardens were places women and children as well as men were welcome as opposed to the coffee houses that were traditionally adult male meeting places. As these pleasure gardens were becoming increasingly popular meeting sites that focused on the consumption of tea, artists began to appropriate this setting for portraits and scenes of London life. In this eighteenth century engraving after George Morland entitled *London Tea Party* (Fig. 25), a family is shown taking afternoon tea together in a London tea garden. The children are shown playing freely while the mother of the family holds a young baby and is dressed in her finest clothes in order to reflect the family's position and status. In the background of the composition, another a family can be seen, apparently taking a walk through the garden. Even though this consumption of tea is taking place in a public setting away from the comforts and conveniences of the home, the sugar bowl on the table is still present, confirming its necessity to this afternoon social ritual. In this frequently repeated setting, an engraving by FD Soiron of 1790 (Fig. 26) shows another family engaged in the activity of having afternoon tea at St. James Park in London. Dressed in their finest, this engraving also shows even the children in the family partaking of this ritual consumption, while the father of the household, dressed in his military costume, looks on at his

[67] Ibid. pp 83. As noted, it was not only the upper and middle classes whose daily lives were shaped by tea. The development of the 'tea break' made life more bearable for the working classes and gave workers something to look forward to and became the central social ceremony during the long hours of the workday. Fortified by the caffeine and the sugar, relaxed and reinvigorated by the drink, workers could return to their relentless tasks and do things that would have been beyond endurance without the tea break.

[68] Ibid. pp 80.

wife and young child. Tea, as compared to coffee, was perceived to be a gentler drink, milder in its effect, and hence quite suitable for women and children as evidenced in these engravings.

As the drinking of tea became a central social event in the lives of the upper and middle classes, it also altered the rhythm of the British day and the nature of meals. Breakfast had been a heavy meal with meat and ale consumed but was transformed into a lighter meal with bread, cakes, preserves and a hot drink, particularly tea.[69] It should be noted that all these foods that began to replace meat and ale for breakfast, contained sugar. This even included breads, which by the eighteenth century was, as compared to the previous century, being increasingly produced out of the home, and sugar was added to the ingredients in keeping with the growing addiction of the population. In fact, it may be more appropriate to conclude that it was sugar itself that was responsible for the complete change in British consumption patterns and habits. Capturing this substitution of tea for ale at the breakfast table is an engraving by Barlow entitled *Dr. Samuel Johnson at Hester Thrale's Breakfast Table* (c. 1770) (Fig. 27). In this image, we see these two men along with two women seated at the breakfast table, beginning their meal with cups of tea being poured by one of the elegantly dressed seated figures. As the servant stands in the background as if awaiting orders from his master, the central figures grouped around the table, are clearly demonstrative of the British populations growing reliance (and certainly addiction in some capacity) to commodities like sugar and tea, made available by the labors of foreign people in distant places.

As noted throughout, the success of tea was also the success of sugar. In the interests of the West Indian sugar plantation owners, increasing consumption of any of the exotic beverages was highly desirable as sugar was a necessary ingredient for them. The addition of tea and sugar to the everyday diet of the English population in the eighteenth century, according to Sidney Mintz, "signaled the linkage of the consumption habits of every Englishman to the world

[69] Ibid. pp 93.

outside England, and particularly to the colonies of the empire."[70] This increased desire in the population for commodities produced by the British colonies was a fact that was not lost on contemporary eighteenth-century society. In a letter from Horace Walpole to Sir Horace Mann in 1779, Walpole states, "I am heartily glad that we shall keep Jamaica and the East Indies another year, that one may have time to lay in a stock of tea and sugar for the rest of one's days."[71] However, what Walpole, like many other of his contemporaries, fails to acknowledge in their desire for commodities such as sugar and tea, is the forced African slave labor and inhuman treatment that was endured in the West Indies and other British colonies, in order to supply the metropolis with the growing demand for such goods. As noted previously, by the mid-eighteenth century, the most important beverage in England was being brewed from what was referred to angrily by some as an 'oriental vegetable', imported from China, drunk hot and heavily sweetened with British West Indian sugar.[72] In an often-quoted paragraph by the early nineteenth century historian David MacPherson, he claimed that:

> Tea has become an economical substitute to the middle and lower classes of society for malt liquor, the price of which renders it impossible for them to procure the quantity sufficient for them as their only drink...In short, we are so situated in our commercial and financial system, that tea brought from the eastern extremity of the world, and sugar brought from the West Indies and both loaded with the expense of freight and insurance...compose a drink cheaper than beer.[73]

This statement is a startling revelation about the conversion during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, of certain goods like sugar, which were initially luxuries of the leisured and rich that became cheaper to consume than items produced in England. This drastic increase in sugar supply from the British

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[70] Mintz. pp 119.
[71] Letter of Horace Walpole to Sir Horace Mann. 15 November 1779. Qtd in Botsford, J.B. English Society in the Eighteenth Century as Influenced from Overseas. New York: Macmillan, 1924. pp 27.
[72] Mintz, Sidney W. " The Changing Roles of Food in the Study of Consumption." Consumption and the World of Goods. Eds. John Brewer and Roy Porter. London and New York: Routledge, 1993. pp 264.
[73] MacPherson, David. The History of the European Commerce with India. London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme & Brown, 1812. pp 132.

West Indies that resulted in sugar becoming affordable to all of the population, was as a result of the use of slave labor rather than waged labor and suggests the extent of expansion in sugar production on West Indian plantations that would have been required in order to meet these increased levels of consumption. Filling this increased demand would have required even more labor from African slaves in the West Indies, a topic that remains unacknowledged in the visual documentation about changing consumption patterns in Britain.[74]

Exploring the changing consumption patterns of three beverages – coffee, chocolate and tea – in England as well as throughout Europe more generally, reveals some interesting parallels that can be made about British West Indian sugar consumption in the seventeenth and eighteenth century. These three beverages required large amounts of sugar to make them more palatable and because of this addition, these beverages transformed the social habits, rituals and consumption practices of Europe. Considering how these drinks became naturalized in the visual imagery of the period reveals the level of dependence on sugar for daily practices and social rituals. The sugar that became increasingly demanded was supplied to England by sugar plantations in the British West Indian colonies and as demand for the commodity rose, so too did the labor demands of sugar plantation owners. Plantation owners turned to the forced transplantation of African slaves to fulfill this demand, thus perpetuating the vicious cycle of the slave trade and subsequent human exploitation. Sugar, it can be said, became the commodity that effectively transformed the lives of not only the European consumers but also the millions of people whose labors were necessary to feed their desires. This labor, as we have seen, goes unacknowledged in the engravings and paintings that captured the social habits of the middle and upper classes. The constant presence of, for example, the sugar bowl in images of

[74] Indicative of this the increased African slave labor required on West Indian sugar plantations to meet the growing demands of the British for sugar : In Jamaica in the year 1670 there were about nine thousand slaves and by the year 1790, the slave population had increased to almost two hundred thousand; On the island of Barbados, between 1700 and 1760, one hundred and eighty thousand slaves were brought from Africa to supply the labor needs of planters. More generally, in the seventeenth century, more than a quarter of a million Africans were imported into the British West Indies; each year in the eighteenth century the British shipped forty five thousand slaves across the Atlantic; between 1690 and 1760 they transported about one million two hundred thousand slaves and in the next fifty years one million six hundred thousand more.

the rituals of consumption throughout Europe, stands as a reminder of the labor of African slaves in the West Indies, all in order to supply a product that was once considered a luxury only for the very wealthy and upper classes.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has explored the ways in which British West Indian sugar was represented in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in relation to Trans Atlantic slavery that was introduced for the large-scale plantation cultivation and production of this increasingly valuable commodity. The preceding chapters have considered how the visual representation of sugar – as an object of botanical study, as landscape and through its consumption – reflected the interests and agendas of the expanding imperial project in the Caribbean. Paying particular attention to the British West Indian imperial project, this analysis has investigated the artistic and aesthetic devices employed to construct concepts about the sugar cane plant and sugar as a commodity more generally, which worked to erase and suppress the laboring presence of the African slave body.

As a site for imperial expansion, the islands of the West Indies during the seventeenth century provided the land and climate that made their conversion to a sugar monoculture possible. By turning to Africa and expanding the slave trade, planters were able to fill their demands for labor as sugar plantations began to increase in size to fill the growing consumption of the metropolis. As a result of the growing commercial popularity of sugar over the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the need to cultivate sugar expanded apace resulting in the forced transplantation of millions of African slaves to provide free labor for the West Indian plantocracy. This presence of African labor, an essential and indispensable component of the rapidly expanding sugar production industry in the West Indies, remained an issue that became repeatedly suppressed and often ignored in the visual representations of sugar that were produced by British artists of the period.

My approach to this project has been maintained, most consistently, through the lens of a postcolonial art historian. My focus on sugar as the object of analysis throughout has little precedence in the study of art history as tradition has privileged issues such as the body and landscapes over commodity based investigations. This project then, has aimed to expand the limited boundaries of existing scholarship on issues such as slavery and race and representation in the visual arts. As such, I have analyzed many of the representations of sugar

discussed throughout the body of this text in conjunction with scholarship from disciplines outside the study of art history, in order to more fully contextualize and situate the social, scientific and economic significance of sugar to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. A study of this nature provides some much needed consideration of the role of the visual object in both constructing and reflecting the agendas and ideologies of the British imperial powers as well as those who derived economic benefits from the expansion of sugar production and consumption in the British West Indies.

Chapter One of this thesis provided some necessary historical and theoretical frameworks in order to situate the importance of sugar to the establishment of the British West Indies colonies and the subsequent rise of the African slave trade. This chapter also introduced theoretical issues concerning the concept of empire and imperialism that formed the basis of discussion for many of the issues developed in later chapters.

Following this historical and theoretical overview, Chapter Two introduced the concept of scientific explorations into the New World in search of new and exotic natural life to be displayed, described, illustrated and collected by European consumers. As a case study for the representation of the sugar cane plant in such natural histories produced as a result of travels to the West Indies, I discussed Hans Sloane's *Natural History of Jamaica* (1707,1725). A substantial portion of this chapter was concerned with the original context in which the botanical illustration of the sugar cane plant appeared and so my analysis of the image was done in conjunction with Sloane's written descriptions of the islands he visited along with the actual specimens he collected and took back to England. The concept of accurate and objective observation as the basis for any written or visual accounts of natural life was shown to be a guise through which specific notions about the natural life of the West Indies could be presented that engaged with demands by European consumers of these natural histories for objects of curiosity. In Sloane's desire for maintaining elements of the curious in his publication, the sugar cane plant became visually represented in such a manner that distanced its production and cultivation from the African slaves who

performed these labor-intensive processes. The productive slave labor then gets erased from Sloane's botanical representations of the sugar cane, an act which can be read as illustrative of maintaining imperial and personal investments in the continuation of the slave trade and growth of the sugar industry in the British West Indies.

Chapter Three then moved on to consider the construction of the West Indian sugar plantation as landscape through artistic and aesthetic devices employed by artists such as George Robertson who was commissioned by the sugar plantation owner, William Beckford. Robertson's images, read in conjunction with the textual descriptions of Beckford in his *Descriptive Account* (1790), worked to promote the concept of variety of the natural life in the West Indies. This concept of variety served to transform Beckford's sugar plantations into picturesque landscapes that were then comparable to other tropical places such as Tahiti. In performing this transformation of the sugar plantation, the African slave body was also transformed into one at rest and pictured at leisure and with unrestricted freedom. The absence of the white body from the landscape images produced by Robertson also suppressed the control and domination over the black slave body thus acting to naturalize the African presence within the transplanted West Indian landscape. Once again, this chapter demonstrated the absence of the laboring slave body in relation to images about sugar cultivation in the British West Indies, an absence that was used in the service of anti-abolitionists and those with vested interests in the commercial success that could be made through the trade of sugar.

Following the discussion about the botanical images of the sugar cane plant and the transformation of the West Indian sugar plantation into picturesque landscape, Chapter Four turned toward the source of the continually increasing demand for sugar – the British consumer. By considering images of consumption of British West Indian produced sugar through the rise in social and societal rituals surrounding coffee, tea and chocolate, this chapter explored the ways in which the growing demands for sugar and the elaborate customs that surrounded its consumption were pictured in relation to slaves and slave trade that was the

source of labor for this commodity. This chapter, by turning toward the source of demand for increased sugar production and thus continued exploitation of African slaves, provided a more detailed and comprehensive understanding of the economic, social and cultural trajectory of sugar as well as allowed discussion of issues such as class, race and politics in relation to British West Indian sugar.

As noted previously, while the main focus of analysis of this thesis was the visual representation of the sugar cane plant and sugar produced in the British West Indies, this project demonstrated some of the many ways in which this commodity was pictured in relation to African slavery that reflected imperial as well as personal investments and agendas. As an object of scientific inquiry and through the guise of objective observation and description, the sugar cane plant was so pictured as to maintain its place as an object of curiosity, which worked to deny the labor-intensive requirements for its cultivation. In terms of West Indian sugar plantations, the seat of sugar cultivation, harvesting and production, the land became transformed into a picturesque landscape through the introduction and promotion of variety of natural life. This constructed picturesque view allowed the representation of the African slave body at rest and naturalized within the West Indian landscape. Finally, as a consumable commodity that was associated with social rituals surrounding class, prestige and access, British consumption of items such as tea and coffee in which sugar remained the necessary yet invisible ingredient for palatability, the slave labor which was the source of production remained unacknowledged in the visual representations of consumption.

While the preceding analysis discussed distinct issues – classification, cultivation and consumption of sugar – and the objects of analysis drew from various media, ranging from illustrations in natural histories, engravings of drawings and portraiture, I have attempted throughout to provide historical and contextual considerations of issues such as the materiality and circulation of each object. However, given the scope of this project, many issues mentioned could not be explored in exhaustive detail, but, where possible, I have included additional sources of information that the reader may consult to further explore specific issues. The limitations of this study brings to the forefront the need for expansion

and further analysis on many of the issues discussed throughout the body of this text. As a basis for further art historical scholarship, consideration of the visual representation of a natural commodity such as sugar provides a productive point of departure from which other scholars may continue to explore the colonial history of the British West Indies and the resulting expansion of the African slave trade that was inextricably linked to the increasing desire for sugar of European consumers.

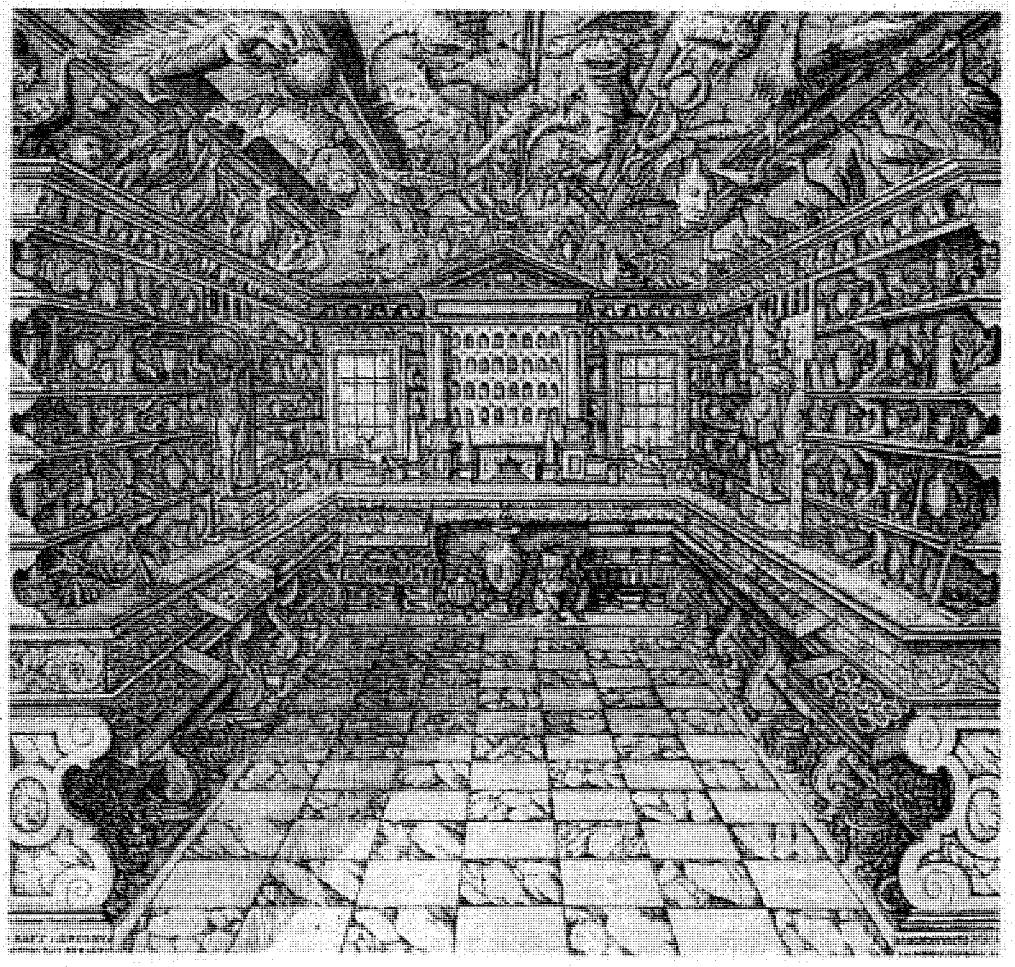

Figure 1.
The Cabinet of Fancesco Calzolari, from his *Museum Calceolarium* (Verona, 1622).
(Source: Mauries, Patrick. Cabinets of Curiosities. London: Thames & Hudson Ltd., 2002.)

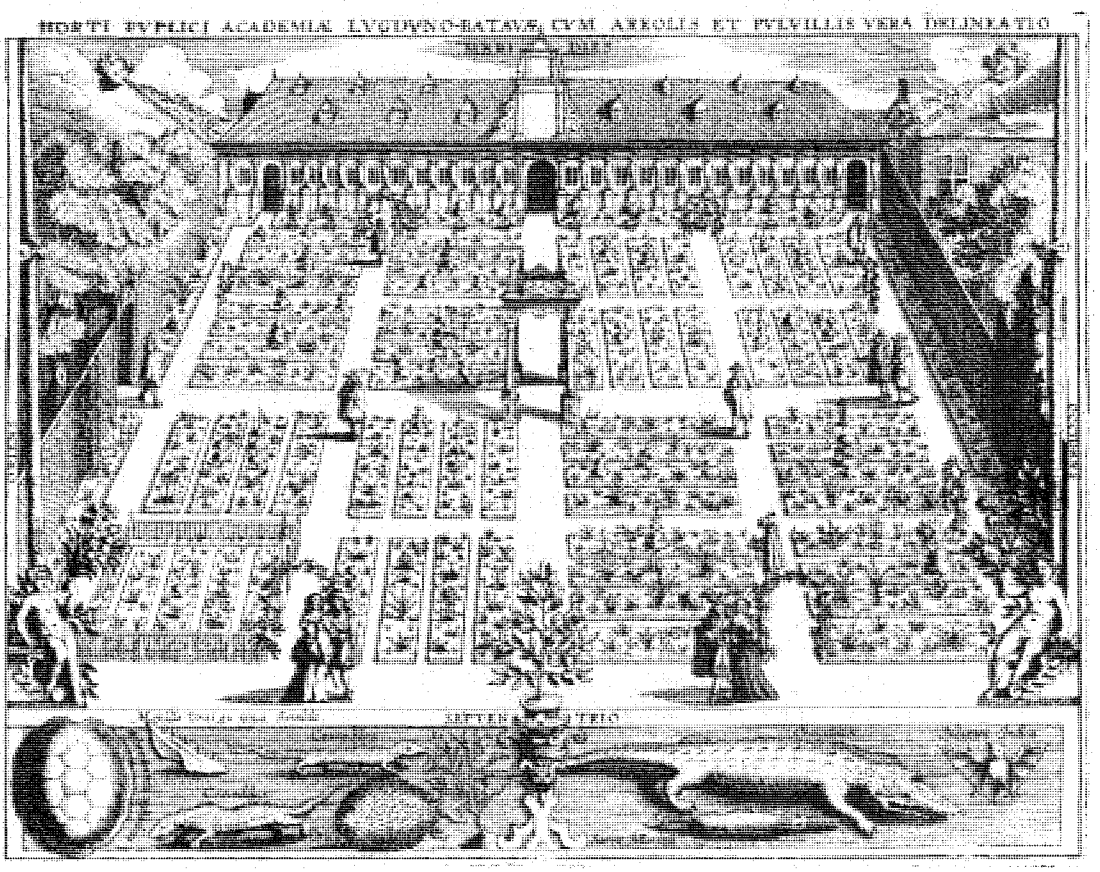

Figure 2.
Willem Swanenburgh after I.C. Woudanus, *Leiden University Hortus Publicus* (1610).
(Source: Swan, Claudia. "From Blowfish to Flower Still Life Paintings: Classification and Its Images, circa 1600." Merchants and Marvels: Commerce, Science, and Art in Early Modern Europe. Eds. Pamela H. Smith and Paula Findlen. New York, London: Routledge, 2002.)

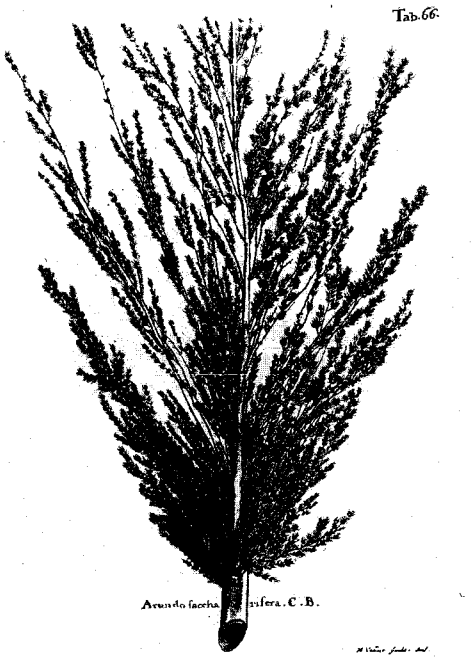

Figure 3.
Michael van der Gucht, *Arundo sacchariferа* [Sugar cane] (1707), engraving.
(Source: Sloane, Hans. Natural History of Jamaica. Plate 66, Vol. 1.)

To Her Moſt Excellent Majeſty,

The QUEEN:

THIS

Natural Hiſtory of Jamaica,

ONE OF

The Largeſt and moſt Conſiderable

OF

Her Majeſty's PLANTATIONS

IN

AMERICA.

Is with all Humility Dedicated,

BY

Her Majeſty's moſt dutiful and
moſt obedient Subject,

Hans Sloane.

Figure 4.
Hans Sloane. *Title Page* (1707).
(Source: Sloane, Hans. Natural History of Jamaica. Vol. 1.)

Figure 5.
Paul Latham. Photograph of Sugar Cane Plants.
(Source: http://home.scarlet.be/~tsh77586/Latham2.htm)

Figure 6.
Gramen dactylon bicorne tomentosum (1707), engraving.
(Source: Sloane, Hans. Natural History of Jamaica. Plate 15, Vol. 1.)

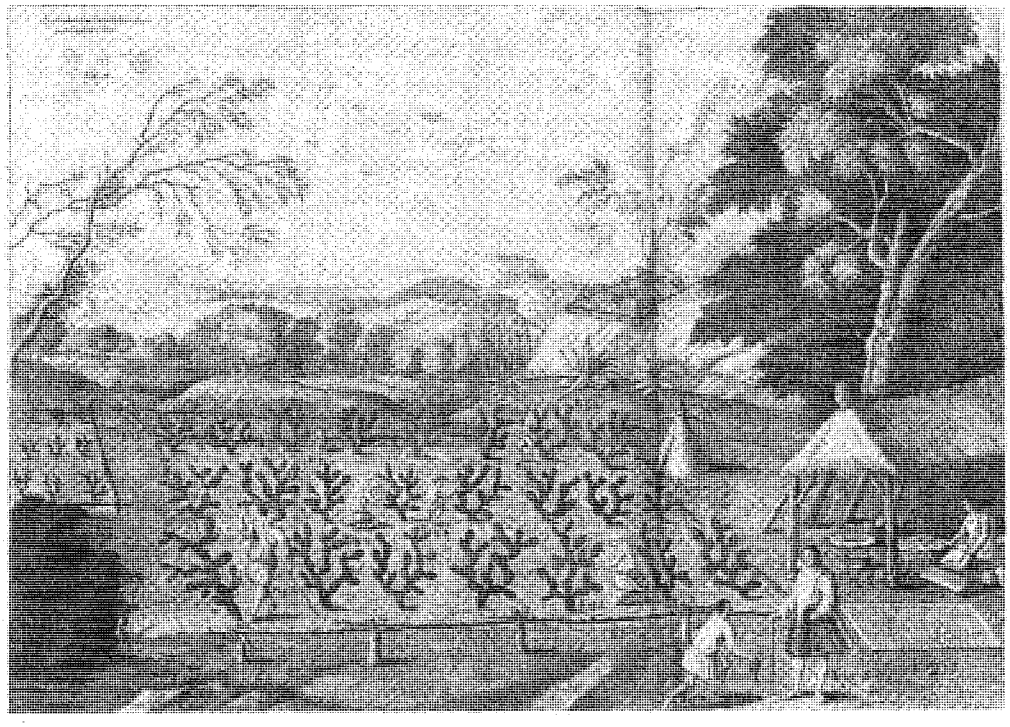

Figure 7.
Michael van der Gucht, *The manner of propagating, gathering & curing the Grana or Cochineel* (1725), engraving.
(Source: Sloane, Hans. Natural History of Jamaica. Plate 9, Vol. 2.)

Figure 8.
Arthur Broughton, *Hortus Eastensis*: or *A Catalogue of Exotic Plants, in the Garden of Hinton East, Esq. in the Mountain of Liguanea* (1792), plate.
(Source: Edwards, Bryan. The History, Civil and Commercial, of the British Colonies in the West Indies. London: John Stockdale, 1801.)

A

DESCRIPTIVE ACCOUNT

OF THE

ISLAND

OF

JAMAICA:

WITH

Remarks upon the Cultivation of the SUGAR-CANE, throughout the different Seasons of the Year, and chiefly considered in a Picturesque Point of View;

ALSO

Observations and Reflections upon what would probably be the Consequences of an ABOLITION of the SLAVE-TRADE, and of the EMANCIPATION of the SLAVES.

By WILLIAM BECKFORD, Esq.

Author of *Remarks on the Situation of Negroes in Jamaica.*

——— "*Sine me, liber, ibis in urbem:*
"*Hei mihi! quod domino non licet ire tuo.*"

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOLUME I.

LONDON:

Printed for T. and J. EGERTON, *Whitehall.*

M,DCC,XC.

Figure 9.
William Beckford, *Title Page* (1790).
(Source: Beckford, William. Descriptive Account. Vol. 1. London: Printed for T. and J. Egerton, 1790.)

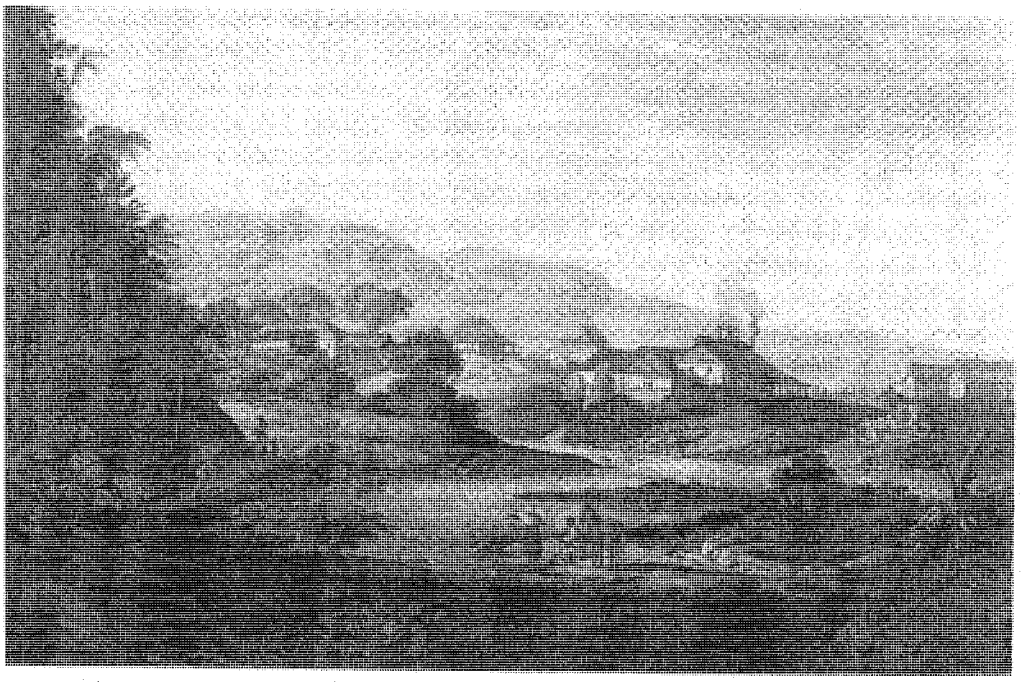

Figure 10.
Thomas Vivares after George Robertson, *View of Roaring River Estate, Westmoreland* (1778), engraving.
(Source: Casid, Jill. Sowing Empire: Landscape and Colonization. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2005.)

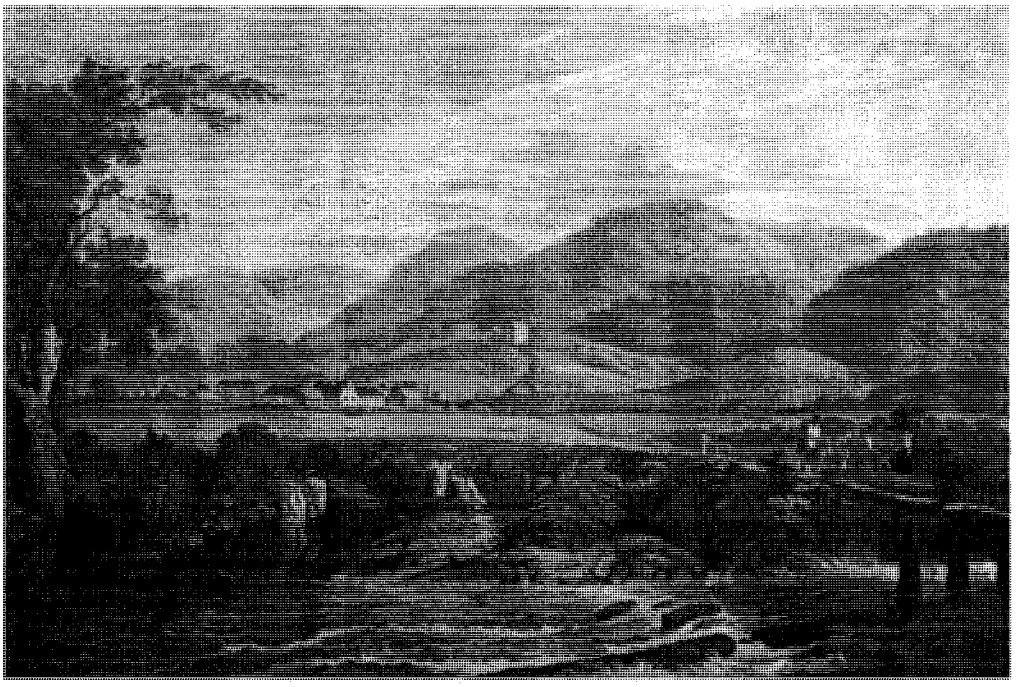

Figure 11.
Thomas Vivares after George Robertson, *View of Fort Williams Estate, Westmoreland* (1778), engraving.
(Source: Casid, Jill. Sowing Empire: Landscape and Colonization. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2005.)

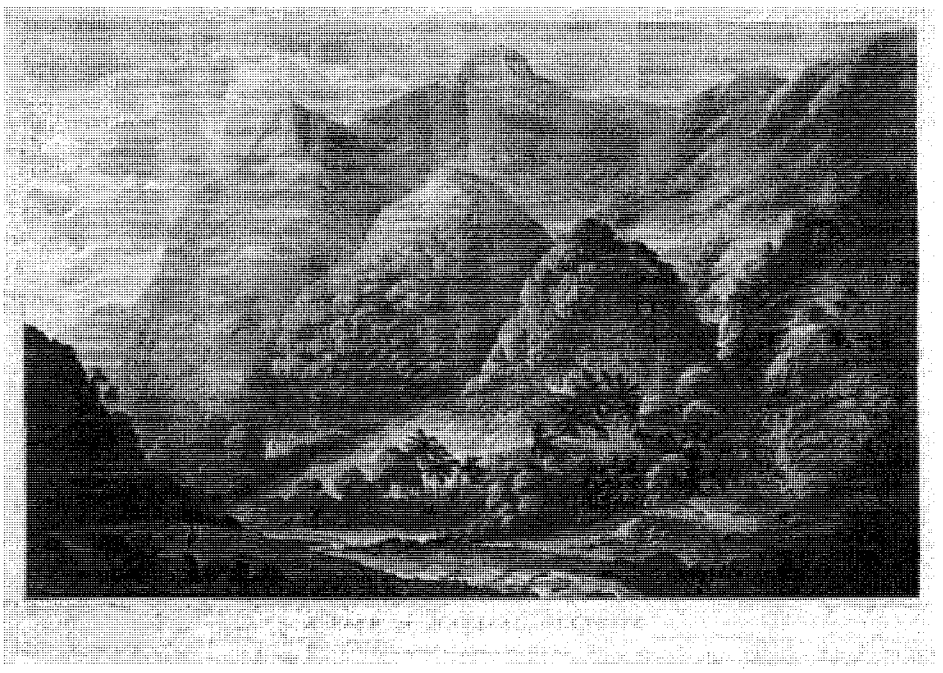

Figure 12.
John Webber. *A View in Matavai, Otaheite* (1787), engraving.
(Source: National Library of Australia)
http://www.nla.gov.au/pub/nlanews/2001/mar01/omai.html

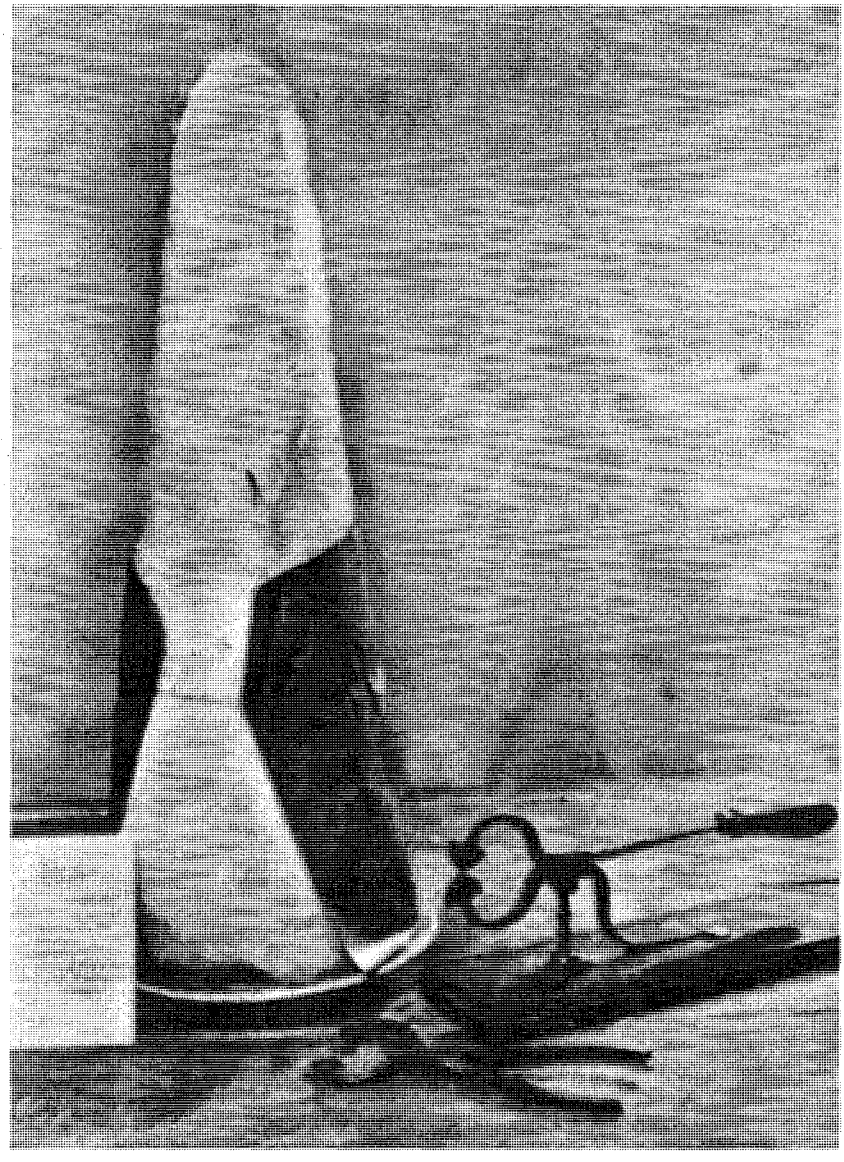

Figure 13.
Photograph of 19th century Sugar loaf and Cutters.
(Source: Cambridge & County Folk Museum.)

Figure 14.
Decreuse, *Portrait of Madame Du Barry* (18th century).
(Source: Schivelbusch, Wolfgang. Tastes of Paradise: A Social History of Spices, Stimulants, and Intoxicants. New York: Vintage Books, 1993.)

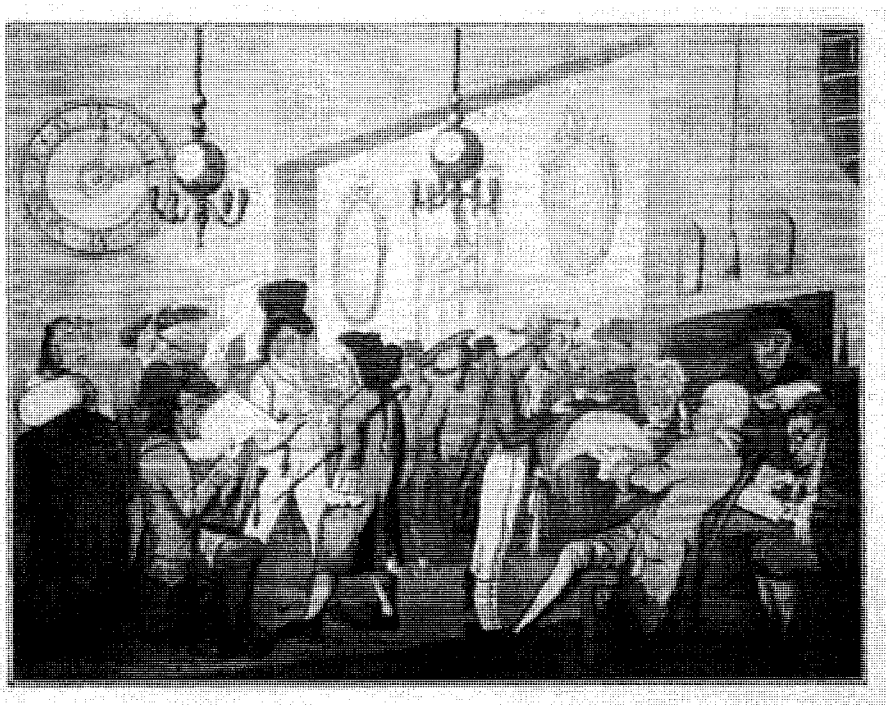

Figure 15.
William Holland, New Lloyd's Coffee House (after 1769), aquatint.
(Source: Mary Evans Picture Library.)

Figure 16.
Ned Ward, *The CoffeeHous Mob* (1710), frontispiece.
(Source: Ward, Ned. Vulgus Britannicus, or The British Hudibras.)

Figure 17.
Anonymous, *In a London Coffee House* (1674), woodcut.
(Source: Mary Evans Picture Library.)

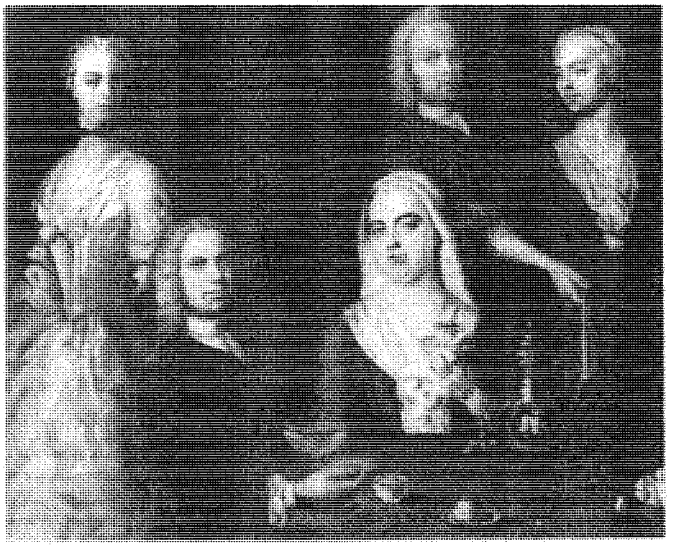

Figure 18.
Jakob Denner, *Family Portrait* (1749), painting.
(Source: Schivelbusch, Wolfgang. Tastes of Paradise: A Social History of Spices, Stimulants, and Intoxicants. New York: Vintage Books, 1993.)

Figure 19.
Anonymous, *Family Portrait* (18th century), painting.
(Source: Schivelbusch, Wolfgang. Tastes of Paradise: A Social History of Spices, Stimulants, and Intoxicants. New York: Vintage Books, 1993.)

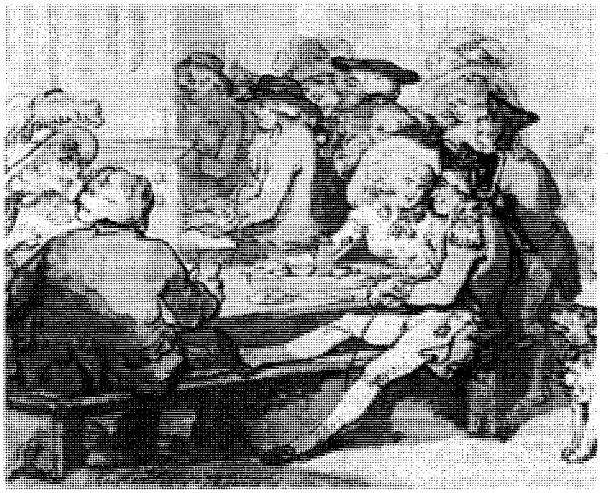

Figure 20.
Henry Rowlandson, London Chocolate House (18th century), watercolor.
(Source: Grivetti, Louis E. "From Aphrodisiac to Health Food: A Cultural History of Chocolate." Karger Gazette. No. 68.
<http://www.karger.com/gazette/68/grivetti/art_1.htm. >)

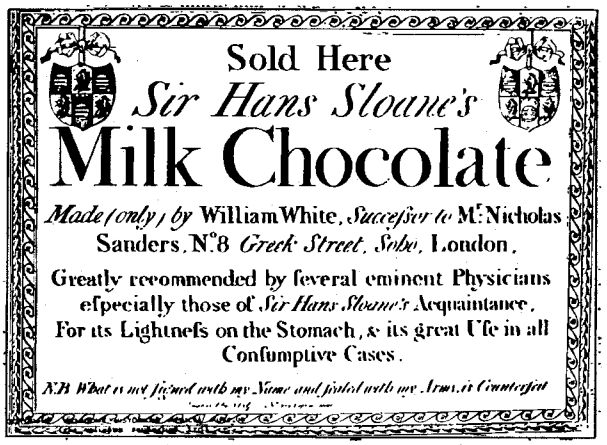

Figure 21.
Sir Hans Sloane, *Trade Card for Sir Hans Sloane's Milk Chocolate.*
(Source: MacGregor, Arthur ed. Sir Hans Sloane: Collector, Scientist, Antiquary Founding Father of the British Museum. London: British Museum Press, 1994.)

Figure 22.
Jean-Etienne Liotard, *A Lady Pouring Chocolate* (c. 1744), oil on canvas, 46 x 40cm. (Source: National Gallery of London Website.)

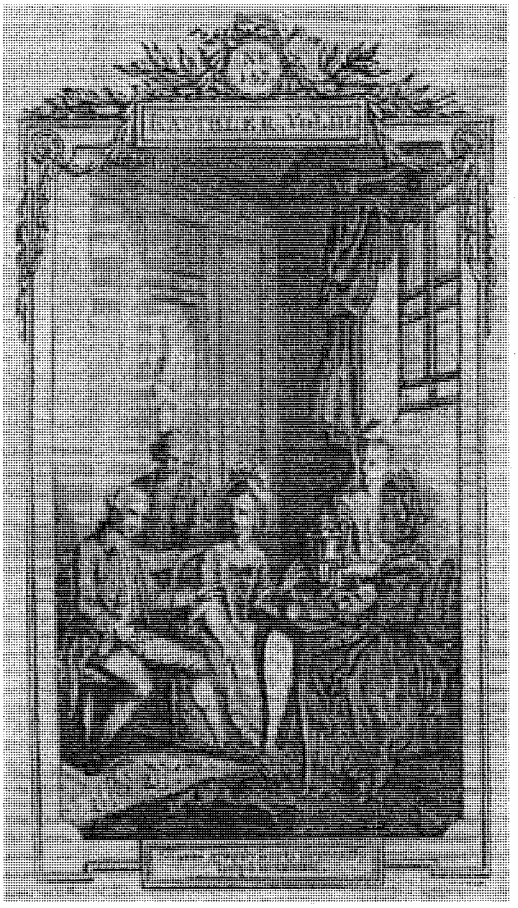

Figure 23.
J. Hall after E. Edwards, *Tea Party* (1779), engraving published in The Rambler, Vol. III. (Source: Mary Evans Picture Library.)

Figure 24.
Issac Taylor, *English Tea Party* (c. 1750), engraving.
(Source: Mary Evans Picture Library.)

Figure 25.
After George Moreland, *London Tea Party* (18th century), engraving.
(Source: Mary Evans Picture Library.)

Figure 26.
FD Soiron after George Moreland, *London Tea Party at St. James Park* (1790), engraving.
(Souce: Mary Evans Picture Library.)

Figure 27.
Barlow, *Dr. Samuel Johnson at Hester Thrale's Breakfast Table* (1791), engraving. (Source: Mary Evans Picture Library.)

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