

Graduate Student Contributions

Kathleen Murphy, *Captivity's Collections: Science, Natural History, and the British Transatlantic Slave Trade* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2023).

In *Captivity's Collections: Science, Natural History, and the British Transatlantic Slave Trade*, Kathleen Murphy explores the connections between developments in early modern natural science and the expansion of the British transatlantic slave trade. Focusing on the eighteenth century when the study of natural history reached its peak and the British began to dominate the slave trade, Murphy examines the individuals, including slaving surgeons, first mates, and even well-known British naturalists James Petiver and Hans Sloane, who used the trade to acquire observations and objects related to natural history. Murphy argues that “British naturalists exploited the routes, personnel, and infrastructure of the transatlantic slave trade to collect the seeds, shells, preserved animals, pressed plants, fossils, and other *naturalia* from around the Atlantic basin” that were integral to the creation of British natural science (5). Highlighting the ways that the slave trade provided the British with unique access to plant and animal specimens in West Africa, and for a time, port cities in Spanish America, Murphy encourages readers to “think broadly about the profits of the slave trade,” which she demonstrates included scientific collections and knowledge (10). Though British naturalists rarely acknowledged their reliance on this trade, Murphy shows that the connections between natural history and the British transatlantic slave trade went

far beyond the ships that transported these collections to England. Instead, employees of slaving companies and naturalists from the metropole depended heavily on the infrastructure of the trade itself, as well as the knowledge and labor of free and enslaved Africans who largely determined what objects were collected. This appropriated knowledge was not only used to further natural science, but as Murphy highlights, to identify valuable commodities that could increase the profits of British slaving companies. According to Murphy, acknowledging the “entangled histories of early modern science and the slave trade” is an integral step to decolonizing the field of science (1).

Using the records of slaving companies, alongside the correspondence and account books of British naturalists, Murphy “traces the itineraries traveled by African and American specimens in British natural history museums” to illuminate the reliance of early modern collecting on the slave trade (6). Beginning in the 1670s and moving chronologically until the 1780s, Murphy creates a history of the expansion and shifts of the British transatlantic slave trade that centers the Atlantic rather than British imperial borders. The first two chapters examine the reliance of British naturalists on the employees of the Royal Africa Company to acquire plants and information from the West African coast that were rare or medically useful to further the study of natural history and be used as commodities to improve company profits. Chapters three and four center on the ways that British naturalists exploited the *asiento*, which allowed the South Sea Company to import and sell enslaved Africans within specific Spanish-American port cities from 1713 to 1739. This trade agreement allowed these naturalists access to plants and animals from

outside the British Empire that they could not otherwise obtain. In these chapters, Murphy emphasizes that it was the infrastructure of the slave trade that provided South Sea Company employees, and in-turn metropolitan naturalists, access to the plants, animals, and information that they smuggled out of Spanish American ports. Finally, chapters five and six return to West Africa to examine the ways that British naturalists benefited from the expansion of the slave trade at the end of the century. Murphy closes with the collecting expedition of the naturalist Henry Smeathman in Sierra Leone, which she shows depended so heavily upon the infrastructure of the slave trade that he eventually became an agent for a slaving merchant. Using the experiences of naturalists and company employees, Murphy emphasizes the dependence of natural history on nearly every aspect of the British transatlantic slave trade.

Captivity's Collections makes several important interventions within the history of science and collecting. Murphy builds on the work of scholars who have argued that scientific knowledge was co-constructed in a variety of locations outside of Europe by the diverse participants who engaged with the creation and circulation of this knowledge. Through her meticulous archival research, Murphy illuminates the reliance of company employees and naturalists in London on natural and medical knowledge appropriated from free and enslaved Africans from across the Atlantic to create what became known as British natural science. Murphy also highlights the unique structures of the transatlantic slave trade that proved to be particularly valuable for the field of natural history. The British

transatlantic slave trade provided naturalists with access to environments that they were otherwise restricted from in West Africa and Spanish America, as well as a wide variety of employees who were targeted to collect objects in exchange for money or, in the case of slaving surgeons who usually had some training in natural history, career advancement. While scholars have recently examined the connections between British science and slavery, Murphy shifts the focus to illuminate the ways that the slave trade itself was entangled in the development of natural history.

Demonstrating the myriad of connections between the British transatlantic slave trade and eighteenth-century British naturalists, *Captivity's Collections* encourages readers to think about the history of modern science and the legacies of the slave trade in new and expansive ways. Murphy creates a history of the British transatlantic slave trade that is also a valuable contribution to discussions on the need to acknowledge the role of colonialism in the creation of scientific knowledge and European collections. Clearly argued and organized, *Captivity's Collections* can be read in its entirety or as standalone chapters and will be helpful to historians of the slave trade, natural science, and the Atlantic World more generally.

Audrey Rankin, ABD
Temple University

Editor's Note: Santora and Wolff are PhD candidates at Temple who have been given the opportunity to conduct research with the support of CENFAD funds: Wolff performed research in several US states and Santora conducted research in Germany.

Locating Perpetrator Emotions in Freiburg's Military Archives – Andrew Santora

Located in the German territory of Baden in the southwestern foothills of the Black Forest, Freiburg im Breisgau stands as a fascinating site of Anglo-German cultural exchange. Just a stone's throw away from the French border near Colmar, the city serves for many as a gateway into exploring the Black Forest, and modern advertising now blends with the city's ornate Gothic architecture. At the heart of the city still stands the city's cathedral, *das Freiburger Muenster*, which was completed in the mid-sixteenth century and whose surrounding courtyard still hosts a vibrant market. Within the city's limits stands one of Germany's oldest universities, *Universitaet Freiburg*, whose ornate buildings and sizable student body, along with their bicycles, make up a significant portion of the city's downtown landscape. Beyond the tourists, the city boasts a vibrant American expatriate community, with pockets of English speakers scattered across the city's cafes and tramcars, and with the university and several cultural centers facilitating such exchanges. With the generous support of a Wachman grant through CENFAD, I was fortunate to be able to travel to this eclectic town and conduct two weeks of research at the city's *Bundesarchiv Militaerarchiv* over the summer of 2024.

Located towards the outskirts of this city, the *Militaerarchiv* is the branch of the German national archives that houses the majority of Germany's military records from across the nation's long and jaded military past, with the most significant concentration of records centering around the long twentieth century. Located within a secure complex, the archives and its staff are perhaps surprisingly welcoming and accessible, with German and

American researchers alike populating the workspaces and perusing German after-action reports and ego documents. As a scholar of military culture, emotions, and masculinities of perpetrators of the Holocaust, my research targets came from *Wehrmacht* training and disciplinary files that reveal institutional efforts at regulating soldier emotions on and off the battlefield. Some of the Third Reich records are charred around the edges, with some pages near illegible—enduring evidence of the scars on the historical record caused by the devastation of the war and its aftermath. This research will form the backbone of a chapter of my dissertation, which will offer a glimpse into the institutional understandings of emotions and the force's efforts to regulate them, so that other chapters can then evaluate the degree of individual conformity to or deviation from these ideas.

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The *Militaerarchiv's* holdings offered two clusters of records that will prove essential to my research, and that offer meaningful insight to scholars on their own right. The first cluster came from *Wehrmacht* service regulations and pedagogical records from army schools aimed at disseminating doctrinal content. Within the pages of *Wehrmacht* regulations,

readers can glean a sense of the force's expectations of its soldiers in emotional terms. For example, several editions of *Wahrung der Ehre* (Preservation of Honor) were revised and rereleased between 1935 and 1940. These pamphlets outlined the ways in which officers were expected to properly conduct themselves while in uniform, and expectations adapted through editions to reflect shifting soldierly expectations as the war progressed. Several regulations, including *Zur Verhuetung des Selbstmordes* (On the Prevention of Suicide) from 1934 and *Richtlinien fuer die Behandlung und Verteilung der Soldaten mit seelisch-nervoesen Stoeungen* (Guidelines for the Treatment and distribution of Soldiers with Mental and Nervous Disorders) from late 1939, focused on how to mitigate suicide within Wehrmacht ranks. These shifts once the war began likewise reflect incremental shifts in force approaches to mental health in the Wehrmacht as an extension of regulation of proper emotional behaviors of its men.

Paired with service regulations, these records not only offer the emotional centers in which the Wehrmacht sought to regulate performance of soldierly behaviors, but also demonstrates how the institution and its instructors sought to adjust and refine these mechanisms over time as the force's situation on the ground dictated.

In addition to these regulatory materials, the *Militaerarchiv* also houses pedagogical notes, which include annotated leaflets and materials about how to teach certain soldierly virtues housed in regulations, from several army schools from across Germany. Paired with service regulations, these records not only offer the emotional centers in which the Wehrmacht sought to regulate performance of soldierly behaviors, but also demonstrates how the institution and its instructors sought to adjust and refine these mechanisms over time as the force's situation on the ground dictated. This change over time is an essential question for Holocaust scholars and military historians in this context alike.

A second lucrative body of materials from the *Militaerarchiv* comes from the dozens of issues of *Wehrpsychologische Mitteilungen*, Wehrmacht Psychological Reports, scattered across several record groups. These reports, which range over several years yet are concentrated in the early years of the war, served as internal journals for Wehrmacht psychiatrists to report findings and work out new approaches to war neuroses. Each issue features at least one entry devoted to field observations, in which doctors can present evolving soldier mental health in theater and suggest potential room for new attention. A through-thread of entries centers on soldierly character, which doctors sought to preserve for the mental sake of the Reich's warfighters. Several issues in 1941 centered around the problem of suicide and workshopped potential explanations and treatments to keep more men in the field. Interestingly, several issues between 1940 and 1942 contain entries relating to sexuality, which is described as both an "unpredictable factor" for soldiers and an "ominous" one, suggesting the potential connotations prescribed to its expression in the eyes of its authors. As with pedagogical records, these issues likewise demonstrate the

Wehrmacht's continued efforts to refine its approaches to soldierly emotions as service conditions evolved as the war progressed, suggesting too the priorities placed upon such objects by the force revising how to best regulate them. These shifting points will form the foundation of my dissertation's chapter on institutional regulation.

The research conducted on this trip graciously supported by CENFAD was also important as a preliminary excursion to scope out potential record targets in following trips. This archive will continue to be useful in offering its holdings on courts martial proceedings and military psychiatric evaluations, which will inform the final chapters of my dissertation. I am grateful for CENFAD's support, not only in facilitating this lucrative research trip, but also for informing my planning for upcoming ones, as I work towards completing my dissertation.

Research Notes from the Road – Jake Wolff, ABD

Studying the history of transportation is great fun because it involves a lot of travel. When I drove out west in 2015 to work on a master's degree, I captioned an Instagram post of Route 66 “a dead end idea.” Then, just six years later, I sold my car and set out to write a dissertation about how the open road has come to represent freedom in the United States.

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Although I originally thought I'd be writing a cultural history from “the bottom up,” the intellectual community at Temple has encouraged me to think hard about the geopolitical imperatives of domestic infrastructure. Route 66, with its popular lore and strategic location through the militarized Sun Belt, lets me do both. During this 2024-2025 academic year, a generous Marvin Wachman Fellowship award and two conference travel grants from CENFAD have helped get me to numerous archives throughout the United States—and not once using a rental car.

Transcontinental highways generate a wealth of records, but rarely are they archived in one spot. I've walked along the Camino Real de Tierra Adentro on my way to read the papers of

New Deal governors housed at the New Mexico State Archives and taken free buses on Route 66 in Albuquerque, the “heart of the Nuclear-Space Age” as one pamphlet boasted. It was a treat flying into Kansas City, the historic home to TWA, where I spent time at the Linda Hall Library before taking a Lyft across the plains to Topeka, Kansas to work in the corporate archives of the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroad. Thankfully, I racked up points on my Amtrak card, making it easier to lengthen trips from Philadelphia to the Franklin Roosevelt Presidential Library in Hyde Park and the National Archives outside Washington, DC.

The window seat, too, has provided me ample time to think. Nearly three million miles of paved roads connect the United States. More freight travels by truck than any other mode and over ninety percent of personal travel is by car. A quarter of all traffic flows over the 46,876 miles classified as Interstate highways. It is, as environmental scholar Christopher Wells puts it, “the most wide-ranging, landscape altering public works project in U.S. history,” and among the most misunderstood.¹

We’ve often taken President Dwight D. Eisenhower at his word, comparing the utility of good roads against their absence rather than their antithesis. Prior to the then-Lieutenant Colonel’s two month caravan across the United States in 1919, rural communities in the heartland were neither isolated nor hard to reach. Kansas, alone, touted five transcontinental railroads with direct service to the California coast.² But due to their competing interests and shared loyalty to the profit motive over patriotic causes, these private-sector firms bottlenecked domestic

supply chains in the First World War. President Woodrow Wilson nationalized the railroads in 1917 and did not relinquish control until March 1920, over a year after Armistice Day and well after the Treaty of Versailles had been signed. The United States led the world in railroad mileage and technological innovation—all improved during nationalization—yet federal policy quickly reprioritized financing a national highway system instead. Why, in the wartime crisis at the apex of antimonopoly politics, did federal transportation policy shift?

The United States led the world in railroad mileage and technological innovation—all improved during nationalization—yet federal policy quickly reprioritized financing a national highway system instead.

The reason for this federalization of the Good Roads Movement lies in moderate, bipartisan support for highways that did not require collaborating with radical, industrial unionists employed by the private railroads. In constructing a public network of federal, state, and local roads under the auspices of national security, a coalition of urban professionals, small business owners, and rural farmers aligned their commercial interests to topple railroad monopolies over the movement of passengers and freight.

¹ Christopher W. Wells, “Fueling the Boom: Gasoline Taxes, Invisibility, and the Growth of the American Highway Infrastructure, 1919–1956,” *Journal of American History* 99, no. 1 (2012): 72-81.

² Richard White, *Railroaded: The Transcontinentals and the Making of Modern America* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2011), 519-521.

I would not be able to write this dissertation without CENFAD's support. From my disparate research trips, I've accessed a variety of federal, corporate, and local records that have not yet been analyzed together. It is due, in part, because the archives are strewn so far about the country and also from sub-disciplinary traditions that silo important methods to studying how national transportation networks formed. Cultural and social historians typically study the regional competitions for paved roads between urban progressives and populist farmers, but without looking at the shared values that brought them into political coalitions for national legislation. Likewise, historians of science and technology do study highways and railways; however, as isolated systems and from the perspectives of experts trained in economics or engineering. We've also learned from military historians that policymakers in Washington often depend upon local knowledge, and buy-in, to successfully construct infrastructure of strategic importance. The wide-ranging speakers who join CENFAD's colloquia series have taught me to make connections between roads and empire that I otherwise would not have seen.

With two travel grants from CENFAD in addition to departmental support, I've workshopped various dissertation sections at several conferences this year. I first traveled to a graduate student conference on the Cold War at George Washington University in May, and later that month I presented a working draft of my prospectus at a symposium hosted by the University of Cologne. In June, I was selected to workshop a chapter on Dust Bowl border checkpoints during a daylong session preceding the Agricultural History Society's annual meeting in Las Cruces, New Mexico. I most recently participated on a panel about imperial infrastructures at the Western History Association in October.

A long form of my conference paper on innovation districts has been accepted for publication in an edited volume on *Colleges and Their Communities* under contract with Rutgers University Press. I now have friends at other universities who work on arctic oil diplomacy, transnational religious activism, animal rights and atomic testing, and settler-colonial regimes of water management.

I feel exceedingly lucky to train in history at Temple University. The Marvin Wachman Fellowship in Force and Diplomacy is generously endowed by the family of Marvin Wachman, a past president of the university who helped found CENFAD to foster "interdisciplinary faculty and student research on the historic and contemporary use of force and diplomacy in a global context." My research is made stronger, certainly, from generous financial support through the center, but most importantly from the community of scholars who constantly push me to think through policy questions from local and international scales.



Photograph of Jake Wolff at White Sands National Monument and Missile Range in Alamogordo, New Mexico. June 2024.