Kathleen S. Murphy, *Captivity's Collections: Science, Natural History, and the British Transatlantic Slave Trade*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2023. xiv + 239 pp. (Paper US$29.95)

Each morning, using brass tongs, the ship's mate went along the deck of the slaving ship gathering insects blown on board overnight while the ship lay at anchor off the West African coast. He was using a standardized set sent to him by Dru Drury, a London silversmith whose passion for entomology led him to produce the first-ever printed "Directions for Collecting Insects in Foreign Countries" for entomological research, distributed for free. Drury gave over 50 mariners, many of whom worked on slaving ships, his Directions. Eventually, these mariners sent over 200 specimens to Drury, helping to form one of the most significant entomological collections in Britain and providing key data for the second edition of his *Illustrations of Natural History*. Such remarkable stories form the bedrock of this excellent study that examines how the infrastructure of British transatlantic slave-trading shaped natural history, the "big science" of the eighteenth century. As Kathleen Murphy demonstrates, "the geographies, commercial priorities, trading practices, and maritime labor of the British transatlantic slave trade determined to a large degree the social and material practices of natural historical collecting along its routes" (p. 8). A "natural historical profit" accrued to scientists in Britain.

Captivity's Collections examines natural historical projects that developed as British slave-trading infrastructure changed. Chapter 1 explores collecting that the naturalist James Petiver commissioned at the trading forts managed by the Royal African Company. After it lost its monopoly on legal slave-trading in 1712, the RAC turned to natural history to find alternative sources of profit, as explored through James Brydges's patronage in Chapter 2. Chapters 3–4 turn to the South Sea Company's search for natural historical profits in the Spanish Americas. Often these expeditions focused on the search for cinchona (a natural source of quinine, which has antimalarial properties) and cochineal (an insect from which a red dye is derived); instead, they collected a wider range of plants, animals, and observations. These included over 200 species of plants gathered by the slave-ship surgeon William Houstoun. He sent specimens to Philip Miller, who cultivated them at Chelsea Physic Garden. Over the next 20 years, eminent scientists including Carl Linnaeus and institutions such as the Royal Society drew on Houstoun's papers. Indeed, the Royal Society, especially through Hans Sloane (president, 1727–41), participated extensively in funding, organizing, and publishing knowledge generated from RAC and SSC endeavors, ranging from botany to astronomy.

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Chapters 5–6 look beyond company structures. Chapter 5 describes how Drury systematized his search for the Goliath beetle by issuing his Directions that paid mariners sixpence per insect. Chapter 6 explores how Henry Smeathman's research, primarily into termites on the Upper Guinea Coast, relied on relations with slaving merchants and Euro-African slave traders. In elegant prose and with exemplary detective work that crosses between multiple archives of specimens, correspondence, and published papers, Murphy has recovered the fundamental role of slave-trading infrastructure in shaping natural historical research.

Murphy points out that Petiver "partially ceded intellectual authority" (p. 43) to Fante knowledge in his *Catalogue of Guinea Plants* and Smeathman admitted in his *Account of the Termites* that Indigenous people told him that different termite castes "belonged to the same family" (p. 173). More context about African diasporic and Indigenous histories would have improved our understanding of these vital contributions to the research process. Before surgeons and mates arrived with their slaving ambitions, African diasporic and Indigenous peoples had trained their eyes to appreciate the characteristics of flora, fauna, and the habitats that they shared with them.

Beyond the study of objects, it would have been interesting to know how Murphy's account could help us see the agency of the entities themselves. These entities changed as they moved through space and time from Indigenous companion or medicine to shipboard commodity to natural historical specimen. Such agency continues beyond the death of the entity: as Murphy points out, some are now "type specimens," the examples from which scientists have devised the taxonomic name and official description and thus remain of enduring importance for scientific research.

Scholars will surely read this innovative and powerful book for years to come. Murphy contributes to scholarship on British history, the history of Atlantic slavery, and museum studies. Alongside analyses of slaving ships as floating prisons, protofactories, and spaces of enforced cultural creativity, now we can understand them as laboratories of natural history. Murphy's attuned eye to the fortuitous nature of both collecting *and* accessioning—some of these collections, like Drury's, were auctioned off upon the collector's death—reveals how slave-trading shaped museum collections and the knowledge they contain in diffuse and indirect ways. Following natural historical entities promises to provide rich avenues for future research.

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