BOOK REVIEW

***Capture: American Pursuits and the Making of a New Animal Condition*. By Antoine Traisnel. University of Minnesota Press, 2020. 354 pp. Cloth $108.00. Paper $27.00.**

Antoine Traisnel's *Capture* is not a history of the physical act of capturing animals. It is a genealogy of animal capture as a desire or mindset. Traisnel argues that the decline of hunting over the last two centuries entailed a dramatic shift in Western attitudes toward nonhuman animals. Hunters typically sought prey in encounters that reinforced a notion of animals as individual, spontaneous, worthy adversaries. Over the course of modernity, *Capture* contends, this "hunt regime" was overtaken by a "capture regime" defined by the obsessive, technologically mediated drive to seize and reproduce not animals but "the animal"—a sort of elusive, homogeneous vitality distributed across all nonhuman creatures. This drive to capture represents a particularly modern kind of longing toward animal life, one that emerged alongside the industrialization of livestock production and the dawning awareness of anthropogenic extinction.

Traisnel tracks the rise of the capture mindset using illuminating close readings of nineteenth-century American verbal and visual media. His subjects range from Audubon's bird paintings through the detective fiction of Edgar Allan Poe to the pioneering stop-motion photographs of Eadweard Muybridge. At every turn *Capture* recalls how such human–animal relations participated in broader structures of social organization, from the transatlantic trade in enslaved peoples to the rise of demography and population management.

This last issue is particularly central to Traisnel's work. Drawing heavily on Michel Foucault's theorization of biopolitics as a form of population-level control, *Capture* considers how representations of animals contributed to this broader apparatus of social regulation. Yet Traisnel admirably refuses the paranoid strain of Foucauldian thought that treats the consolidation of power as totalizing, preordained, and unstoppable. While the shift from hunt to capture involved a

regrettable erasure of animals' presence and specificity, Traisnel also locates promising elements in the regime change. He dilates on the surprising agency of Muybridge's horses, for example—they effectively took their own photographic portraits—and he finds a deep-seated respect for otherness at the heart of the capture regime's obsession with animal inscrutability.

The notion of capture that Traisnel develops is indebted not only to Foucault but also to Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, and Rey Chow among others. Broadly speaking, Traisnel does a commendable job blazing a navigable trail through the sometimes densely interwoven thicket of academic theory, usefully connecting more anthropocentric continental philosophy with work in animal studies by the likes of John Berger and Akira Mizuta Lippit. At times, however, *Capture* gets sidetracked by minor altercations between such critics that distract from its main quarry. The book is also dogged by a somewhat undertheorized relationship between its expansive historical claims and the mostly canonical and American primary sources used to support them. Nevertheless, *Capture* offers a thought-provoking tour through the ways human-animal relations were reimagined in nineteenth-century America. Moving easily between literature, painting, photography, and philosophy in pursuit of its subject, *Capture* has something to offer anyone curious about the link between our fascination with other animals and our frustrated desire to grasp them, know them, and save them.

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