

Yuka Suzuki. *The Nature of Whiteness: Race, Animals, and Nation in Zimbabwe*.

Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2017. xxii + 210 pp. Photographs. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$90.00. Cloth. \$30.00. Paper. ISBN: 978-0295999548.

In *The Nature of Whiteness*, Yuka Suzuki examines how nature served as a medium for the construction of race and identity in postcolonial Zimbabwe. The culmination of fifteen months of fieldwork in “Mlilo” (the coded name for the region of Suzuki’s work), *The Nature of Whiteness* examines how white “wildlife ranchers” in Zimbabwe used animals and nature to determine and assert their identity in defense against increasing hostilities by the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) government. Local perceptions and global wildlife conservation movements reinforced these identities, solidifying the relationships among animals, nature, and whiteness, and stimulating both great gains and losses in wildlife conservation in Zimbabwe as a result.

The Nature of Whiteness is organized into six chapters, which alternate between thematic and chronological examinations of the relationship between race and nature in Zimbabwe. Suzuki introduces her ethnographic and anthropological analytical tools, such as race, whiteness, and animals, in the first chapter, and in ensuing sections she examines how these elements fit within Zimbabwean society, history, and global discourses of wildlife conservation. Throughout the book, she includes interviews with and narratives by white wildlife ranchers in order to portray their perceptions of race relative to animals in Zimbabwe.

Suzuki begins her historical examination of racial understanding in Zimbabwe with the establishment of the Ndebele nation under Mzilikazi in 1817. After providing “a short settler history,” *The Nature of Whiteness* focuses on the advent of wildlife ranching by white farmers in the 1970s through their forced removal under ZANU-PF-sanctioned land invasions in the early 2000s. She analyzes the adoption of wildlife ranching by white farmers as a mechanism to reinvent themselves as good citizens of the global environmental conservation movement despite the liability of their skin color in Zimbabwe following independence. The eventual expulsion of these farmers and the systemic slaughter of their cultivated wildlife at the turn of the century were perceived by many black Zimbabweans as the formal end of “white privilege” in the country. Suzuki weaves her ethnographic and anthropological analysis of the relationship between race and nature throughout this contemporary history. She examines how whiteness came to be articulated more broadly across space and time in Zimbabwe, demonstrating that animals were utilized as mechanisms to explain and justify race relations through moral imaginings, personal narratives, and natural lexicons. The most telling of these stories includes the testimony of a white farmer arguing that “the wildebeest don’t mate with the zebra, even though sometimes they graze in the same place. . . . Black and white mustn’t mix because it’s not natural” (46). She also demonstrates how different animals served as fluid symbols for reinforcing identity, authority, and racialized

hierarchies in Zimbabwe. She gives particular attention to lions, African wild dogs, elephants, and domestic pets and analyzes how these animals were utilized in the continuous construction of race in Mlilo.

The book highlights the insidious ways in which animals were manipulated to justify the presence of white farmers following Zimbabwe's independence, and how their slaughter during the land invasions symbolized the end of an unjust racial system in the country. One shortcoming of her book is that its examination is largely one sided. While Suzuki has abundant information regarding the perception of race, identity, and animals from the white Zimbabwean perspective, there is a dearth of black Zimbabwean voices. Early on Suzuki apologetically nods to this shortcoming, stating that she initially set out to understand how wildlife was utilized as a resource by both black and white communities. But this approach turned out to be "trickier" than she had anticipated, because the local district councilor in Mlilo actively discouraged black Zimbabweans from engaging with her. Perhaps further analysis of this mistrust and the subsequent silence are relevant to Suzuki's argument and warrant more attention than they are given. Sometimes silence holds answers.

The Nature of Whiteness is an intriguing analysis of how identity and nature are intricately intertwined in postcolonial Zimbabwe. Suzuki's detailed, yet sensitive analysis demonstrates that animals have been and continue to be manipulated, both ideologically and physically, in the reinvention and reinforcement of racial identities and hierarchies by both black and white Zimbabweans. Although the relationship between race and nature is steadily evolving, what remains consistent is the vulnerability of wildlife caught in the middle of this continuous racial reimagining.

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HISTORY

Richard Reid. *A History of Modern Uganda*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2017. Contents. Explanations, Apologies and Acknowledgements. Maps. Glossary. Sources and Bibliography. Index. xxvi + 403 pp. No price reported. Paperback. ISBN: 978-1-107-67112-6.

In the introduction to *A History of Modern Uganda*, Richard Reid asks, "does the nation itself have a history, or do we only tell the histories of the peoples who happen to live within those boundaries?" (5). Reid argues that Uganda *does* have a history, and recognizing that history becomes more essential as a transition to whatever comes after Museveni draws inevitably closer. Reid's story is one of diversity and connection over the *longue durée*.