


BOOK REVIEW

People and Animals in Nigerian History

Animality and Colonial Subjecthood in Africa: The Human and Nonhuman Creatures of Nigeria

By Saheed Aderinto. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2022. Pp. 340. \$80.00, hardcover (ISBN: 9780821424698); \$36.95, paperback (ISBN: 9780821424766); e-book (ISBN: 9780821447680).

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Keywords: West Africa; Nigeria; colonialism; political ecology; animal husbandry; methods

‘For here we trace the likeness of [the] Garden of Eden,’ observed M. O. Okigie in a poem on W. H. Biney’s pioneering Nigerian zoo in May 1946 (197). The zoological gardens founded by Gold Coast boxing promotor and businessman Biney, serve as an apt illustration of the collision between animal and human worlds that Aderinto explores in *Animality*. His study weaves together colonial history, animal-centered cultural studies, and the historiography of fields as diverse as health and sports, to propose an original argument about the centrality of animals to people and power in Nigerian — and, by extension, African — history. Animals, Aderinto contends, were just as much products of colonial rule as humans, and subject to the same processes of demarcation, coercion, and idealization by the colonial state.

Dogs provide a clear example: around 1936, canines were serving as surrogate police in Mushin, suburban Lagos. The inhabitants’ dogs, Aderinto observes wryly, ‘were doing the job of the government’ (117) by guarding the community against intruders. More generally, canines were subject to diverse government interventions, ranging from being taxed, subject to rabies control measures, targeted in roundups, and becoming the victims of mass dog killings. Divisions were made between ‘domesticated’ animals, licensed, and connected to European and elite African households, and their ‘stray’ counterparts, considered dangerous, ‘feral’, and beyond the control of the colonial state. Canine pets received treatment in the Lagos veterinary office — such as the 887 animals, mainly belonging to Europeans, treated in 1954–5 (103) — whereas strays were rounded up and sent to Lagos’s own canine gas chamber (170–1). Dogs are just one among the many animals that Aderinto analyzes: one of the book’s great strengths is this range, which in turn allows for broader conclusions and impact.

Aderinto’s book is divided into two distinct sections, the first exploring different species, the second examining public health, animal welfare, and the development of game parks and zoological gardens. Detailed consideration is devoted to the horse, connected to an elaborate culture of durbars, the donkey, with its key role as beast of burden in colonial Nigeria’s nascent capitalist economy, and the aforementioned dog. Yet a menagerie of other animals inhabits the pages of Aderinto’s book, ranging from the Ibadan crocodile in Agbo’le Delesolu at the heart of Oje district (20) — an animal that, Aderinto relates, was familiar to the author from childhood, and to whom the book is partly dedicated — to baboons, gorillas, leopards, elephants, and manatees.

Aderinto chiefly focuses on the colonial era, when the government displayed a characteristically flexible, even chaotic, attitude towards Nigeria’s fauna. When it came to elephants and manatees,

Aderinto contends that the colonial government vacillated between protection, and culling or licensed hunting. Pest control sometimes trumped conservation: baboons that intruded on farmland in the vicinity of Bauchi district, partly due to the reduction in leopard numbers as a result of colonial policies, were poisoned with sodium arsenide by forest conservators (185).

Animals became integral not only to colonial policymaking, but also to Nigerian politics, whether in relation to nationalist parties or the politics of northern emirates. Aderinto's reading of Akinola Lasekan's cartoons shows how his work came to feature the rooster (symbol of the NCNC, National Party of Nigeria and the Cameroons) (121), as well as drawing multiple parallels between the 'sheep' of late colonial Nigeria, including labor unions, the unemployed, and abstract categories such as 'financial insecurity', and the imagery of the predator, such as the 'wolf', as either the colonial government or the NCNC's rival, the Action Group (127). If nationalist supporters 'turned animals into symbols of national discourse' (127), then the equestrian culture of the durbar was appropriated from a spectacle of colonial power to an opportunity for northern elites to network both amongst themselves and with colonial officials. Elite Africans invested in and appropriated colonially inflected equestrian culture, with star horses such as Ajasa's Periwinkle in the 1890s and Alakija's Remembrance Day, Jubilee, and Thousand Bombers in the 1940s, enjoying public celebrity (81). Critically, horse racing became reinterpreted according to changing political events: races during the Second World War were given a war-related gloss and linked to philanthropy (231).

Given the complexity of the colonial configurations of animality unearthed by Aderinto, it must be stressed that human-animal proximities were important well before the colonial period. Aderinto draws on multiple examples of precolonial attitudes to animals and wildlife conservation, arguing that these practices presented fewer immediate environmental risks than their colonial counterparts. Hunting, for instance, 'in precolonial times' provided 'a means of regulating animal populations', and socializing younger males, rather than being focused on 'purely capitalistic' extraction (186). The horse had already come to play a key role in Sahelian politics such as the Sokoto Caliphate. More generally, fundamentally distinct conceptions existed regarding the status of animals such as horses and dogs in several areas of Nigeria, where some cultures valued the sacrifice and consumption of these animals, or their use in medical treatments (97). With preexisting human-animal relations in mind, Aderinto shows how conflicts sometimes emerged in colonial towns, where different communities had distinct ideas about the use of dogs for labor, particularly in hunting, or about whether dogs were permitted to eat human waste and garbage (96).

Although Aderinto's history is primarily concerned with the colonial period, it closes with a commentary on the way in which human-animal relations have continued in postcolonial politics. The durbar, for instance, continued to be a key and contested institution in northern Nigeria. In 2009, district heads were advised by the Governor of Kano Abdullahi Ganduje to not participate in the Emir of Kano's Salah durbar due to a personal feud between the men (257). Aderinto's analysis of postcolonial continuities in human-animal relations also extends to contemporary ethnic and political controversies, such as those surrounding the federal government's 2019 scheme for a rural grazing area settlement program (252).

Not all animals are created equal in Aderinto's account, and he favors larger mammals, with smaller creatures mentioned only very sparingly. Snakes form one exception to this, for example in the pen portrait of Lagosian cobra charmer Professor Benson (198). It would be interesting to learn of the colonial history of such significant animals as ants, spiders, frogs, scorpions, and termites, important either as threats to human habitation, sources of useful poisons and medical treatments, or as obsessions in colonial European perceptions of Africa. Marine animals and waterfowl are not a key focus, despite having complex cultural and economic roles in cultures of the southwestern coast or the Niger Delta. These choices are likely guided by the book's sources, and reflect those subjects of immediate interest to writers in the African press, the work's major source base.

Animality opens up a new field of animal-centered history in Nigeria. Aderinto's key arguments will be essential and provocative reference points for historians of Africa well beyond Nigeria, particularly his contention that dog-fancying must be understood as a key dimension of colonial modernity. The book is an inherently interdisciplinary work, and Aderinto's broader theoretical contention that animals were themselves agents of colonial history will interest readers far beyond history, including anthropologists, political scientists, and hopefully also those in the animal sciences.

Animality represents a major contribution to the history of colonial Africa, and one that transforms our understanding of the period. By centering animals within his account of Nigeria's colonial history, Aderinto achieves two main theoretical innovations. Firstly, he convincingly argues that animals must be understood as colonial subjects in their own right, albeit ones lacking human agency. Animals were transformed by the colonial state, and constructed afresh in social and cultural terms. Secondly, Aderinto shows why historians of colonial Africa must consider the animal world not only when writing environmental or scientific history, but also when examining the whole gamut of social experience and political language where the natural world might not conventionally be considered. The resulting book will be useful for teaching colonial Nigerian and African history, and its theoretical scope means that it will also work well in continental survey courses, interdisciplinary area studies, as well as in postgraduate seminars.



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To cite this article: Şeun Williams (2023): Animality and Colonial Subjecthood in Africa: The Human and Nonhuman Creatures of Nigeria, Canadian Journal of African Studies / Revue canadienne des études africaines, DOI: [10.1080/00083968.2023.2168859](https://doi.org/10.1080/00083968.2023.2168859)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00083968.2023.2168859>



Published online: 08 Feb 2023.



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Animals have largely been absent from or only granted mere cameos in Nigerian historiography. African history, particularly West African history, has not quite taken the “animal turn” yet. With *Animality and Colonial Subjecthood*, Saheed Aderinto boldly heads along that route, striving to mainstream and centre “nonhuman creatures as subjects, objects, and agents of historical change” (21). This monograph is the first book-length treatise on “multispecies world-making” plotted in Nigeria. In it, Aderinto explores the ways in which animals transformed human ideals regarding public health, nutrition, leisure, companionship, imperial might and prestige, modernity, civilisation and progress, among others.

The central argument of the book – that animals, like humans, were “colonial subjects” – is innovative and perceptive. Aderinto makes the vital point that without bringing animals into our understanding of colonialism – or of the African past broadly – we may not fully grasp its extent and essence (3). In substantiating this thesis, Aderinto builds the narrative not just around one animal species as is common in the literature, but around several animals across and within taxonomic units. The account encompasses cattle and how beef became the primary meat with which the colonial state fed the expanding urban population (Chapter 1), as well as the donkey and its integration into the colonial political economy and labour force as the main living vehicle (Chapter 2). The book also discusses dogs as companion animals, coagents of imperialism, and outlawed threats to urban public health (Chapter 3). The horse also features prominently in the text as the elite nonhuman and a biological colonial machine (Chapter 2). Other kinds of animals, such as elephants, goats, sheep, birds, pigs, etc., also earn some level of attention in this composite animalist history of Nigeria. This capacious breadth and the resulting fine synthesis make up for whatever the work may lack with regards to the depth that focusing on only one or a couple of animal species would afford. How better to demonstrate the centrality of animals to this work – and to Nigeria’s past – than the fact that the book is dedicated to seven real, named Nigerian animals: “Chuku and Lekewogbe (dogs), Jubilee (a horse), Aruna and Imade (gorillas), Alagba (a tortoise), and Oni Ile Delesolu (a crocodile)”!

Aderinto defines colonial animality as “a state of existence and identity of a creature under foreign domination” (8). This term also refers to unveiling human existence that manifested in animalistic tendencies (4). Throughout the book, Aderinto demonstrates that the key markers of human colonial subjecthood – contradictory conceptions of rights and obligation, imperialist exploitation, and subjugation under imperial violence and racialisation – are very much applicable to colonised animals. He establishes that colonialism sought to produce modern animals, while also using the notion of modernity to shape human–animal encounters.

In discussing the history-making roles that animals played in Nigeria’s colonial past, the author develops a fresh, apposite framework, treating living and non-living elements of nature as a system for understanding the past. He calls it an “integrative approach to Africa’s environmental history,” one that takes nature and environment – in their material and figurative senses – as co-constitutive and interrelated. Deservedly, Aderinto takes pride in the fact that his work goes beyond parroting trite rhetoric about the interwovenness and interdependency of the ecosystem, as is common in many works of multispecies literature,

to actually establish that fact through “concrete narratives and examples” throughout the book (17).

The colonial government’s management of animal diseases and zoonoses (such as human and animal rabies) is another area where the identity of animals in Nigeria as colonial subjects was clearly established. Aderinto substantiates this in Chapter 5, where he discusses the colonial biopolitics of pathologising, medicalising and policing dogs. Demonstrating how capitalist underpinnings are as crucial to colonial veterinary science as they are to colonial medicine, the author characterises the former as an arm of imperial power aimed at improving animals’ health in order to maximally exploit them and to protect humans. The goal of the two disciplines and their practice was to keep subjects – human and nonhuman – healthy for the benefit of colonial capitalist expropriation (14).

In the fourth chapter, Aderinto moves beyond the materiality and lived experiences of non-human Nigerians to engage with the symbolic, metaphoric and ideological essences of diverse animals. This he does particularly through a close reading of the culturally grounded modernist animal art of Nigerian cartoonist Akinola Lasekan. The author explores the artist’s domestication of nature – tame and wild – for political discourse throughout his oeuvre during Nigeria’s decolonisation era. He makes sense of Lasekan’s deployment of diverse animals and their intrinsic biological features in conceiving Nigeria as a zoo, the colonial state as a predatory carnivore, and the populace as its prey.

Aderinto also finds colonial subjugation and modernisation of animals in the imperial politics of wildlife conservation and animal welfare/rights campaigns. In Chapter 6, he underscores that colonial conservation policies were operationalised on the hegemonic logic that both the human and nonhuman inhabitants of Nigeria were governable. He notes that the founding of private and government zoos, and the export of Nigerian wildlife to European zoos, was hinged on the saviour complex intrinsic to colonial paternalism that sought to save animals from “extinction.” This ideology rechanneled the domestication of wild animals in precolonial Nigeria, which was an integral part of ritual power relations and religious identities of communities, towards a secular bent.

The seventh and the final chapters of the book explore the changing moral sensibilities towards animals, and the furtherance of those sensibilities by means of advocacy, the law and the court. Aderinto interprets this change within the frame of colonial modernist ideologies of progress and civilisation. Thus, humane treatment of animals became one of the metrics for civilisation and elitism at the time, much like the acquisition of Western education. Even so, Aderinto finds elasticity and double standards in the definition of what was adjudged as cruelty to animals within and across species, and depending on who was involved. In the eighth chapter, the author further examines animal rights and welfare campaigns under colonial rule with a focus on the lived experiences of the donkey and the horse. For its economic importance as a living critical infrastructure of transport, the donkey was deemed deserving of humane treatment, just as the horse was considered to be above ill treatment because of its athletic and noble status.

In all, the “animal-conscious mind-set” with which Aderinto engages his wide-ranging sources is useful for African historians seeking to write comprehensive histories of the continent’s past. This kind of mindfulness is relatable to the “arts of noticing” and the “obligation of curiosity” and interspecies respect that some multispecies scholars recommend as requisite for transcending the human conceit and anthropocentrism that characterised twentieth-century scholarship (Haraway 2008, 7, 20, 22, 36; Tsing 2015, 22).

The book is indeed a brilliant addition to the ever-expanding literature on colonialism, Nigeria and multispecies studies. It is a great, informative read not just for scholars and students of Nigerian history, but also for the everyday reader. The heyday of Aderinto’s career

might not be over, but his *Animality and Colonial Subjecthood in Africa* is, without a doubt, the stuff of a magnum opus.

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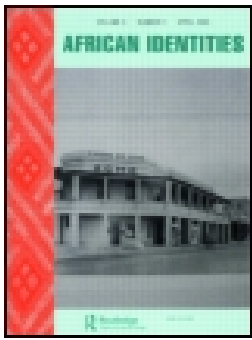
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<https://doi.org/10.1080/00083968.2023.2168859>





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To cite this article: Rosemary Oyinlola Popoola (2023): Animality and colonial subjecthood in Africa: the human and nonhuman creatures in Nigeria, African Identities, DOI: [10.1080/14725843.2022.2164252](https://doi.org/10.1080/14725843.2022.2164252)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14725843.2022.2164252>



Published online: 02 Jan 2023.



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The book 'Animality and Colonial Subjecthood in Africa: The Human and Nonhuman Creatures in Nigeria' is an alternative history through the eye of a nonhuman creature. Aderinto takes animal history 'from the margin to the center' of Africanist historiography. The author documents the encounter of nonhuman creatures with colonial rule, modernity, violence, science, and racism. He centers animals in Africanist scholarship and, specifically, their place in Nigeria's history. The book shifts our attention from history as the history of men and, more recently, to women to history as inclusive of nonhuman creatures. Drawing from a rich, expansive and varieties of sources, including archival sources, official court proceedings, magazines, journals, oral interviews, accounts in African and non-African newspapers, public memory as well as popular text such as autobiographies, biographies, and memoirs of European, the author demonstrates that nonhuman creatures were subject and co-agent of colonialism. Each chapter of the book borrowed from multiple disciplines, methodologies, and languages ranging from science, environment, arts, humanities, and social science.

The eight chapter book focused on a wide range of issues; animals in the cuisine and diet of Nigerians, the politics of animal slaughter and its intersection with public health, the use of animal identities and character in political satire, and the politics of animal compassion as well as animal in the diaspora to mention a few. The book is centered around two overlapping arguments. First, the subjecthood and western expression of modernity that colonists expected of colonial humans were applied to nonhuman creatures. Second, violence and racism which are distinct features of colonialism toward humans applied to nonhuman creatures in terms of legislation, ordering, and administration of public and private spaces. Specifically, Aderinto argues that 'colonialism was an edifice of violence' towards colonial animals as it was towards humans. The animal was 'sorted, indexed and prioritized to meet colonialist construction of normality, orderliness, and modernity'.

Chapter one is a pot of mixed salad saddling disparate yet interwoven subjects. From animals in Nigeria's diet and cuisine, the politics of animal rearing, introduction, and debates on capitalist modernity approach to husbandry, animal legislation that criminalized, and policed the public presence of animals, the politics of public health and safety to the establishment of veterinary science in northern Nigeria as distinct civil service and arm of colonial public health, racialized staffing and discrimination against African trained veterinary. In addition, the author situates the subjectivity of animals and exploitation by both colonialists and Nigerian nationalists. The subjectivities of animals include dispossession through gentrification, urban legislation, and town planning, violence like in the mass massacre on the eve of the historic visit of the Queen of England in 1959 and racial ordering, and discrimination, subjugation to imperial science, and their exploitative use and integration in colonial service for transportation. Beyond subjectivity, the author also delves into the various ways that animals demonstrated agency and showed resistance to human legislation and encroachment into their territories. This chapter connects to the past, present, and future of Nigerian politics with regard to the current debate on the country's best approach to animal husbandry in 21st Nigeria, the herders-farmers conflict, and the politics of insecurity. Also, it speaks to the politics

of hunger and nutrition as a core aspect of development. The author's details chronicle of animal subjectivity echoes Fela's idea of the zombification of Nigerian under military dictatorship.

Chapter two is fascinating for its blend of history, race, class, and gender. Aderinto explores human-animal relations in pre-colonial Nigerian history and by extension Africa as well as the diversities of animal roles as co-combatants in war and working animals to symbols of pride as well as their significance in religious and secular ceremonies. Significantly, Aderinto argues that colonialism ended, altered, and 'transformed' Nigerian equestrian tradition in its use of animals for the performance of power, racial identities, public spectacle, and legitimizing British presence in Nigeria. By ordering specific animals like horses and donkeys, colonialists established the authority, hegemony, race, gender, and spectacle of the empire. For instance, horses became venerated, celebrated, and a symbol of aristocracy as horse racing became the 'crucial site through which the government shaped and reshaped the dominant notion of power, honor, and respectability'. More so, Aderinto showed that although a few select women like Winterbottom excelled in racing and Nigerian political activists like Adunni Oluwole rode on horses, horse racing was male-centered and the image of the horse in colonial Nigeria was affiliated with imperial masculinity. This gendered use and symbolic representation of hetero-patriarchal power in animal deployment affirm colonialism as a male edifice and project. More so, racing was not the only representation of power, it was also a site for racial and class differentiation from the choice of the audience (opened to only European and a few African elites), sitting arrangement in the pavilion (everyone sat in the order of their power within the colonial hierarchy at the racing event) to the exploitation of the 4500 unpaid laborers of prisoners who cleared the racecourse ahead of the racing event in 1932.

Chapter 3 examined the social history, gendered nature of dog taxation, politics of dog licensing, racialization, agency and resistance of dogs against the hegemonic rule, and legislation that enforces their subjectivity to colonial ordering or othering. Similarly, Aderinto shows that dogs have varied utility in diverse contexts. Within the Yoruba worldview, Aderinto explores the value and significance of dogs in ritual, heroism, spirituality, beliefs, hygiene, sanitation, economic and nutritional value, security, and as travel companions among others. More so, dogs have spiritual symbolism in the Yoruba worldview, given the varied meaning and implications of dogs' sounds (barking). Beyond security, the sound of dogs signifies some sensitivity to the invisible world, to the expression of the sense of sorrow during burial by joining the human community in maintaining silence. Significantly, Aderinto showed that dogs are racialized bodies depending on the timing of their arrival and owner. The position of their owners in the colonial hierarchy and race shaped dogs' experiences in colonial Nigeria. The racialization of animals and in this case, dogs give credence to the hesitancy and resistance of scholars to link Black studies and animal studies in commensality. More so, while dogs experienced subjectivity, violence, and discriminatory legislation, they also disregard the color line by crossing the line to have sex, socialize, and share food.

Chapter four interrogates the nexus between modernism, visual arts, nationalism, and animal identities in the work of pioneering Nigerian cartoonist Lasekan Akinola. Aderinto examines Akinola's appropriation of animal identities in depicting political and socio-economic realities in colonial Nigeria. Akinola's artwork aligns with beliefs that the feature of the animal world, its ecology, and its ecosystem mirror and has a real and metaphorical resemblance to human lived experience. Borrowing extensively from visual arts, Aderinto explores the theme of Akinola's artwork from unequal pay, party politics, and rivalry, colonial violence, racism, decolonization, nationalism- human-animal relations. The author magnifies the role of visual art in the discourse of party politics in colonial Nigeria, an aspect that is

understudied. This chapter places arts at the center of nationalism and colonial politics to complicate the intersection of animal symbolism in historical writing on nationalism, cultural politics, and decolonization. Aderinto delves into how Akinola's approach to visual art such as his early beginning and exposure to the animal world and religion influenced his artwork. This chapter opens up possibilities for researching cartoons and animations in postcolonial Nigeria both as a practice of counter-visibility and a tool for imaging everyday realities in Africa

In chapter five by exploring how racial politics of canine law, race, class, and power shaped encounters between canine populations and humans, Aderinto shows that biopolitics extends to non-human creatures given that law as a disciplinary practice of power was extensively used to regulate, order, other and police animals. Specifically, the author shows how race, law, and politics of disease influence the discussion of rabies, a canine zoonotic disease, and its threat to public health and safety in colonial Nigeria. The author further explores the politics and racial science of imperial veterinary and its incessant conflict with indigenous medicine, science, and specifically veterinary. Fundamentally, Aderinto argues that through the politics of disease, race, and the law British colonial medical establishment affirmed and sustained the relevance of western medicine as an essential arm of the colonial civilizing mission in Nigeria. Additionally, the author refuted the notion that race influences emotional attachment to the animal through a rigorous and close reading of several anti-cruelty animal petitions written by Nigeria to colonial authority. This chapter contributes to and expands the history of medicine in Africa and situates the constant tussle between indigenous and western medicine in historical perspectives.

Chapter six interrogates and historicizes the racial and power politics that shaped wildlife conservation, nature, and modern zoo evident in the way that wildlife was ordered, sorted, and indexed to meet the narrow colonialist conception of the materiality of nature. Aderinto explored the role of nature wildlife conservation in pre-colonial societies and complicates the debates on environmental imperialism by showing how race and power influence the naming of consumers, producers, and gatherers of the materiality of nature. Through colonial paternalism, colonialists are conservationists even if exploitative through the unethical trafficking of wildlife and its materiality to the empire to the imperial zoos as public spectacles for European amusement while Africans are labelled poachers. Additionally, the chapter further captures human violence against nonhuman creatures, colonial laws against animal cruelty, and debates in colonial Nigeria on the creation of modern zoos. Chapter seven examined the politics of animal compassion, the proliferation of anti-animal cruelty litigation in colonial courts, and animal compassion rhetoric. Importantly, the chapter explores how the European and educated Nigerian elite, through racial ordering and class positioning, sought to make compassion towards animals one of the markers of superior class identity that the 'illiterate' must cultivate. This chapter exposes the paradox of colonial kindness, which extends to animals but not to humans. Aderinto was emphatic that colonial kindness to animals was not about altruism. First, it was about law and order. Second, it was about expanding 'the boundary of social control and extension of the domain of colonial violence'.

The final chapter examined the politics of animal cruelty and how animal cruelty in the satellite became a concern in the national discourse of the metropole. Aderinto examined the attempt to criminalize horses' sacrifice, which was an insignia of imperial dignity in ritual sacrifice and ceremonies. The author returned to the original argument of the book that 'colonialism turned animal into the modern and colonial subject through the imposition of ideals that mirrored understanding the place of animal in colonial civilization'.

This book has cross-cutting influence and significance to expand the field of science, social science, and humanities. For instance, in the study of African politics, it would be useful to understand the appropriation of animal identities and symbols in the display of power

identities and expression of dominance to activism or counter-visibility practices of deriding animal symbols authority adopts. For instance, Uganda's 34-year ruler President Museveni declared himself a leopard, and academic and activist Dr. Stella Nyanzi opined that her activism is a way of poking the anus of the leopard. In humanities, it could be useful in analyzing animal theme aesthetics and lyrical contents of popular music, for instance, the tendency to troupe opposition in animalizing description. Nigerian fast-rising female artist Oyinkansola Sarah Aderibigbe, known as Ayara Starr, in her recent diss song 'rush' called her detractor 'animal in human form'. Also, the book could be useful in the analysis of how the non-human world's hierarchy is used to reinforce human hierarchy and symbols of power. The book could also be useful to situate the politics of environmental movements and development in Africa. In all, the book offered an interesting, unique, and exceptional perspective on writing the history of nonhuman creatures.

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<https://doi.org/10.1080/14725843.2022.2164252>

