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ITALO CALVINO'S ANIMALS

Anthropocene Stories

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Abstract: The words “Anthropocene animals” conjure pictures of dead albatrosses’ bodies filled with plastic fragments, polar bears adrift on melting ice sheets, solitary elephants in the savannah. Suspended between the impersonal nature of the Great Extinction and the singularity of exotic individuals, these creatures appear remote, disconnected from us. But animals in the Anthropocene are not simply “out there.” Threatening and threatened, they populate cities and countryside, often trapped in industrial farms, zoos, labs. Among them, there are humans, too. *Italo Calvino's Animals* explores Anthropocene animals through the visionary eyes of a classic modern author. In Calvino’s stories, ants, cats, chickens, rabbits, gorillas, and other critters emerge as complex subjects and inhabitants of a world under siege. Beside them, another figure appears in the mirror: that of an *anthropos* without a capital A, the epitome of subaltern humans with their challenges and inequalities, a companion species on the difficult path of coevolution.

Keywords: Italo Calvino, animals, Italian literature, anthropocene, ecocriticism

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