



## **Critters in the Mexican Cultural Imagination: Small Life/Literary Forms**

Special Issue for *Humanimalia* – Call for Papers

Editor: Sophie Esch, Rice University

Interested in everything that crawls and flees, creeps and cheeps, this special issue seeks contributions that explore the relation between small life forms and literary forms in the Mexican cultural imagination.

This call invites authors to attend to what often gets overlooked, easily dismissed, or obliterated: insects, rodents, small amphibia, reptiles, fish, birds, little mammals, and other small critters. Often *bichos* and *bichitos* are rejected as creepy, annoying, ugly, or seen as ‘pests’ or ‘varmints’ by humans. Yet at times certain small nonhuman animals also elicit particular fascination, care, and concern in humans (e.g. the mass extinction of insects, bees, monarch butterflies, opossums, and amphibia). The purpose is to explore the multiple and contradictory roles that insects and other critters play in the Mexican imagination, from food to art to social media campaigns and from chapulines to axolotl and tlacuache. Following scholars such as Fornoff, Ginn et al, Haraway, and Rivera-Barnes, this issue invites authors to probe the limits and challenges of interspecies convivialities. Is literature able to imagine small critters beyond the binary of abjection/endearment? Can it imagine small critters as beings in their own right, materiality, agency, or world-making activity? Given its penchant for all things small, this special issue is also particularly interested in short literary forms such as the bestiario, the vignette, the haiku, the corrido, or the microrelato (without excluding long literary forms). Are there resonances or dissonances between short literary forms and small life forms?

In posing these questions, this special issue aims to contribute to the diversification of animal studies overall and to the consolidation of the still-nascent field of critical Mexican animal studies. Whereas animal studies tends to privilege megafauna, livestock, or typical companion species (dogs, horses, cats), this special issue seeks to explore the ambiguous presence of small critters, and in a specific location and its particular biomes and literatures: Mexico. Given the heterogeneity of forms and languages in Mexico, this field constitutes an important corrective to critical animal studies that remain problematically focused on the Global North and English, particularly at the expense of marginal, non-Anglophone, or Indigenous voices from the Global South. For these reasons, this call is particularly interested in articles that explore indigenous cosmologies and literatures and/or that offer theoretical reflections on the significance of small life forms. It invites authors to theorize or think with the figure of the bicho or bichito, the animalito, the alimaña, the tecuani or others that relate to Mexican or Mesoamerican cultural worlds. In any case, the editor expects all authors to reflect explicitly on their interventions in the field of (Mexican) animal studies in their contributions to the volume.

Please follow the author guidelines of *Humanimalia*: “We publish articles of 5,000–15,000 words and seek both broad, theoretical submissions that have a conceptual focus and intervene in the field of animal studies, and also more particularly focused works that situate their arguments within more specific field, debates and examples.”

<https://humanimalia.org/about/submissions>

### **Timeline**

May 2023: cfp

July 15, 2023: abstracts due, please send to [sophie.esch@rice.edu](mailto:sophie.esch@rice.edu)

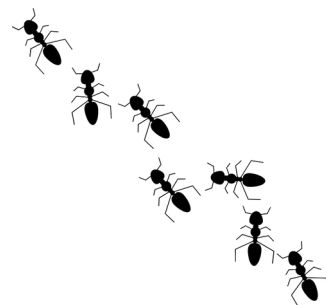
August 2023: acceptance/rejection of abstracts (acceptance of abstract does not mean automatic acceptance of article; article acceptance is pending peer review)

January 10, 2024: deadline for completed articles

January-February 2024: editor review

July 2024: deadline for revised articles

2024/2025: publication of special issue



### **Selected Bibliography**

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Haraway, Donna. 2016. *Staying with the Trouble. Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. Durham, London: Duke University Press.

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Ortiz Robles, Mario. 2016. 'Animal Revolutions (Allegory and Politics)'. In *Literature and Animal Studies*. London; New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

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