A flock of birds in the sky can be more than just ecology. It can transform suddenly into a formation, a murmuration of starlings, for example, that becomes a ballet with no heads, with darting moves and waves of motion that seem to dance toward chaos but then bank and dive together to avoid collision. Schools of fish might also seem to move together at times according to rhythms of inaudible symphonies, unless we reduce these kinds of behaviors merely to predator-prey strategies. What else might we learn from these astonishing nonhuman displays? What kinds of models could flocks of birds and schools of fish provide for thinking about ideal forms of living together, for example, in powerfully affective ways? What would be the right distance to maintain between individuals who want to move to their own rhythms yet still be part of a community? These kinds of questions inspire and fascinate Roland Barthes in one of the last lecture series he gave at the Collège de France in 1977, published posthumously in English as *How to Live Together: Novelistic Simulations of Some Everyday Spaces* (2013). The key problem for Barthes becomes how to “regulate interindividual distance” when “what’s most precious, our ultimate possession is space.” But there is also a desire for “a distance that won’t destroy affect,” where there is a “relation that’s in no way oppressive but at the same time where there’s a real warmth of feeling” (132).

In his introductory lecture Barthes provides an antithetical example to suggest how these kinds of relations can nonetheless become oppressive. He recalls seeing a “mother pushing an
empty stroller, holding her child by the hand. . . [walking] at her own pace, imperturbably; the child, meanwhile, is being pulled, dragged along, is forced to keep running, *like an animal...*” (9; my emphasis). The figure of the animal in this case signifies a lack of agency, a metaphor for the child whose own desires are inevitably subordinated to the mother’s. Barthes generally wants to theorize the key elements that are necessary if we want organisms to be able to live together without having their own rhythms disrupted by the power of others. But it also becomes quite clear that Barthes sees nonhuman animals as little more than just symbolic since they are assumed to lack language and therefore subjectivity. Barthes’ project could thus be explored from a variety of animal-oriented perspectives that have exploded in literary and cultural studies in the last decade or so, from animal to animality studies, from human-animal studies to posthumanist theory, among many other labels for this kind of work. But these fields can also be seen as exploring “how to live together” in various ways, without necessarily relying upon Barthes’ fundamental distinction between human and nonhuman animals. Barthes’ method is intriguing to consider, though, when he says that he is “merely opening a dossier” on key “traits” such as “Animaux/Animals” (135, 26), particularly as they are constructed in literary texts. My aim in this chapter is to explore the potential as well as some of the more problematic aspects of Barthes’ thinking about both human and nonhuman relations in these later lectures. Barthes’ attempt to theorize how best to live together also provides an opportunity for exploring the different kinds of cultural politics that drive the burgeoning attention to animalities of various kinds in literary and cultural studies today.²

Barthes begins his lecture series with the question of method, distinguishing the project even from his own earlier emphasis on semiotic interpretation in the service of Marxist critique. Building upon Nietzsche, Barthes argues *against* “method” as opposed to “culture” because he
explicitly wants to avoid a “manner of proceeding toward a goal, a protocol of operations with a view to achieving an end; for example: a method for decoding, explaining, describing exhaustively” (3). He is focused instead on following what he calls a “fantasy”: “the fantasmatic force of Living-Together: living together ‘harmoniously,’ cohabiting ‘harmoniously’; it’s what fascinates most about other people, what can inspire the most envy. . . . It’s myth (illusion?) in its most basic form: the right sort of material for a novel” (5). It’s important to note, then, that Barthes is not interested in social prescriptions for utopian communes; instead, he wants to explore key literary texts that tap into the fantasy of an ideal form of living together, or else illustrate the forces that can tear it apart.

*How to Live Together* is a collection of Barthes’ lecture notes, supplemented by transcriptions from recordings of the lectures themselves, along with the seminars he ran in conjunction with the lectures. As a result, they are often only fragments of thoughts, with references and allusions to various other texts, rather than a finished book adapted and published by Barthes himself. But the introductory lecture lays out a path that Barthes will follow, particularly in relation to the key concept of “idiorrhythmy”: “something like solitude with regular interruptions: the paradox, the contradiction, the aporia of bringing distances together...” (6). The concept comes from Barthes reading about the history of monks on Mount Athos, “both isolated from and in contact with one another within a particular type of structure. . . . Where each subject lives according to his own rhythm” (6). From the Greek, “idios” means “personal, particular, one’s own” (178n31), which makes it possible to fantasize about “idiorrhythmic clusters” of people living together outside of monasteries as well. The central texts that Barthes then proposes as sites for considering idiorrhythmy—or its obstacles—are André Gide’s *La Séquestrée de Poitiers (The Confined Woman of Poitiers)*; Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*;
Palladius’ *The Lausiac History*; Thomas Mann’s *The Magic Mountain*; and Emile Zola’s *Pot-Bouille* (*Pot Luck*); while other texts such as Proust’s *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu* also become key reference points.

Barthes wants to resist “method” in the sense of a pre-determined or overly didactic approach to the literary texts. As such he anticipates critiques of literary criticism more recently by Rita Felski and others who see “symptomatic” or “suspicious” reading practices as too predictable, reductive, or boring. Barthes’ position might also be seen as challenging the critiques of animal studies broadly conceived if the point is simply to determine whether or not a given text suggests ethical ways of treating nonhuman animals (or living together with them). While I believe there are good reasons for exploring the treatment of nonhuman animals in literary texts, I have also prioritized the study of discourses related to animality in ways that focus more on their implications for human cultural studies, arguing for the distinction, therefore, between animal and animality studies. While I might not agree with some of Barthes’ politics in these lectures, I think it’s fair to say that his theorization of how best to live together (even if he does not really consider the materiality of inter-species relations) is not necessarily so different from a similar starting point for much of the work that is being done today on animalities broadly conceived.

Barthes becomes quite useful, for example, when he identifies power and desire as two primary forces that can disrupt idiorrhythm—perhaps inevitably—along with less obvious ways that individuals can feel restricted by others, such as the idea of another “holding forth” in ways that negatively impact one’s own rhythms. An example of “holding forth” might be linguistic but it could also be a bodily imposition, in which one feels perhaps crashed into, or forced to alter course, rather than allowed to maintain one’s own rhythm, or flight pattern, so to speak. Barthes
reveals that he feels “intimidated if someone lectures me. . . what’s more, slight paranoia, I’m very sensitive to other people ‘holding forth.’ I’m quick to feel that I’m being lectured at” (142-43). It can be seen in the form of Robinson Crusoe’s father “holding forth” at the beginning of the novel, exhorting him to embrace bourgeois life rather than going to sea, as well as other kinds of behaviors Barthes has observed, including someone eating breakfast next to him with “force, vigor, continuity, tension, a certain theatricality. Investment: breakfast is a garment” (150-51). In this case the “epiphany” can be “affectionate (loving someone whom you take pleasure in seeing eating heartily)” as opposed to “more irritating, more corrosive” examples of behaviors that impose upon those around them (151). In order to organize the topics and texts for his lectures, Barthes takes this kind of approach to other “traits” that affect living together, in order to allow for “a certain number of digressions—into the fields of historical, ethnographical or sociological knowledge” (171), as he later summarizes the results of the lecture series. The process of “opening dossiers” is one that Barthes wants others to contribute to “in their own manner,” while Barthes himself would merely “suggest ways of structuring the themes” which are “presented in alphabetical order of the key words” (172). Is it possible or even desirable, though, to explore “traits” such as “Animaux/Animals,” “Banc/School,” “Cause/Cause,” and “Nourriture/Food” without “holding forth” in some way if we are critics interested in animalities today? Not everyone would agree. Some would articulate important reasons for pursuing what might seem like a more predictable path into texts that engage with animals and animality.

The primary literary text that Barthes opens up in his dossier on animals is Robinson Crusoe, which he sees as paradigmatic of the opposite of living together: solitude (15). Despite all of the nonhuman creatures—and nonwhite humans—that Crusoe meets, Barthes still sees the novel primarily in terms of living alone, as well as a recapitulation of the evolution of human
civilization, beginning with “man” in his “animal” state. In his introductory lecture Barthes acknowledges how the novel can be read within a Marxist frame: “Robinson Crusoe: capitalist, colonizer, slave trader. Having lost everything (sort of shipwreck-bankruptcy, all he’s left with is a knife), gets back on his feet, colonizes and populates his island, becomes its governor, etc.” (14). But Barthes reads Crusoe primarily as living in solitude, moving from “beast to man” (26), which is one of the reasons why “animality” becomes important for him in this case. Some of the questions that animality studies today might ask, though, would be: what kind of “beast” (as in “the beast within”) is constructed in this reading? Must Defoe’s deployment of the term necessarily be the same as what could be called the discourse of the jungle that Barthes seems to have in mind? How might this signifier have shifted diachronically in relation to Christian and Darwinist/Freudian discourses? What is the relationship between constructions of human animality and constructions of racial and class difference at different historical and cultural moments?

For Barthes, Crusoe’s “ascendancy from animal to man runs parallel to another, symmetrical movement: the domestication of animals” (26). But Crusoe’s interactions with nonhuman animals are not considered as material examples of idiorrhythmy along the way because the animal is merely “a substitute for man” (27). The parrot becomes a “Substitute for language,” for example, but it still remains an object: “It’s possible to fetishize an object by turning it into a person, a God, a term of interpellation. . . . But it’s not possible to solicit a familiar You from an object” (27). For Barthes, when Crusoe hears his own name from the parrot, he “doesn’t lose sight of the fact that he’s a human being” (27), with the implication being that the parrot does not ever achieve subjectivity through the use of language; it can only manage the imitative response of an animal other. Further, Crusoe’s interactions with a young
goat that he nurtures are read merely as a “Substitute for affect” (27), in which the goat becomes merely a “domestic” and therefore an example in which Crusoe (and the history of human civilization writ large) can be seen as “deriving affect from power, creating an affective power, using power as a means to receive affect” (27). Defoe’s description seems to support Barthes’ reading: “the creature became so loving, so gentle and so fond that it became from that time one of my domestics and would never leave me afterwards” (qtd. in HLT, 27). Barthes reads it instead as an example of biological “imprinting” that might be a “conduit” for an affective relationship, but not a contact zone between subjects from different species. Barthes takes a similar approach to the “trait” of “Nourriture/Food” when he does not consider the possibility that nonhuman animals could be read as subjects rather than objects. He opens up that dossier instead in terms of the role of food in relation to idiorrhythmic possibilities of humans “Eating Together”: from various rules and rituals in different historical and literary examples, to religious prohibitions in different contexts, to menus and eating practices as signifiers of various cultural signifieds. But there is no consideration of animals themselves, of the lives of nonhuman beings that are raised and killed and consumed in these various examples.

Critics today interested in animalities would generally find these kinds of perspectives to be problematic, suggesting as they do a construction of nonhuman animality that must forever be bracketed off and distinguished from “the human.” Barthes’ contemporary Jacques Derrida is one theorist who has been particularly influential in terms of deconstructing that kind of thinking. Derrida’s later work takes up what he calls the “question of the animal” in significant detail, including ideas that he first worked out as lectures two decades after Barthes. From a 1997 conference titled "L'animal autobiographique" in Cerisy-la-Salle, France, for example, Derrida’s ten-hour address was published posthumously in book form as *The Animal That Therefore I Am*
The last seminar that he gave at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS) in Paris from the fall of 2001 to the spring of 2003 was later published as *The Beast & The Sovereign* (vol. 1 and 2; 2009, 2011), in which he also highlights *Robinson Crusoe*, but as a site for theorizing discourses of sovereignty and biopolitics. In *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, which can provide a more general background here, Derrida tracks the human/animal binary in relation to major philosophers and theorists, from Descartes to Kant, Heidegger, Lacan, and Levinas, revealing how all of them, in different ways, rely upon ultimately untenable formulations of “the human” as categorically different from all other species on the planet.

According to Derrida, all of these philosophers “say the same thing: the animal is deprived of language. Or, more precisely, of response, of a response that could be precisely and rigorously distinguished from a reaction; of the right and power to ‘respond,’ and hence of so many other things that would be proper to man.” The distinction between response and reaction in animals, with reaction corresponding to mere instinct, becomes a particularly useful site for exploring a range of theoretical issues that have traditionally been used to mark off the human/animal boundary.

Derrida argues that it makes no sense to talk about “the animal” as the binary opposite of “the human” since there are so many different kinds of differences between species and even within what calls itself “human.” Instead, we should focus on the “finitude that we share with animals, the mortality that belongs to the very finitude of life, to the experience of compassion, to the possibility of sharing the possibility of this nonpower, the possibility of this impossibility, the anguish of this vulnerability, and the vulnerability of this anguish.” According to Derrida, it is quite clear that animals can suffer, following Bentham’s famous question. But it also becomes clear that denying animals language—the ability to respond rather than merely react—is no
longer tenable, particularly if we understand language more broadly. As a result, Derrida moves toward ethical considerations of animal subjects in ways that Barthes could not imagine in the 1970s. Derrida points out that "the annihilation of certain species is indeed in process, but it is occurring through the organization and exploitation of an artificial, infernal, virtually interminable survival, in conditions that previous generations would have judged monstrous, outside of every supposed norm of a life proper to animals that are thus exterminated by means of their continued existence or even their overpopulation." But it also becomes clear that Derrida does not advocate for universal positions on animal rights, for example, because of the ultimately humanist framework in which those kinds of rights are invoked. Derrida’s work thus becomes important not only for posthumanist theory, but also for human-animal studies and animality studies, depending upon whether one’s emphasis tends to focus on nonhuman or human animals.

Barthes’ work tends to lend itself more to animality studies, perhaps, primarily because his interest in nonhuman animals is to read them as models for humans or for human instinctual behaviors. In his discussion of animals as a “trait”, the “two contrasting movements” he traces are “from beast to man,” as discussed earlier, and “from man to beast” (26). The latter can be seen in what Barthes identifies as “anachoresis”, which is the idea of a human being choosing to retreat from the rest of humanity, or, in this case, “man desiring, drawn to, fascinated by animality” (29). This can take the form of a movement “back”, so to speak, to a more “animal-like” existence, for Christian monks, for example. But Barthes also registers different possibilities for “animality” within Christian discourses, such as when “Animality = infra-nature: aggression, fear, greed, flesh: man without law” (29) (and which therefore might align “the beast within” more with Christian than Darwinist discourses). Animals can also become metaphors for
“a world turned upside down,” when Christian texts register stories of animals going against “their basic animal nature” (29). Other possibilities seem to include something like a more equitable relationship between a hermit and a companion animals, or what Barthes calls “the affectively humanized animal,” but the hermit, we are told, must be careful not to venture into “the risk of sin” (30). Barthes’ thinking about idiorrhythm does not include sexual relations—or the potential for bestiality in this case—and so the occasion of living with a domesticated animal becomes “An aporia typical of love: How is it possible to love someone just a little bit?” (30). But it seems to me that the animal here remains mere metaphor, that the question is really only ever about a human “someone” for Barthes.14

In his subsequent discussion of the trait “Banc/School,” Barthes reinforces the fact that his interest in animals is primarily as metaphor: “Clearly: one should never seriously compare traits of animal ethology with traits of human sociology, never infer one order from the other (because between the two there’s always at least this separating them: language)” (37). But we can consider parallels, according to Barthes, since animals can evolve toward better ways of living together as well, even if “Ethology: supplies images, not explanations” (37). Barthes is interested in this case in a school of fish, more so than an anthill, for example, which he sees as a metaphor for “generalized, universalized bureaucratized training (this has nothing to do with specific regimes: the mass culture of capitalist societies = a version of the anthill society; television = an extension of the ant-hill)” (37). The school of fish, though, can be seen as modeling “collective, synchronized, abrupt shifts in tastes, pleasures, fashions, fears” (37). If we weren’t talking about literal fish, Barthes reflects, we might see this model as “what appears to be the perfect image of Living-together, one that would appear to effect the perfectly smooth symbiosis of what are nevertheless separate individual beings” (37). It can even reproduce itself
without sexual intimacy: “a school of male fish will swim above a school of females. As the mass of eggs floats up to the surface it passes through the school of males, which then release their sperm—reproduction without contact, pure species with no subjects. Erotic paradox: bodies are pressed against each other and yet they don’t make love” (38). Barthes is careful throughout his work to note that idiorrhythmy is not about the intimacy of lovers, which makes this example more appealing to him: “Idiorrhythmy: protects the body in that it keeps it at a distance in order to safeguard its value: its desire” (38).

According to Patrick ffrench, we might want to note Barthes’ own sexuality and elements of his biography—particularly living with his mother until her death—as contributing to Barthes’ fantasy of “an affective, desexualized eroticism” that “carves out a space outside or ‘before’ castration and repression. It privileges maternal attachment and is resolutely non-phallic. It features a ‘happy’ sexuality.”¹⁵ This helps to explain why Barthes might want to exclude couples and sexual relationships as positive examples in his dossiers related to idiorrhythmy, although ffrench elides any mention of how animals and animality are related to Barthes’ fantasy. In the dossier on “Ecoute/Hearing” Barthes begins by distinguishing between which senses are more important for dogs and humans, for example, with dogs privileging smell and humans usually focusing on sight, but noting that hearing can also be quite important. The difference can be seen when it comes to the idea of territory: “Animal territory: often marked out by smell,” while human territories can be defined by sight, touch, or hearing as well (79). Noting Freud’s connection between hearing and sexuality in his “theory of the Primal Scene (scene of hearing),” Barthes also references literary examples in which hearing is related to repression: “Hans Castorp overhearing his Russian neighbors making love in the room next door” in Mann’s The Magic Mountain; “the entire apartment building. . . [as] a space of eavesdropping and espionage”
in Zola’s *Pot Luck*; and then the fantasy of the “Idyllic, utopian community: a space where there’s no repression, that is to say no listening, where there would be hearing but no listening” (80-81).

In order to imagine that kind of idiorrhythm, Barthes wants to avoid focusing not only on the couple but also the family as part of a community, since “the commune falls apart from the moment family groups are reestablished—due to the conflict between sexuality and law” (8). At the other end of the spectrum, Barthes wants to avoid “macro-groupings, large communes, phalansteries, convents, coenobitism” as well, “because their structure is based on an architecture of power. . . and because they’re openly hostile to idiorrhythm...” (8). For this reason, I think it’s quite accurate to say, as Patrick ffrench does, that Barthes’ lectures “will inevitably disappoint those seeking a systematic and totalized socio-political theory.”16 ffrench is right then, to focus on “the pleasure and the *jouissance* of the fragment” rather than “the theoretical construction of social space.”17 Following Diana Knight, ffrench argues that utopia for Barthes “pertains essentially to the details of everyday life and. . . to a certain mode of corporeal and spatial being with others—a precise calibration of spatial, corporeal and affective factors.”18 But I am not ultimately persuaded by ffrench’s argument that Barthes’ inquiry should be read primarily as a response “to the demand for some kind of political expression that emerged in the wake of the events of May 1968.”19 For ffrench, “Much of Barthes’ work of the 1970s can be read as a counter-strategy to the intense politicization of the decade, deflecting the demand for politics toward a subtle and delicate ethics of affective and corporeal relations.”20

Whether we agree with that hypothesis or not, I find it difficult to read *How to Live Together* primarily as a critique of “communities established in the wake of 1968 in France” that end up re-instating the problematic power relations of the society they were established to resist,
presumably echoing critiques made by Foucault and Lacan. If this were the case, I would think that Barthes would have taken advantage of a wide range of comparisons to be made explicit between the traits that limit idiorrhythmy and contemporaneous historical and cultural examples in which those dangers could be identified. But I do agree with ffrench, however, that Barthes is ultimately more interested in “a community formed by the subjectivities of reading and writing” and that the “virtual or at least non-actual nature of this community does not, however, dilute the affective force of living with, precisely because this takes place affectively and imaginatively, in the dimension of the Imaginary.” I would instead see this interest as a missed opportunity for connecting the work to more explicitly politicized critique.

Barthes is quite explicit in the end about not making any social prescriptions. He ends his lectures intentionally with a dossier on “Utopie/Utopia”, indicating that he had initially planned to “dedicate the thirteenth [and final lecture] to constructing, in front of you, a utopia of idiorrhythmic Living-Together—since the lecture course started out from that particular fantasy” (130). Instead, he admits that he “didn’t have time to collect your contributions”; that he “lacked the necessary enthusiasm”; and that he had realized over the course of the lectures that “a utopia of idiorrhythmic Living-Together is not a social utopia” (130). Although it’s not in his written notes, orally he says, simply: “I don’t have a philosophy of Living Together” (196n12). While he suggests vaguely that the lectures of the following year will “involve an Ethics,” Barthes also resists committing to any particular method for dealing with the dossiers he has opened up thus far: “the preparation for method is an infinite, infinitely open process. It’s a form of preparation whose final achievement is forever postponed” (136). Despite the fact that he begins the lecture series by talking about a “non-method,” he now concludes that “As always, the ‘non-’ is too simple. It would be better to say: pre-method. As if I were preparing my materials with a view to
dealing with them methodically at some later stage; as if I actually weren’t too bothered what method would take them up. Anything is possible: psychoanalysis, semiology, ideological criticism could make use of them...” (136). But Barthes is content to leave those kinds of approaches to others.

How might various scholars today respond to this suggestion that “opening up dossiers” should be left at the stage of a “pre-method”? Perhaps Barthes himself would have brought subsequent work to bear on these dossiers if he had time to do so before his unexpected death. It is certainly possible to do more in political terms with other dossiers he opens that indicate promising (or limiting) “traits” to consider, such as “Domestiques/Servants”, in which distinctions come to be made between members of a community who work and those who do not work to meet the basic needs of the community. According to Barthes, “this communitary problem repeats the major structural problems of all societies: the division of labor, exchange, class divisions, the reconstruction of a social microcosm at the margins of society, the circumscription of an idle, privileged group” (77). This problem can begin even with a voluntary master/servant relationship in the case of apprentice monks, but can also be seen in literary examples such as Robinson Crusoe and Friday, which Barthes describes more accurately as a master/slave relationship: “Living-Together with Friday is a matter of living with a slave. . . . Friday places Robinson’s foot on his head himself (as if it were the essential nature of a black man to be instantly enslaved...” (76). According to Barthes, under the “trait” of “Chef/Chief”, the idiorrhythmic space is disrupted as soon as there is a chief, rather than a community of equals, or even a group with an informal guru, for example: “the introduction of a hierarchy: the invention of the chief” (54). Or, in the dossier on “Idyllique/Idyll”, there must be “an absence of conflict,” where the idyllic “refers to a literary representation (or fantasmatization) of its relational space”
Or, under “Règle/Rule”, idiorrhythm is threatened by the development of habits or customs into more rigid rules: “Perhaps, after a certain period of time (historical, personal), every rule, even an inner one, becomes abuse?” (120). All of these threats to idiorrhythm—servants, chiefs, conflicts, rules—could be considered not only in relation to specific historical and cultural examples, but also in relation to animalities as well: how can opening up these dossiers illuminate some of the obstacles to harmonious forms of inter-species Living Together?

One of the traits that Barthes pays less attention to is “Cause/Cause”. When considering “small, flexible groups of several individuals who are attempting to live together (within a certain proximity to one another), while each preserving his or her rhuthmos,” Barthes acknowledges the importance of the question: “What brings them together?” (43). Whether it is a monastery or the sanatorium of The Magic Mountain, “For there to be idiorrhythm—or a dream of idiorrhythm—there has to be: a diffuse, vague, uncertain Cause, a floating Telos, more a fantasy than a belief” (46). For human-animal studies, the fantasy might be not just a small community but larger societal structures that allow for different species to live together in better ways. For animality studies, the desire might be for a world in which discourses of animality are no longer deployed to justify oppressive and exploitative practices and societal structures. But we might also think about animalities scholarship itself as uniting behind “a diffuse, vague, uncertain Cause” in which opening up dossiers on animalities in literary and cultural texts is more than just a “pre-method” but motivated instead by a desire to critique problematic practices and discourses.

To return, finally, to my opening invocation of a murmuration, I am struck by what seems to be a lack of imagination in Barthes’ thinking about this kind of phenomenon. Barthes makes other references to it at various points in How to Live Together, but his attention stays focused on
the question of distance between individuals. In relation to the idea of territory, for example, Barthes suggests that it “Isn’t just a matter of security, it also has to do with a constraint of distance: the spacing of subjects between one territory and another + a certain regulated distance between one subject and another within the territory itself” (117). But security and predator-prey strategies in particular instances also have a significant role to play: “Intra-territorial spacing is reduced whenever the territory is under threat (schools of fish, flocks of starlings) but, once the danger has passed, the subjects reestablish their distance from one another” (117). Once again, the fish (what kind?) and the starlings (in which historical and cultural contexts?) are generic stand-ins for human potential. For Barthes, a biological basis of behavior seems to connect humans and nonhumans when it comes to reproduction and breeding (117), as well as territoriality, since he reinforces the idea that “man = a territorial animal, like the stag and the robin” (57). While he remains quite clear that he sees language as the ultimate dividing line between “the human” and “the animal”—along with all of its corollaries, from subjectivity to affect to culture—Barthes still leaves no space for the sheer awe that can result from watching a murmuration of starlings. What else can we do with that feeling? Where else can our thinking about flocks and schools lead? From my perspective, the animalities that Barthes opens up in *How to Live Together* thus remain insufficiently explored. Why must we assume, for example, that biology or evolution must be the most interesting or important reference points for thinking about human and nonhuman behavior? How might we go further—with both affect and politics—with studies of literary and cultural animalities today?
Notes


3 See, for example, Rita Felski, *The Limits of Critique* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015).

4 More recently, I have come to believe that more productive distinctions can be made between animality studies, human-animal studies, and posthumanist theory, rather than lumping them all together under the supposedly broader term of “animal studies.” See my “Introduction.”

5 For some of my reservations regarding the critique of critique suggested by Felski, for example, see my “The Future of Reading: Animality, Illness, and the Politics of Critique,” in *The Future of Literary Studies*, ed. Jakob Lothe (Oslo: Novus Press, forthcoming).


7 Donna Haraway has been a crucial and influential voice in human-animal studies exploring interspecies relations. See, for example, *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis: University


10 Ibid., 30.

11 Ibid., 28.

12 Ibid., 26.

13 For more on this critique of rights discourse, see Cary Wolfe, Animal Rites: American Culture, the Discourse of Species, and Posthumanist Theory (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 21-43. See also Wolfe, What Is Posthumanism? (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), and Before the Law: Humans and Other Animals in a Biopolitical Frame (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

14 For more recent discussions of interspecies sexualities and erotic relationships, see Kathy Rudy, Loving Animals: Toward a New Animal Advocacy (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013); Colleen Boggs, Animalia Americana: Animal Representations and Biopolitical Subjectivity (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), and “Love Triangle with Dog: Whym Chow, the ‘Michael Fields,’ and the Poetic Potential of Human-Animal Bonds,” in


16 ffrench, 113.

17 Ibid., 116.

18 Ibid., 117. See also Diana Knight, Barthes and Utopia: Space, Travel, Writing (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid.

21 Ibid., 122.

22 Ibid., 124.