THE ANIMAL VOICES OF EDGAR ALLAN POE

by

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Abstract

There are prominent animal figures and graphic moments of animal imagery in several of Edgar Allan Poe's short stories. These animals are at the heart of the action; they are often main characters. Poe's animals have voices and these voices challenge the dominant monologue of the narrators and undermine the prevalent ideologies that the stories enact. Poe's animals shriek, wail, and scream and their voices enable political critiques of some of the central issues at the heart of antebellum America. Without these animals, the marginalized voices could not be heard. The animal denizens in Poe's stories speak: the cat of "The Black Cat" screams, interrupting and condemning a patriarchal narrator and the orangutan of "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" shrieks, shaves, and murders like a human, challenging the dehumanization of slaves in America. Animal imagery also *speaks* in the final two stories, but not in the same way; animalizing another being capitalizes on a hierarchy of classifications. By categorizing their oppressors as animals, the patients of "The System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether" open up a discourse with the narrator in a place where the psychology of madness would silence the voices of the insane and the jester of "Hop-Frog" subverts the monarchical dominance that would oppress the court fool. Poe's fictional animals reveal how the categories used to construct American ideologies could marginalize, abuse, and exploit different beings. These animal voices force these categories into crisis, destabilizing the definition of the human and problematizing the treatment of a variety of subhuman beings. Poe is not an animal rights advocate, but his animal figures are able to show us the problems and power of the categorical systems we use to structure our lives.

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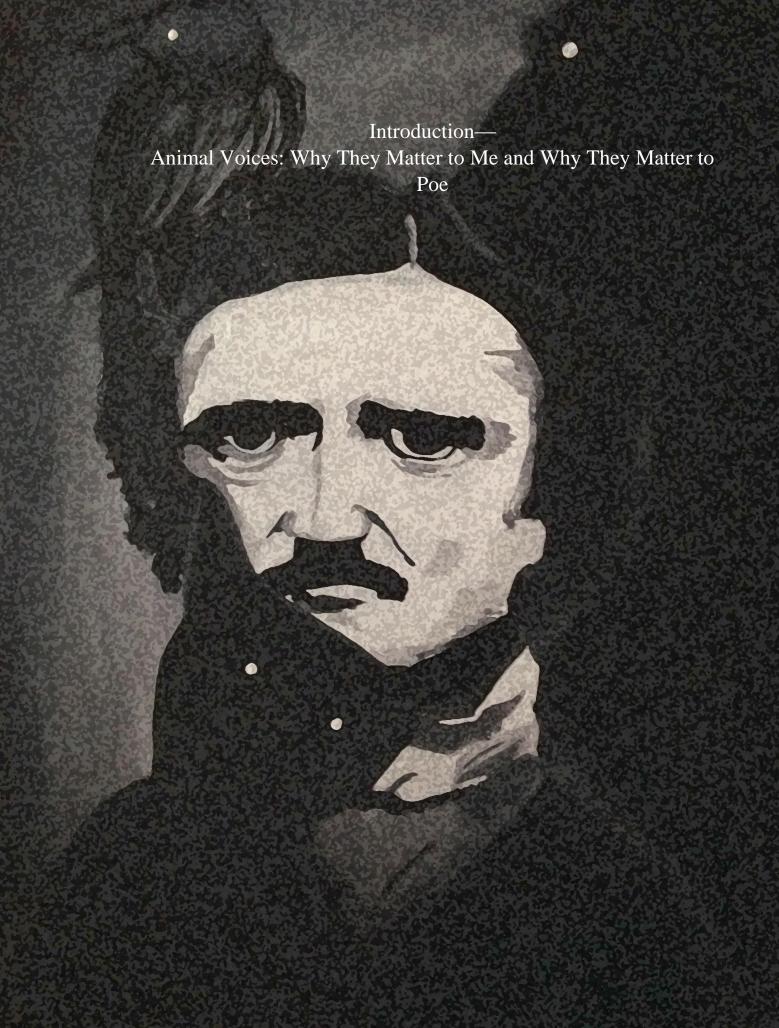
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I have created five different paintings for this project and included them at the beginning of every chapter. Each of these paintings (except the one that precedes the introduction—this one is just a fun nod to Poe's animals) represents the moment when the animals speak in each story. Hop-Frog is pictured standing on top of the flaming bodies of the king and his councillors in Chapter One (11). Chapter Two begins where the story of "The Black Cat" ends—as the woman and cat metaphorically merge behind the walls of the narrator's cellar (23). The orangutan stands in front of a mirror and sees a human face to start off Chapter Three (47). And in Chapter Four, the unnamed narrator cowers while big black ape-like figures loom behind him (71).



I first met Edgar Allan Poe when I was six years old. I am sure that, back then, the small compilation of his most famous stories fascinated me because it contained so much of the gruesome murder and sticky gore that I was not allowed to watch on television. I did not realize he was a nineteenth-century writer or that he was a canonical figure in American Literature. All I knew then was that, as the pendulum descended upon the man bound to a board by ropes, unable to move, only able to watch the scythe swing slowly down and down and down, these were the only kinds of stories that I wanted to read. Since then, I have known Edgar Allan Poe as several things: the creator of detective fiction; the master of the macabre; the king of horror. Since the initial publication of his writing more than 150 years ago, his works have had a sustained cultural impact: they have been adapted as a graphic novel, a big box office film, and a television drama—the Simpsons have even featured him in one of their Halloween specials. The scholarship devoted to Poe is also extensive and diverse. Scholars examine Poe's work in many different ways. Some of the most dominant approaches are feminist, psychoanalytic, and historical readings. In this thesis, I will add to this body of work on Poe by focusing on the animals in his short fiction.

This thesis will listen to the voices of multiple animals: from the cats in "The Black Cat," to the orangutan in "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" ("Rue Morgue"), to the frogs, chickens, and apes of "The System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether" ("Tarr and Fether"), to the tarred and feathered orangutans of "Hop-Frog." When I say that I will

¹ The obvious omission in the list of works I will analyze is Poe's most famous work "The Raven." Each story, you will notice, is a short story. Keeping the scope of this project in mind, I have decided to focus on Poe's short fiction and not his poetry. If I were to expand the arguments of this thesis, "The Raven" is the first work I would turn to.

listen to the animal voices, I mean that I will focus on the moments in Poe's fiction when he describes animals speaking as humans would speak. Paying special attention to these moments reveals similarities across the stories: animals and animal figures are behaving like humans and this behaviour reveals the systemic and inhumane treatment of other less-than-human figures in each story.

With its focus on Poe's animals, this thesis adds to recent and ongoing research in a number of ways. Scholars have paid little attention to the animals that appear in Poe's work. Jennifer Mason identifies an even larger gap in American studies, and argues that "animals have remained a critical blind spot" more generally (7). Colleen Boggs devotes a chapter of her 2013 book *Animalia Americana*, to the first cross-story analysis of Poe's animals, in which she examines animal subjectivity in nineteenth-century America. And while there have been several articles on individual stories like "The Black Cat" (1843) and "Rue Morgue" (1841), most do not focus in a sustained way on the thematic impact or historical relevance of the animal in these tales.

As I will show, Poe's work is rich with animal figures that have what I call posthuman potential. These figures are able to destabilize categories by dissolving cherished classifications and closing the great divides² between categories. Figures with posthuman potential often exist in between categories or binaries.³ I will focus specifically on one great divide: that between the human and the nonhuman.⁴ For the

² This is a term Donna Haraway uses in her book *When Species Meet*.

³ For this project, "categories" is a general term that refers to the concepts we use to structure our worlds. Binaries are sets of two opposing categories (for example, life and death, or white and black).

⁴ While both Boggs and Stephanie Rowe briefly mention posthumanism, neither fully develops a posthumanist argument. Rowe does not explicitly identify posthumanism as the theoretical lens for her reading of Poe, yet she advances several distinctly posthuman ideas in her work on "Rue Morgue." In her 2002 dissertation, she discusses how many of the figures in Poe's fiction are beyond or outside the human.

purposes of this project, the human is a category defined by social and political perceptions and constructions, rather than strictly by biology.⁵ In Poe's historical context, the human was the white (often property owning) male. The nonhuman exists oppositionally to the human and is a living being excluded from this category—an animal, for example.⁶ The subhuman is a being who is biologically human, but is somehow less, deficient, or not quite human in the cultural or political context of their society. The subhuman is, therefore, a being denied the rights of other biological humans and is often described as biologically less than human—the slave from "Rue Morgue," the woman from "The Black Cat," the physically deformed dwarf from "Hop-Frog," and the mentally ill patients from "Tarr and Fether," for example (see figure 1 for a visual breakdown of these key terms).

She reads the orangutan of "Rue Morgue" as an inhuman other who problematizes the distinction of ape and man. This reading is one of the earliest to suggest that Poe's orangutan is something other than just an animal

⁵ For these definitions, it might be useful (although problematic in its own way) to think of them biologically. A nonhuman could be called any being that is not a *Homo sapiens*. Biologically, the subhuman would be *Homo sapiens*, but denied the rights of other *Homo sapiens*. I am hesitant to mark these categories using biology, however, because historically, scientists and other writers have also manipulated biological terms to exclude beings (a good example of this is the black American and the literature that classified him/her as a being who is biologically different and intellectually inferior to white Americans).
⁶ There are other examples of the nonhuman, but they are almost exclusively found in fiction. Some examples include sentient machines (the film *Her* is a contemporary example), spirits (for example, the soul sucking Dementors featured in *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, or even aliens from different planets (the film *District Nine* is a good recent example).

Non-reason Reason Subhuman Nonhuman Human The subhuman is a The nonhuman is in The human, for this being identified as direct opposition to the thesis, is a white male. human but also viewed human. The nonhuman is White males could be as being lesser or completely excluded subhumans (for example, deficient in some way from the human. a white male could be a when set beside other criminal, disabled, or humans. The subhuman mentally ill) but, unlike is denied the full rights other subhumans, they granted to humans, Animal are not subhuman by usually based on default. This definition is pseudo-scientific The animal is a nonhuman. The a reflection of the beliefs classifications or labels animal is denied the rights of held in Poe's specific defining the subhuman humans, is marked as nineteenth-century as less than human. biologically inferior to the American historical human, and is consumed, context. exploited, and abused by the human.

Figure 1: Definitions Visual Flow Chart

Across the four stories that I will analyze, animals and animal images are paired with examples of the subhumans mentioned above. In "The Black Cat," a woman is murdered with an axe to the brain and a cat catches her killer; in "Rue Morgue," an orangutan doubles for a slave and challenges the racial stereotypes of the period; in "Tarr and Fether," a group of mentally ill patients animalize and cage their doctors; and in "Hop-Frog," an angry dwarf inverts the hierarchies of power, and punishes a cruel monarch. Many of the subhumans in these stories do not have a voice. The animals, however, do: they scream and shriek, protesting the inhumane and unequal treatment

humans inflict upon these subhumans.⁷ Physical boundaries begin to break down in "The Black Cat" as the corpse of the woman decays and the cat assumes a position on top of her ruined head to speak for her. In "Rue Morgue," the boundaries between humans, slaves, and animals merge as Poe gives his reader an orangutan who speaks, shaves, and murders. The boundaries separating man from animal start to collapse in "Hop-Frog" and "Tarr and Fether" when the physical appearance of the humans is altered to make them look like apes. By focusing my reading of Poe on his posthuman animals, I will reveal how these animals are able to destabilize the categories used to define and understand the human in Poe's America.

The animal voices provide the reader with an alternative to the stories' overpowering first-person narrators. This narration often speaks for the current ideologies of the historical period, but the animals have a countervailing effect that offsets that dominant voice. Scholars often define Poe's work "as ideologically conservative, asserting that the violence he renders against the body—especially socially marginalized bodies—reinforces a social order dependent upon the violent subjugation of women and enslaved people" (August 5). While this may be true for some of his work, this project will demonstrate that an animal-focused analysis enables a politicized reading of how people treated the subhuman of nineteenth-century America.

⁷ This project is not about the rights of animals—not exactly. Considering the emerging animal rights discourse in America, it would be tempting to argue that Poe was concerned with the welfare of animals—the animal rights discourse was emerging in this period and animals were becoming fully formed characters in fiction. This is not the primary issue operating in these stories. A discourse around or about animal rights had begun in Poe's time, but the rights of animals were less urgent or significant than the social and political subjects of gender and race. Poe is not an animal rights advocate, but his animal figures suggest that he is concerned with exploring why and how other beings have been labeled, exploited, and marginalized: people like women, slaves, and the mentally ill, and the physically disabled.

⁸ I would argue that this description suits *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*, for example.

Chapter One outlines the major theoretical concepts underpinning my reading of Poe's fiction. In this chapter, I will use Mary Douglas' research on classificatory systems to show how categories structure different communities. Douglas' work helps to explain how we build the categories that organize our worlds. As Douglas notes, things do not always fit neatly into our categories. When objects or other entities exist in these inbetween spaces, they are what Douglas calls "dirty"; this dirt challenges the assumptions we make about the larger categories. Donna Haraway's revolutionary essay "A Manifesto for Cyborgs" introduces an apt example of Douglas' in her figure of the cyborg. The cyborg is a figure who exists in this liminal space. As simultaneously human and machine, the cyborg evokes discomfort simply by existing in two categories at once and, for Haraway, it has the power to expose the exploitative nature of certain categories. I am pairing Haraway and Douglas to illustrate how the categories of the human, the subhuman, and the nonhuman animal operate and how posthumanism can break these categories down. I will describe how we build categories, how we can break these categories down, and finally, how we have used these categories to talk about the animals in our lives. The hierarchy of categories has power, and one's location in this hierarchy often determines how much power a being will have.

Chapters Two and Three focus on stories with actual animal characters. In "The Black Cat," the cat is integral to showing how Poe challenged the legitimacy of the domestic contract of nineteenth-century America. Categorizing a woman as subhuman enabled exploitation and abuse—something that the titular figure in "The Black Cat" demonstrates. The abusive husband is the narrator of this story, and he speaks very little about the appearance, presence, or voice of the nameless wife. He descends into

alcoholism, returning home almost every night extremely inebriated. As the story progresses, the narrator becomes increasingly abusive towards his wife and pets—mutilating and eventually murdering his first black cat, Pluto. Towards the end of the tale, he murders his wife by plunging an axe into her brain. The story climaxes as detectives search the cellar for his wife's body, and a second black cat reveals her location behind the bricks lining the basement's dank walls. I will argue that the figure of the cat compensates for the narrative bias in the tale. The story invites the reader to view the cat as a surrogate for the wife, and as a result the reader is able to hear the type of abuse the narrator inflicts but does not describe. The final scene of this story displays this thematic connection visually. As the detectives tear down the walls of the narrator's basement, the black cat stands atop the woman's dead corpse, crying out for justice. While the animal and woman metaphorically merge into a grotesque posthuman figure, the narrator continuously dehumanizes himself. Chapter Two will explore how the categories of human, subhuman, and nonhuman are in constant flux.

There were violent debates in nineteenth-century America about race and slavery, and Chapter Three's analysis of "Rue Morgue" explores the complex nature of these fierce disputes through a reading of the story's most problematic character: the orangutan. In "Rue Morgue," C. Auguste Dupin (Poe's famous first detective) solves the grisly murders of two wealthy women. The story takes an unexpected turn when Dupin discovers that the murderer was an animal. In this story, Poe uses the orangutan to interrogate the identification of the American slave as subhuman. I will focus on two key scenes: the scene in which the ape is shaving and the scene in which witnesses confuse an orangutan's voice for a human's. Scholars continue to dispute what Poe's views on

slavery were, and extant scholarship on this story does not resolve this debate. The orangutan of "Rue Morgue" generates confusion by insisting on the orangutan-slave's humanity.

While "Tarr and Fether" and "Hop-Frog" do not prominently feature animals as characters, both stories use animal imagery copiously. Chapter Four focuses on the impact of such animal imagery in order to highlight the powers of categorization. In "Tarr and Fether," the patients of an insane asylum overpower the doctors, cage them, and cover them in tar and feathers. When the narrator of the story visits the institution, the patients are masquerading as the physicians. Until the very end of the tale, the narrator does not know that his hosts are insane. While the narrator dines with the patients, they behave in increasingly animal-like ways, imitating a donkey, a chicken, and a frog. This story stresses the uncertainty of classifications such as sane and insane in the period, animalizing both doctor and patient and leaving the reader questioning everyone's sanity.

The power of these categories is also highlighted in the violent, subversive, and carnivalesque story, "Hop-Frog." In "Hop-Frog," the eponymous court jester persuades the king and seven of his most important councillors to dress up as orangutans. He does this by covering them in tar and flax, which is meant to be a joke or surprise for a ball. The story closes with Hop-Frog chaining the eight men together, stringing them up from the roof, and setting them on fire. Hop-Frog "transforms" the king and his men into animals, stripping them of their human rights and human voices. When the king and his men are human, Hop-Frog is unable to challenge or hurt them. By reducing them to nonhumans, he is able to subvert the categories structuring his world to his advantage.

The events of "Hop-Frog" show how animalizing beings enables brutal and inhuman treatment.

Each of the four stories I discuss will show how animals are able to help the subhuman figures of the nineteenth century speak. "The Black Cat" merges woman and animal, "Rue Morgue" thematically humanizes an orangutan, and "Tarr and Fether" and "Hop-Frog" highlight the power of categorization by depicting subhuman characters who overpower their human counterparts by making them into animals. In nineteenth-century America, subhumans did not have a voice. These four short stories are able to help the subhuman speak at a time when their rights were being abused, taken away, or violated.

Chapter One—
Doing the Dirty Work: Categorization and the Po(e)sthuman
Figure

In December of 2013, the Nonhuman Rights Project (NhRP) filed a lawsuit that sought to grant select chimpanzee's bodily liberty (habeas corpus) in the eyes of the law. A variety of different scholars and professionals came together to try and accomplish this goal among them legal experts, scientists, and animal rights activists. As nonhumans, animals do not have this basic right of personhood. In light of the recent classification of corporations as persons, this situation is almost tragically laughable; legally, we have granted personhood to commercial enterprises before granting it to animals. Who, or what, we consider worthy of human rights and bodily liberty is an idea that is constantly changing. Steven Wise, the founder of the NhRP, has studied the history of habeas corpus in relation to the fight against slavery (two themes prominent in Chapter Three of this thesis) and his work reminds us of one of the many times we have redefined who counts as human. When speaking about Tommy, a chimpanzee, Wise says that "his petition asks this court to issue a writ recognizing that Tommy is not a legal thing to be possessed by respondents, but rather is a cognitively complex autonomous legal person with the fundamental legal right not to be imprisoned" (Wise, qtd. in Gorman). In this thesis, I highlight how, because of social and political categorical constructions, subhuman figures do not have bodily rights or a voice to speak out against their abuse. The similarities of the nineteenth-century subhuman and the twenty-first-century animal—between Tommy and the nameless wife of "The Black Cat," for instance—are

⁹ Corporate personhood is an American legal concept that has been evolving since the early nineteenth century. Recently, the rights of corporations have been quickly increasing. For example, corporations have a First Amendment right to make political expenditures. Recently, in Burwell v. Hobby Lobby, the American Supreme Court "recognized that corporations are entitled to religious freedom under the First Amendment" (Weaver). This allowed the Hobby Lobby Corporation to deny birth control coverage to its employees as a religious exemption.

provocative and capture the primary concerns of this thesis: who counts as human, how do we mark the difference, and why?

This chapter will seek to answer three central questions: How do we construct the category of the human? How is the critical discourse of posthumanism able to complicate and confuse these categories of personhood? And what makes an animal a powerful figure whose voice will reveal the inhumane treatment of the subhuman beings in each story? The human and the posthuman animal figure are the two ideas that underpin the readings in this thesis. I use these concepts to show how the animal is working in each tale. Poe's animals and animal images destabilize the power structures and show why systems like patriarchy, slavery, and even monarchy are deeply problematic.

Our worlds—Poe's, Hop-Frog's, Dupin's, mine, and yours—are constructed using categories. We use categories to understand larger order concepts, such as the differences between human and nonhuman and the living and the dead, but we also use categories to understand everyday experiences. Systems of classification determine who you are and what your role is in any given society. Perhaps the most important category we construct as human beings is the category of the human. This category exists at the expense of "others": animal others, woman others, disabled others, mentally ill others, and enslaved others. In the following chapter, we will see how posthumanism celebrates the confusion of categories and is a response to this type of rigid humanism. A posthumanist reading of Poe's short fiction underscores how the question of who is human was a central concern. Using these two ideological frameworks as a baseline, I argue that because the animals in Poe's short fiction are posthuman, they are able to resist, critique, and confuse the existing category of the human.

1.1 Building the Categories

In *Purity and Danger*, Mary Douglas proposes that humans create what she calls systems of classification to reduce ambiguity. ¹⁰ Douglas' key insight is that dirt is matter out of place (44). In other words, dirt is not mud, dust, manure, or clumps of hair—although all of these things *can* be dirt when we discover them in a different or unexpected context. As she puts it, "There is no such thing as dirt; no single item is dirty apart from a particular system of classification in which it does not fit" (xvii). For something to be out of place, there needs to be a system that tells us where things go or when things are in their place. Often, these systems develop around sets of binaries—and the dirt is what exists in between:

We can recognize our own notions of dirt that we are using as a kind of omnibus compendium which includes all the rejected elements of ordered systems. It is a relative idea. Shoes are not dirty in themselves, but it is dirty to place them on the dining table; food is not dirty in itself, but it is dirty to leave cooking utensils in the bedroom, or food bespattered on clothing; similarly, bathroom equipment in the drawing room; clothing lying on chairs; outdoor things indoors; upstairs things downstairs; under-clothing appearing where over-clothing should be, and so on. In short, our pollution behaviour is the reaction which condemns any object or idea likely to confuse or contradict cherished classifications. (44-45)

¹⁰ I will use the phrase "systems of classification" and the word "categories" interchangeably in this chapter. "Systems of classification" is Douglas' term, while "categories" or "categorical crisis" is mine. For this thesis, I use them to mean the same thing.

This explanation shows how these systems of classification operate in the small moments and simple actions of everyday life. For example, we would feel uncomfortable if our nail clippers were in with our cutlery or if a box of tampons were shelved in the cupboard next to the pasta sauce. When things are out of place, it creates discomfort. Nail clippers and tampons belong in the bathroom and, when they are shelved neatly in an understood system of classifications, we feel at ease. However, these categorical systems extend beyond the location of personal grooming tools and feminine hygiene products to much larger-order concerns. As Douglas demonstrates in *Purity and Danger* in her analysis of religious ritual and of the sacred and the profane, this notion of the dirty functions on a much larger scale with much greater stakes. These categories shape the way people treat other (human) beings. For Douglas, these categorical systems shape our lives.

Categories like the human are constructed and not implicit, and the ideas Douglas proposes help to explain how people have defined the human. Additionally, Douglas shows that when these systems of classifications are complicated or made ambiguous, the result is dirty. Where categories structure societies, ambiguous items frequently complicate cherished classifications and these ambiguities are quickly—sometimes violently—corrected, or cleaned up, to extend Douglas' metaphor. People will always seek to manage ambiguous dirt and this makes any change to our existing categories challenging. For example, in the time Poe was writing, there was a categorical crisis

¹¹ One example of categorical crisis is a corpse. Julia Kristeva's essay *The Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* develops an argument related to Douglas' discussion of dirt, but in a sustained examination of the abject. The abject, she says, "disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite" (4). For Kristeva, the corpse is the ultimate example of the abject: "corpses show me what I permanently thrust aside in order to live" (4).

around race. Because the slave was both black and human (according to some), he¹² was an ambiguous figure because, in this period, the category of the human only included people who were white. This categorical crisis would, in the 1860s, play itself out in the American civil war. The concept of the human is a category we construct to include some individuals and to exclude others. The human, as the critical discourse of posthumanism is devoted to demonstrating and exploring, is a category that is constantly in flux.¹³

1.2 Breaking Them Down

Douglas argues that we create larger categories to manage our environments; keeping Douglas' points in mind, posthumanism then seeks to break these categories down. Posthumanism is a critical idiom that addresses the problem of exclusion and embraces ambiguity. Donna Haraway's essay "A Manifesto for Cyborgs" (1985)—which was posthumanist before it became fashionable—uses the figure of the cyborg to exploit the liminal spaces between what she calls the three "great divides" or binaries in western culture: man/animal, organic/inorganic, and real/virtual. Although my reading of Poe is focused on biological beings, Haraway's cyborg is a useful example of a dirty posthuman figure because it is a figure devoted to "serious play," or to a meaningful and dramatic exploration of the liminal spaces in between categories ("Manifesto" 1). As she puts it, her manifesto "is an argument for pleasure in the confusion of boundaries and for

¹² I gender the slave male here only because, in "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," the orangutan is gendered male and that is who I argue represents the slave in this thesis.

¹³ For a comprehensive description of humanism and how it has changed throughout history, see Tony Davies' *Humanism*.

¹⁴ For some of the key texts in this field, see Neil Badmington's reader *Posthumanism*, Cary Wolfe's *What is Posthumanism*, N. Katherine Hayles' *How We Became Posthuman*, and Elaine Graham's *Representations of the Post/Human*.

¹⁵ Haraway uses this phrase in her book *When Species Meet*.

responsibility in their construction" (3) and her cyborg is the figurative representation of these ideas. Posthumanism holds seemingly incompatible ideas together and refuses to allow these ideas to resolve into larger wholes—or as Douglas would say, refuses to allow people to manage ambiguity.

In When Species Meet (2007), Haraway applies the ideas introduced in "A Manifesto for Cyborgs" explicitly to animals and to human-animal interaction and mutual dependence. Unlike the sometime-martial, sometimes-evangelical tone of "Manifesto," with its sustained focus on the meaning of interspecies encounters, When Species Meet is a personal, emotional, and at times autobiographical enactment of the ideals expressed in the earlier essay. However, this work is important for my project because it introduces the posthuman animal figure. At first, it may seem counterintuitive to think of an animal as "post" human. The "post" in the word posthuman seems to imply a development of the human or something beyond or after the human as a category of existence. Biologically, people may see the animal as pre-human or less than human. Haraway offers several examples of posthuman animals in When Species Meet—examples that range from her own pet dog Cayenne, to the microorganisms in our bodies, to Derrida's cat. These animals challenge our ideas about the categories we use to structure our lives. "I love the fact," writes Haraway,

that human genomes can be found in only about 10 percent of all the cells that occupy the mundane space I call my body; the other 90 percent of the cells are filled with the genomes of bacteria, fungi, protists, and such, some of which play in a symphony necessary to my being alive at all, and some of

which are hitching a ride and doing the rest of me, of us, no harm. (*When Species Meet* 3-4).

Even these microscopic organisms are able to challenge the perception of our body as unilaterally singular or completely our own. As it looked at Derrida's naked body, his cat famously challenged Derrida's existing distinctions between the I and the animal other. Today's domestic canine companion is moving between the category of animal and family member—for some, a dog has come to occupy the category of friend or child. We can see an animal as posthuman because it, much like the cyborg, interrogates the category of what we view as the human. The "post" of posthumanism can seem futuristic or somehow beyond the human. This, Badmington argues, is not the case; the posthuman is not an evolution of the human (Badmington 21). Instead, he insists that the posthumanism interrogates the idea of the human. As I will discuss in the next section of this chapter, people in nineteenth-century America were beginning to rethink their relationships with animals. The categories that defined these animals were shifting; animals were now domestic companions and even biological human ancestors. The animal is posthuman because, in the nineteenth century, the animal was a liminal figure whose categorical identity was shifting. And as we will see in all four stories I discuss in this thesis, posthuman animal figures can renegotiate the boundaries of the human.

There are two important phrases that I will use in the chapters that follow. The first is "posthuman slip," and the second "an animal cover-up." A posthuman slip occurs when someone confuses an animal for a human when the visual evidence that would "give the animal away" is denied to the witnesses. During these slips, the boundary between human and animal becomes more difficult to discern. There are posthuman slips in both "The

Black Cat" and "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" and it is at these particular moments that the posthuman animal figure has the power to speak—revealing the abuse humans are inflicting upon subhumans. We can see what I am calling an "animal cover-up" in both "The System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether" and "Hop-Frog." These coverups occur when a being categorized as subhuman takes away the humanity of their abusers by them by "making" them into animals. When I say making them animal, I do not mean literally; obviously, the biological identity of the character does not change. Instead, I mean that the subhuman is able to make a character animal by taking away his human rights and his human voice. ¹⁶ He is animal in all but his biology.

1.3 Domesticating Them

The discourse of animal rights is not the primary focus of this thesis. However, it was my personal interest in this discourse that forced me to seriously think about how and why we are able to grant rights to some and take the rights of others away. This project is not about the mistreatment of animals, but if it does not show how the systems we once used to dehumanize people we now call human beings are still being used today to exploit animals on an unimaginably large scale, I have failed in my argumentation. Who counts as human and who does not is perhaps the most important question that the animals of Poe's stories ask—one that we should still rigorously interrogate when considering the existence of nonhumans. Animal identity and human-animal interaction were shifting and

¹⁶ I use the pronoun 'his' when referring to the category of the human because I define the nineteenth-century human as white and male.

a discourse of animal rights was beginning to emerge; as a result the animal became a potent figure for considering the treatment of nineteenth century society's subhumans.

On June 24, 1865, the *New York Times* published an opinion piece on cruelty, saying that Americans did not need to look to other countries or cultures to find examples of barbarity. The editorial cited a number of different cases of cruelty in America and all of these examples had to do with the ways that animals were treated before they were slaughtered (Finsen 1). The piece suggested that "the manner in which…live cattle are dragged or driven to the shambles is an outrage upon the natural feelings of anyone not utterly hardened by familiarity with cruelty in its most barbarous forms" (*New York Times*, qtd. in Finsen 1). It would be inaccurate to say that nineteenth-century America was as concerned with animal rights as we are today; however, as this editorial demonstrates, people were beginning to reconsider the rights of animals as well as the nature of our relationships with them.

The origin of the animal rights movement in America is contemporary with Poe's publishing life and can offer insight into why the animals in his tales could generate a sympathetic and powerful reaction in his audience. Karen and Michael Iacobbo write that, contrary to popular belief, "Vegetarianism in the United States did not sprout from a Sixties California commune" (1). They point out that vegetarianism, which is connected to animal rights, existed in early Colonial America in different Christian societies (9).¹⁷ It would be more than 100 years before these early vegetarian ideals would leave the realm

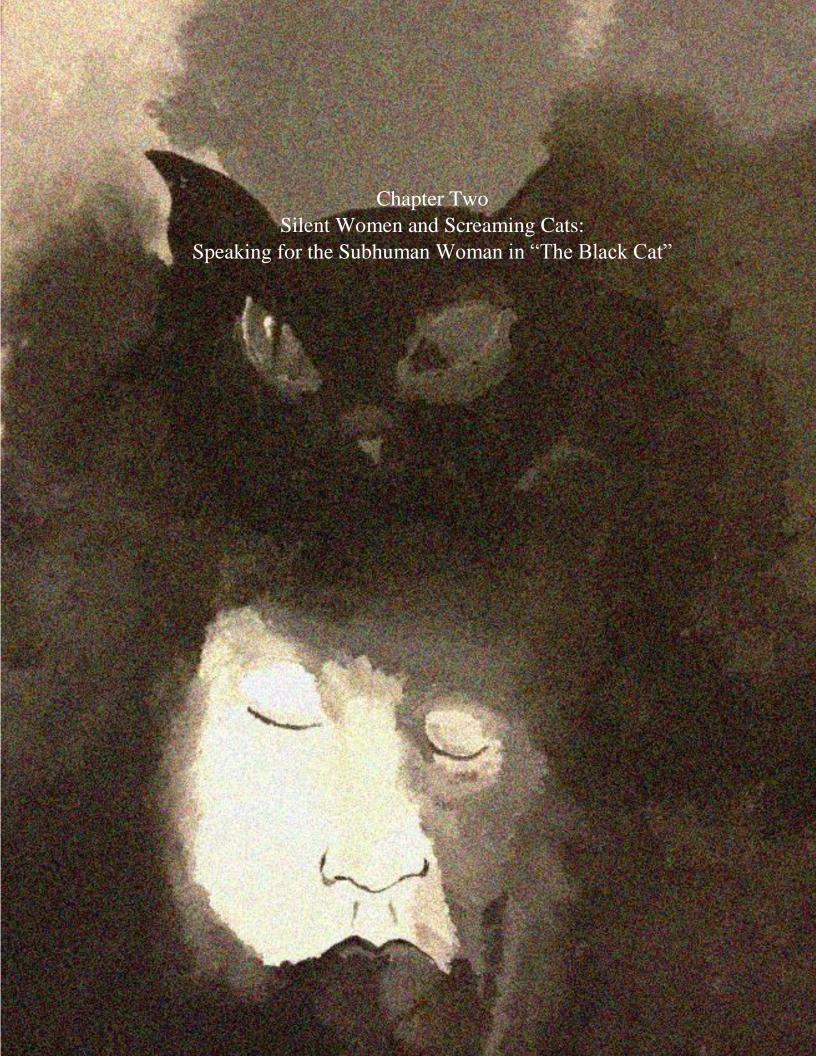
¹⁷ These different groups based these beliefs from Genesis 1:29 that reads "And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat" (*King James Bible*, Gen. 1.29).

of Christian religious belief. In the nineteenth century, humane societies gradually began to emerge. ¹⁸ America would not have its first official humane society until after the Civil War; Henry Bergh formed the first Animal Welfare organization in America in New York in 1866. Before the end of that decade, there were similar institutions in Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Illinois, California, and Minnesota (Preece 16). Private citizens were also beginning to produce a literature stressing compassionate animal treatment. People like George Angell, an animal rights advocate, would even distribute monthly magazines. The first issue of his magazine *Our Dumb Animals* (1868) had a circulation of more than 100,000 (Preece 17). There was also a wealth of literature devoted to the treatment of the domestic companion (as we will see in Chapter Two). Animals and their rights were the focus of a new and emerging discourse.

Poe may have been drawn to the animal's narrative and descriptive potential because philosophies about the utility and identity of animals were shifting during his time. Socially, animals were becoming companions and were a new part of the domestic space in America. Scientifically, as researchers began to investigate evolutionary biology, which would culminate in Darwin's *Origin of Species*, the biological relationship of man and animal was undergoing huge changes. Animal rights movements and vegetarian lifestyles became increasingly popular in the late nineteenth century. The location of the animal on the hierarchy of the categories I have laid out (human, subhuman, nonhuman)

¹⁸ Animal rights and vegetarianism occurred first in England. A group of individuals committed to animal rights reform founded the first society devoted to preventing cruelty to animals in Britain in 1824 (Mason 16). For a more comprehensive study on vegetarianism in Britain see Timothy Morton's *Shelley and the Revolution in Taste*, David Perkins' *Romanticism and Animal Rights*, and Christine Kenyon-Jones' *Kindred Brutes: Animals in Romantic Period Writing*.

is complicated, which is part of the reason that animals are such productive posthuman figures. Mary Douglas describes how systems of classification organize societies. The posthuman animals in Poe's short fiction deeply problematize this categorical hierarchy. Cats and orangutans challenge the ideology of what it means to be human, creating a dirty ambiguity that is not easily resolved and prompts a re-evaluation of those we deem less than human. Animal imagery is able to cover up the human and allow marginalized beings to take control of the categorical hierarchies that structure their lives. The animal in Poe's works is a figure of great potential, as much now as it was in nineteenth-century America.



"The Black Cat" is a story about the collapse of a manic man's world; it is also the domestic horror story of a woman without a voice. The husband's narrating voice dominates the tale and he does not give his wife, who remains unnamed, any words of dialogue, nor does he describe her in any detail. "Listening" to the animal voice in the story reveals the vulnerability of a woman in the domestic space of Poe's period. The murderous narrator teeters on the edge of sanity and sobriety for most of the tale, and his supernatural description of Pluto's (possible) resurrection is too bizarre to be unquestionable fact. ¹⁹ The first-person, overwhelming, and unreliable narration of "The Black Cat" prompts readers to seek a voice other than the narrator's to make sense of the events of the story. The only voice to turn to in this particular household, and the only other voice to be heard in the story, is the voice of the black cat, who cries out in the final scene and reveals the husband's crimes. By reading the cat and the wife as interchangeable figures in the domestic space, we can make visible the husband's objectionable treatment of his wife, and make audible the otherwise muted abuse.

In this tale, Poe complicates the categories of human, woman, and animal. He recategorizes all of the main characters in "The Black Cat": the woman becomes a nonhuman; the man becomes monstrous, reduced to subhuman status; and the black cat becomes human, elevated to fill the domestic role of the wife in this story. The categories of human and nonhuman are not static in this story and Poe is able to use these

¹⁹ It is impossible to tell whether or not there are actually two black cats in this tale. The similarities between Pluto and the second cat are striking and unlikely. However, the narrator states that he is not the only person who interacts with the animal; he also describes his wife immediately taking a liking to the creature. For the purposes of this thesis, when referring to the two possible black cats generally, I will refer to them in the singular. When discussing specific moments in the story, I will distinguish these two cats by calling the first cat Pluto (his name) and calling the other cat the second black cat.

categorical crises²⁰ to critique the domestic contract. By the end of the story, when the detectives enter the basement where the wife's body is bricked up into the cellar wall, the narrator's humanity has become unrecognizable. The human-ness of the black cat, however, progressively builds towards this moment. In the final scene of the story, the no-longer-human voice of the narrator succumbs to the more human voice of the black cat, as the grotesquely hybrid figure of the cat and the woman stands in front of the narrator and the police officers to reveal the horrifying consequences of the domestic contract. Through its animal figure, Poe's story invites the reader to question the conditions of nineteenth-century American domesticity.

2.1 The Language of Men, Women, and Animals

In "The Black Cat," Poe replicates and then subverts the typical nineteenth-century domestic space. During this historical period, matrimony made women property and stripped them of their legal rights; religious doctrine rigidly proclaimed that men were superior to women; and, social publications valorized the "angel in the house" and prescribed silence and submission as appropriate marital behaviour. The wife in "The Black Cat" embodies this problematic subjugation. ²²

Poe's critique of the domestic household was timely. In spite of the social, legal, and religious systems that demanded particular behaviour from women, there were incredible shifts in female authorship, employment, and agency in the first half of the

 $^{^{20}}$ A categorical crisis, which I describe in Chapter One, occurs when something or someone complicates categories or no longer fits within a classificatory system.

²¹ The origin of this phrase was Coventry Patmore's 1854 poem, "The Angel in the House."

²² For an overview of the many pale and silent women in Poe's work, see Floyd Stovall's "The Women of Poe's Poems and Tales."

nineteenth century. In this period, women were still subhumans²³ but were also witnessing some of the first widespread and organized women's movements demanding change. The woman of early- and mid-nineteenth-century America was submissive, exploited, legally inferior to men, and stripped of her rights by matrimony; yet, the woman of the nineteenth century was also published author, celebrity prostitute, university graduate, feminist, and wage-earning factory worker. The first women's rights convention took place in 1848 in Seneca Falls, New York, famously asserting that all men and women are created equal (McMillen 71). In the period when Poe wrote "The Black Cat," authors, scholars, and activists were seeking to renegotiate gender relations. While women would not receive the vote for more than 70 years, the latter half of the nineteenth century marked the political and social beginnings of the feminist movement (Rothman 389-94). These social developments can explain why Poe's tale would problematize his society's expectations of married women.

The domestic contract was an expression of patriarchal ideology, and in this domestic system, the patriarch had all of the power. In return he was expected to provide for the members of his family. Margaret Fuller writes that women were forced to "retain the shelter of a parent's or guardian's roof till she married," adding that marriage would give women a "sure home and protector" ("The Wrongs" 485). A woman exchanged her body for financial and physical safety—a contract the narrator of "The Black Cat" does

²³ As we have seen, this thesis defines a subhuman as an individual who is denied the rights of fully human beings and so the woman of nineteenth-century America in "The Black Cat" fits into this category.
²⁴ I feel that I must note that Fuller's tone in this passage is critical and mistrusting, questioning why women must accept these terms. However, I wanted to quote Fuller here so as to have a description of the male's responsibilities from the period when Poe wrote.

not uphold. Pateman questions the very notion that marriage is contractual, because, in a contract, both parties are guaranteed certain rights. In the marriage contract, the woman had no protection or means of retribution if the husband did not fulfill his promises. The man, however, had full legal control over his wife. The domestic contract, in theory, ensured that men and women entered into a mutually beneficial relationship. However, in practice, as the literature suggests, marriage stripped a woman of many legal and physical rights and offered her no recourse against a man who did not uphold his end of the bargain.

In this domestic situation, animals and married women were labeled with similar words and were bound by similar ethical rules and regulations. ²⁶ In "A Series of Mere Household Events': Poe's 'The Black Cat,' Domesticity, and Pet-Keeping in Nineteenth-Century America," Heidi Hanrahan discusses pets and women together, historicizing the idea of the domestic animal in America. For Hanrahan, the murder, poverty, and generally dark tone of this story reflect the potential darkness that lurks behind the closed doors and windows of the nineteenth-century American domestic household, a gothic arena where one's most sinister desires could be played out. She claims that "Poe, primarily through the treatment of a domestic cat, critiques and ultimately dismisses the comforting reassurances of domesticity, which fails to defuse his narrator's perverse

²⁵ For example, Pateman notes that "until 1884 in Britain, a wife could be jailed for refusing conjugal rights, and, until 1891, husbands were allowed forcibly to imprison their wives in the matrimonial home to obtain their rights" (123).

²⁶ In his canonical text *Animal Liberation*, Peter Singer stresses that the biases underlying sexism and racism are also the biases that enable what he calls speciesism. The connection between other marginalized figure and animals is present in both "The Black Cat" and "The Murders in the Rue Morgue." The animals in both of these stories are treated in ways that mimic how people treated women and black Americans in the period.

desires or to save his soul" (47). This view of the story supports my reading of "The Black Cat" in which the animal figure exposes the problematic treatment of the subhuman woman. I move away from Hanrahan, however, by considering the animal figure as a surrogate for the silent wife who makes the brutal abuse going on within this domestic system explicit.

Hanrahan examines how the promises of patriarchy (for the man to be the dominant head of the household, but also to protect and respect the house's inhabitants) are broken in "The Black Cat"; she shows how the abuse of the wife and the abuse of the animal are violations of the master/slave dynamic as well as the husband/wife contract. The nineteenth-century domestic contract closely resembles the master-slave relationship, which suggests that domestic relations in this period were deeply problematic. Carole Pateman writes that the sexual contract is a key component of patriarchy.²⁷ She links the contract of man and wife in this period to the contract between a man and his slaves: "The civil master of a family attains his right over his wife through contract...The marriage contract, too, is a kind of labor contract. To become a wife entails becoming a housewife; that is, a wife is someone who works for her husband in the marital home" (118). Joan Dayan also suggests that marriage is a type of master/slave relationship: "The rare and special love between slave and master, man and wife, based on the law and property, becomes the medium by which perfect submission becomes equivalent to a pure but perverse love" (192). Margaret Fuller, one of the most famous early women's rights

²⁷ Pateman calls this relationship the sexual contract. Pateman's stance emphasizes the sexual nature of the domestic contract and while I believe this component is relevant, it is not what I am highlighting in my reading of "The Black Cat." I call this contract the domestic contract because it is the phrase more commonly used in extant scholarship.

advocates of the nineteenth century, wrote that "there exists in the mind of men a tone of feeling toward women as toward slaves" ("Women" 18).²⁸ Both Dayan and Hanrahan stress that Poe is not willing to subscribe to a system of patriarchy (Hanrahan 49); instead, "The Black Cat" is a story that resists these ideologies.

This contract gave married men overwhelming legal control, and church doctrine supported this matrimonial power imbalance. Sally McMillen says that sermons and scripture helped to validate a separation of men and women in what she calls the two-sphere mentality (18). Sermons directed women to be chaste and submissive, emphasizing the ideal of the angel in the house. McMillen explains that "Ministers might celebrate the equality of men's and women's souls and their heaven, but they upheld the importance of separate spheres and female inferiority on earth" (18). Evidence for female inferiority was also cited in religious scripture, frequently citing Genesis 3:16: "Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee" (Genesis 3:16). The traditional Christian marriage vows of this period also asserted male economic and material dominance over women. When a woman married, she promised in her wedding vows to "love, honour, and obey" her husband, while a man made no such promise.

²⁸ In her ground-breaking essay, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792), Mary Wollstonecraft was an earlier writer to make the link between the master/slave dynamic and the domestic partnership.

In addition to its legal ramifications, marriage had serious economic consequences for women.²⁹ Once a woman married, she was stripped of her right to her personal possessions. Any wages she earned were also the property of her husband.³⁰ A wife could not sign any legal documents and, in the unlikely event of a divorce, a woman could not gain custody of her children (McMillen 19). According to Blackstone legislation—a law that originated in Europe as coverture—the man and woman became one person in the eyes of the law when they married: "the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least is incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband; under whose wing, protection, and cover, she performs every thing" (19). All legal rights of the woman were subsumed by the man under these circumstances.

Poe depicts the potential negative ramifications of this contract for women in "The Black Cat." The silent wife, whom Poe clearly renders inferior and subhuman, is unable to escape her husband's increasingly reckless financial decisions. Her fate is inextricably directed by her husband's decisions.³¹ The narrator's description of the night his house

²⁹ Single women retained many of the rights that married women gave up. For example, they were autonomous legal beings and were entitled to all of their financial earnings. Single women had more rights than married women, but both had less rights than men. For example, women could not inherit property. ³⁰ Women's increasing presence in the workforce complicated these religious and marital principles. By the 1850s, one quarter of factory wage workers in America were female (McMillen 30). Women were working and earning an income all across America and the rapid industrialization of American cities accelerated the growth of this workforce. Wages for women were not equal to those of men, however, and women could not advance to managerial positions where they would have power over a male employee. Several of the key issues at the Seneca Falls Convention revolved around equality in the workforce. Women were wives but they were also wage earners—making Poe's critique of the unrealistic expectations of domesticity socially timely.

³¹ In spite of the one-sided nature of marriage as a religious and legal contract, the building resistance to this type of ownership in the period is one example of how ideas surrounding women's rights were changing. Poor and wealthy families were beginning to challenge these rigid legal restrictions. Poor families could not afford to have the woman of the family unemployed, and so men and women were both working. In the 1840s, wealthier families were challenging matrimonial regulations, attempting to pass bills that would allow women to keep their financial and property rights. These bills were often aimed to protect wealthy women from "spendthrift" husbands and to prevent wealth from leaving the family if there were no male heirs. Many men worried about the possible ramifications of women retaining these rights: McMillen writes

catches fire shows how brutal and total the consequences of this dependency could be:

"The whole house was blazing. It was with great difficulty that my wife, a servant, and
myself, made our escape from the conflagration. The destruction was complete. My entire
worldly wealth was swallowed up, and I resigned myself thenceforward to despair"

("Black Cat" 600). The fire destroys the narrator's property and the only tangible wealth
he has to his name. Afterwards, the narrator plunges even more deeply into despair,
determined to drink away any wealth that remains to him. The unnamed wife must move
with her husband into "the old building which our poverty compelled us to inhabit" (603),
she must live in poverty, and she must endure the increasing physical abuse. Her
experience of suffering, however, is completely absent from this scene—her silence
mimicking the complete absence of legal repercussions available to her during this
period.

Marriage vows were not the only examples of language that asserted male superiority in the domestic space. Publicly circulated pamphlets, handbooks, magazines, and other social media labelled women as subservient and obedient (McMillen 17). *Godey's Lady's Book* was the most popular woman's magazine in this period and, in this publication, female authors outlined the kind of behaviour a woman should strive to become. According to Sarah Josepha Hale, the editor at the time, a woman was "never to contradict her husband, never to respond if he was abusive, never to give him advice unless he asked for it, never to censor his morals and behavior, and never to make him

that the men of this period worried that "if wives gained a right to claim their own property and thus became more independent, husbands might lose all control over them" (29). While the existence of these bills was optimistic, not a single one passed.

feel that he had done anything wrong" (qtd. in McMillen 17). While this magazine was the most popular, there were many other books, pamphlets, and manuals reasserting women's place in the home as mother and submissive wife.³²

In the story, the wife performs her expected subservient role in the home by being utterly silent. The wife does not speak: even as she is murdered, "She fell dead upon the spot, without a groan" (603). She does not criticize her husband's irresponsible drinking nor does she respond to his verbal and physical abuse: "from the sudden, frequent, and ungovernable outbursts of a fury to which I now blindly abandoned myself, my uncomplaining wife, alas! was the most usual and the most patient of sufferers" (603). This silence emulates the type of behaviour that was encouraged by many of the women's magazines and manuals of the time. A woman, said Hale, should not complain when she is being abused but should suffer silently. Hale advocated the moral superiority of American women but stressed submission. The plot of the story underscores these social expectations.

"The Black Cat" is a story of the domestic space gone wrong. Being aware of what marriage and the domestic contract were like in the nineteenth century helps to explain why it is so easy for the narrator to breach this contract. By submitting total legal, social, and religious control to the patriarch of a household, a married woman had no power to dispute any mistreatment. "The Black Cat," says Hanrahan, "offers a profoundly disturbing challenge to the core assumptions behind these promises of domestic bliss,

³² Mrs. Parker's Domestic Duties, or Instructions to Young Married Ladies, The Mother at Home by John C. Abbot, and The Southern Literary Journal are a few examples of where a woman could find this type of domestic advice.

showing them incapable of containing our narrator's base impulses" (47). The domestic home of "The Black Cat" captures the potential consequences of marriage in nineteenth-century America and the liminal hybrid figure of the black cat is able to make the problematic nature of the domestic contract explicit.

2.2 The Evolution of the Nonhuman and the Degradation of Mankind

In this section, I will show how Poe manipulates the categories of the human and nonhuman to critique the domestic space. In this tale, we watch the woman shift from subhuman domestic wife to nonhuman object, we see the nonhuman cat take on human characteristics, and we witness the narrator lose his humanity and become demonic. This merging and shifting of categories leaves the reader with an unstable sense of what a human should be. Additionally, the narrator's disparaging descriptions of humanity confuses the typical perceptions of a man's right to a superior role in the domestic home. These changing classifications problematize the narrator's patriarchal power (granted to him for being a human male in antebellum America).

One primary categorical change occurs when the narrator shifts his treatment of his wife from subhuman to nonhuman. The narrator invokes his marital right to his wife's body as property explicitly when he objectifies and dehumanizes her corpse. The crime hinted at in the story's opening passages occurs suddenly, as the narrator is on his way into the cellar. The black cat becomes tangled up in his feet, and in a blind rage, he uplifts an axe and "aimed a blow at the animal which, of course, would have proved instantly fatal had it descended as I wished" (603). The wife, in the first assertive act we see, lifts up her hand to deflect the blow, but the narrator, "Goaded, by the interference, into a rage

more than demoniacal...buried the axe in her brain" (603). As soon as his wife hits the floor, her husband strips her of any personhood she may have had. He drops the female pronoun immediately, switching from "She fell dead" to "This hideous murder accomplished, I set myself forthwith, and with entire deliberation, to the task of concealing the body" in the very next sentence (603). The narrator's contemplation of the disposal of the body emphasizes its nonhuman status. The body is treated as an object and not a person:

At one period I thought of cutting the corpse into minute fragments, and destroying them by fire. At another, I resolved to dig a grave for it in the floor of the cellar. Again, I deliberated about casting it in the well in the yard—about packing it in a box, as if merchandize, with the usual arrangements, and so getting a porter to take it from the house. (604)

This passage emphasizes the immediate shift in word choice from "wife" to "corpse" and from "she" to "it." This vocabulary choice moves the wife from the category of subhuman to nonhuman. Once his wife becomes a corpse, once she becomes an it, the narrator is able to cut her up into small pieces and burn her, he can pack her up in a box and ship her, or he can throw her down a well. By classifying the body as "merchandize," the husband emphasizes his ownership of the wife as an object. The narrator describes his wife, barely a silent subhuman for much of the story, as a lifeless nonhuman.

³³ In *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, Carole Adams says that "After being butchered, fragmented body parts must be renamed to obscure the fact that these were once animals. After death, cows become roast beef, steak, hamburger; pigs become pork, bacon, sausage" (47-48). We see a similar tactic here, when the male narrator speaks about cutting "the body" and not "his wife."

Pluto is perhaps the most evocative example of this categorical shifting. Unlike his dehumanizing treatment of his wife, the narrator's treatment of his cat humanizes Pluto. The grotesque merging of human and animal at the end literally embodies the narrator's persistent humanization of the cat. Pluto is the only character in the story who has a name.³⁴ If the other characters in the tale were named, this detail would not stand out people have historically named their pets. But, as Haraway points out, naming animals personalizes them (When Species Meet 207).35 In a story with unnamed male and female protagonists, the fact that the cat has a name is noteworthy. Additionally, there are multiple scenes in which the narrator highlights "the unselfish and self-sacrificing love of a brute, which goes directly to the heart of him who has had frequent occasion to test the paltry friendship and gossamer fidelity of mere Man" ("Black Cat" 597). This passage directly compares man and animal, openly praising the animal as the superior companion. The bond between animal and man is not thin or gossamer and this friendship is not trivial: an animal's love is self-sacrificing, compared to the unreliable bonds between two men. This example suggests that Poe has a cynical attitude towards the domestic husband and perhaps a deep mistrust of mankind³⁶ and human reason.

³⁴ Pluto's name is likely a reference to the Roman god of the death and the underworld (Hades to the Ancient Greeks) and links him to the supernatural elements surrounding the death of both feline figures in this story. Hades/Pluto is even sometimes referred to as the eater of corpses (Price 238). While Poe does not show that cat eating the body of the wife, their grotesque merging at the end of the tale invites the possibility.

³⁵ This naming, however, does not make an animal into a "somebody" (as Haraway puts it), but instead makes them into a "lesser person" in relation to the family that names them (*When Species Meet 207*).

³⁶ I gender the word "mankind" here intentionally. In "The Black Cat," the narrator uses this word to describe his "hatred of all things mankind" (603). Additionally, gendering this word highlights how his wife (and many other women) were not a part of the category of the human.

While the animal is humanized, the narrator is dehumanized by his own description of mankind—further complicating the category of the human. Where people typically champion the superiority of man because of his ability to reason (Descartes is the classic proponent of this ideology and his ideas have endured for centuries),³⁷ the narrator denounces mankind for his reason's more sinister intentions. The narrator repeatedly laments the state of mankind. His reservations are made explicit when he asks,

Who has not, a hundred times, found himself committing a vile or a silly action, for no other reason than because he knows he should not? Have we not a perpetual inclination, in the teeth of our best judgment, to violate that which is Law, merely because we understand it to be such? ("Black Cat" 599).

Man knows better and chooses to do wrong or to be immoral anyway—this oddity of human psychology and behaviour is one that Poe explores repeatedly. Readers have come to know it as the metaphorical "imp of the perverse." The narrator says later that "It was this unfathomable longing of the soul to vex itself—to offer violence to its own nature—to do wrong for the wrong's sake only—that urged me to continue and finally to consummate the injury I had inflicted upon the unoffending brute" (599). The narrator's only motivation for murdering Pluto was to do "wrong for the wrong's sake." As

³⁷ Descartes was one of the first people to examine animal sentience—a concept that will also be important in my reading of "The Murders in the Rue Morgue." In 1637, Descartes wrote *A Discourse on Method*. In this famous work, Descartes contends that it is "reason or sense" that alone "constitutes us men, and distinguishes us from the brutes" (2). Descartes grants men reason and uses animals as the point of differentiation. Descartes also states that animals do not possess the ability to think or speak: "And we ought not to confound speech with the natural movements which indicate the passions, and can be imitated by machines as well as manifested by animals... For if such were the case, since they are endowed with many organs analogous to ours, they could as easily communicate their thoughts to us as to their fellows" (24). Descartes' ideas about animals, despite being four hundred years old, persist in the social discourse of animal rights today. The animals in Poe's stories resist this simplistic classification and they behave in decidedly human ways.

³⁸ Poe returns to this concept in "The Tell-Tale Heart" and "The Imp of the Perverse."

criminology began to emerge as a discourse in the nineteenth century, the anxiety and strange social fascination with the criminal developed in earnest. Man's ability to reason is not always celebrated; reason, as this narrator makes explicit, can turn sinister. The narrator condemns mankind and laments the loss of his humanity, moaning, "I knew myself no longer. My original soul seemed, at once, to take its flight from my body" (598). Descartes³⁹—as well as most Christian doctrine—associates the soul with basic humanity. Without a soul, according to such doctrine, a man is no longer human.

The narrator's own descriptions of his deteriorating humanity are not the only evidence Poe presents to dehumanize him. Poe describes the narrator's abuse of the black cat in gruesome detail; his actions further degrade his moral standing. The master-slave dynamic of the domestic space extends to women and slaves, but also to animals. Any member of the domestic space was subject to the patriarch's rule (Hanrahan 48). However, in Poe's America, a person's treatment of his companion animal was a measure of his moral character. As a result, even though the patriarch ruled over the animal in the domestic space, he was still pressured by social conventions to treat the animal well. Americans were beginning to consider the compassionate care of companion animals a good indicator of the moral character of the pet owner (Mason 13) and believed that contact with companion animals enhanced a person's humanity. Many nineteenth-century writers (including Lydia Maria Child and even Nathaniel Hawthorne), considered the treatment of domestic animals to be a measure of a person's character, so that a lack of care for animals indicated a moral deficiency. In 1895, American scholar Nathaniel

³⁹ See footnote 36.

Shaler said that "man's contact with the domesticated animals has been and is ever to be one of the most effective means whereby his sympathetic, his civilized motives may be broadened and affirmed" (18). Some believed that caring for pets was especially useful in helping people develop the ability to take care of others.

For the years prior to the beginning of the story (as well as at the beginning of his narrative), the narrator seems to be a good husband and pet owner. The narrator says that, as a child "I was especially fond of animals, and was indulged by my parents with a great variety of pets. With these I spent most of my time, and was never so happy as when feeding and caressing them" (597). This love of animals grew with him, and the narrator admits that "I derived from it [pet ownership] one of my principal sources of pleasure" (597). By the time the story has started, however, the narrator has begun to treat his pets badly. The narrator's animal abuse, according to nineteenth-century social perceptions, is a sign of his moral decline.

The ongoing abuse correlates directly with a negative change in his other behaviours: he describes how he spends his time and money drinking in excess and he abuses his wife. Through "the instrumentality of the Fiend Intemperance" the narrator says that he "experienced a radical alteration for the worse. I grew, day by day, more moody, more irritable, more regardless of the feelings of others. I suffered myself to use intemperate language to my wife. At length, I even offered her personal violence" (598). In an attempt to avoid responsibility for his actions, the narrator attributes his degrading humanity to alcoholism. Alcoholism is the disease and gin the demon that the narrator claims forces him to commit his crimes. For a man about to meet his death, blaming the horror of his domestic life on alcoholism is an attractive excuse. But, as T.J. Matheson

shows in his essay "Poe's 'The Black Cat' as a Critique of Temperance Literature," this explanation is not consistent. Unlike many of the texts engaging with alcoholism during the period that paint the drunk as a sympathetic character not responsible for his actions, in "The Black Cat," Poe deliberately writes against this characterization. 40 As Matheson notes, many of the gruesome crimes are committed when the narrator is sober. The degradation of man is not only a result of alcohol; "Though alcohol might cause such evil to surface, the evil itself, as Poe saw and as his narrator demonstrates, still had its origins in the human soul" (80). Poe does not offer an easy answer to the despicable nature of the narrator. Instead, he complicates "human" nature by confusing the categories of man, demon, and animal, until the reader is left unsure of whether this "nature" is human at all. By the end of the story, the narrator describes himself as almost nonhuman: "And now was I indeed wretched beyond the wretchedness of mere Humanity" (603). Meanwhile, the animal becomes the moral voice of the story, alerting the officers to the actions of the narrator and forcing him to pay for his crimes.

2.3 Seeing, Speaking, and Becoming the Nameless Wife

It is on the eve of his execution, after all of the events leading up to his fatal sentencing have passed, that the narrator of "The Black Cat" begins his tale. The narrator's patriarchal voice dominates "The Black Cat." His voice, much like the marriage contract, absorbs his wife—he speaks for her, obliterating any potential female point-of-view or resistance. Perhaps the best example of his revisionist domination of the

⁴⁰ Namely, Timothy Shay Arthur. Matheson presents Arthur's texts as sympathizing with drunkards. The demon that emerges is a product of alcohol and essentially absolves the man of his crimes while intoxicated.

story occurs in first sentences of the tale. The narrator opens "The Black Cat" by saying that he will unburden his soul of a "series of mere household events" (597). After reading all of the events of the story, I look back at this dismissive claim and find it baffling: plunging an axe into a woman's brain cannot be standard domestic behaviour, cannot be one in a mundane "series of mere household events." The narrator mutilates animals, burns down his house, and walls up his wife—three other atypical household occurrences. Nineteenth-century Americans are unlikely to have sympathized with the narrator's sentiments and rationalizations; however, the narrator of "The Black Cat" has legal and complete domestic control over his wife and the other beings that reside in his home. This control allows the narrator to say that his actions were just "a series of mere household events," and almost get away with it.

As a foil for this all-powerful voice, Poe gives the reader the black cat. When the narrator begins physically abusing his wife, he downplays his actions with verbal evasions. In his first account of violence against his wife, the narrator says, "I suffered myself to use intemperate language to my wife. At length, I even offered her personal violence" ("Black Cat" 598). When the narrator says that he "suffers himself" to use the "intemperate language" he shifts the suffering from the woman being verbally and physically abused to the narrator himself. These sentences imply that his wife does not suffer when he abuses her: instead, he offers her violence—and she can choose whether or not to receive it. The narrator's language in this scene is subtly benevolent, inferring that he is being somehow generous, a sentiment that conflicts with his violent behavior. The narrator also stresses that his wife accepts her abuse patiently, passively, and, as always, silently. The narrator skirts responsibility by using the words "personal violence,"

a vague and indirect phrase, instead of describing the abuse in precise bodily terms. When the narrator describes his "sudden, frequent, and ungovernable outburst of fury to which I now blindly abandoned myself" (603), he says that his "uncomplaining wife, alas! was the most usual and the most patient of sufferers" (603). His emphasis on her "uncomplaining" nature reinforces her role as the silent, wifely exemplar; as far as we are told, she dutifully keeps quiet.

To see this abuse and to hear the wife, we need the black cat. There are multiple scenes where the narrator abuses the black cat in this story, and there is one scene where he abuses (and murders) his wife. The first moment where the narrator describes abusing Pluto occurs late one night, as the he returns home incredibly intoxicated:

I seized him; when, in his fright at my violence, he inflicted a slight wound upon my hand with his teeth. The fury of a demon instantly possessed me. I knew myself no longer. My original soul seemed, at once, to take its flight from my body; and a more than fiendish malevolence, gin-nurtured, thrilled every fibre of my frame. I took from my waistcoat-pocket a pen-knife, opened it, grasped the poor beast by the throat, and deliberately cut one of its eyes from the socket! ("The Black Cat" 598-99)

In this scene, we see a vulnerable being in a domestic space who is powerless and threatened by a larger individual. The inferior being is unable to resist the physicality of the narrator and receives his brutal abuse helplessly. Additionally, the narrator loses his humanity in this passage and becomes a soulless, furious demon. In a scene that parallels this one, the narrator describes the events leading up to his wife's death using language similar to how he depicts the mutilation of the cat: "Uplifting an axe, and forgetting, in

my wrath, the childish dread which had hitherto stayed my hand, I aimed a blow at the animal which, of course, would have proved instantly fatal had it descended as I wished. But this blow was arrested by the hand of my wife" (603). In both instances, the cat and wife try to resist his violence: the cat bites the narrator's hand and the wife tries to stop the narrator from murdering the cat with an axe. In response, the narrator brutally abuses and eventually murders them both. Both excerpts reference the narrator's hand; by resisting his hand, the cat and wife are rebelling against his domestic control. Pluto literally bites the hand that feeds him, and as punishment, the narrator cuts out his eye. The wife attempts to "arrest" the narrator's hand, showing for the first and last time an agency separate from her husband, and he plunges the axe into her brain. This behavior reveals the narrator's complete disregard for his living possessions. His response to any activity that opposes his complete control is violence—the cat and wife are property first and beings only when they are not challenging the narrator's superior domestic position. Finally, for a brief moment, the abuse that has been implied but muffled in the rest of the story is represented visually and corporeally. The narrator's abuse of the cat is a possible example of the type of domestic violence endured by the wife and allows the reader to see into an otherwise intensely private domestic space. The word "hands" repeat, demonic imagery recurs, and the first-person narration silences the abuse of the wife, telling only the story of the abuse of the nonhuman (and therefore potentially less controversial) figure of the cat. These two scenes show the narrator abusing his domestic companions in similar ways. As a result, it is possible to conflate moments of animal abuse in the story with spousal abuse—especially when considering the similar domestic roles the cat and wife occupy in the story.

Poe's descriptions of the abuse of cat and woman are not the only similarities between these two domestic figures; the woman and cat behave in other analogous ways. These similarities merge their domestic roles and suggest that the characters are interchangeable. 41 In the tale, the narrator often treats the black cat as his most important domestic companion. He names Pluto in his narrative and does not name his wife, and Pluto is the last member of the house the narrator abuses—his wife is the first victim of abuse, his pets "were made to feel the change in my disposition. I not only neglected, but ill-used them," but for "Pluto, however, I still retained sufficient regard to restrain me from maltreating him" (598). Eventually, "Pluto began to experience the effects of my ill temper" (598), but he is the last member of the house to do so. The most eerie and evocative blending of cat and wife, however, occurs when the second black cat begins sleeping with the narrator. Describing these encounters, the narrator says, "I started, hourly, from dreams of unutterable fear, to find the hot breath of the thing upon my face, and its vast weight—an incarnate Night-Mare that I had no power to shake off incumbent eternally upon my heart!" (603).42 The physical closeness sought by the cat evokes a domestic closeness (a closeness unreciprocated by the narrator).

⁴¹ Mary Gove Nichols, a women's rights activist and acquaintance of Poe's, recalls a visit to his house while Poe's wife Virginia was ill: "She lay on the straw bed, wrapped in her husband's great-coat, with a large tortoise-shell cat on her bosom. The wonderful cat seemed conscious of her great usefulness. The coat and the cat were the sufferer's only means of warmth, except as her husband held her hands, and her mother her feet" (Nichols 214). The real-life image of a large tortoise-shell cat draped across Virginia Poe's chest is startlingly similar to the imagery in the story. There is a physical closeness in this scene that captures the relationship between man and animal in "The Black Cat."

⁴² This scene in "The Black Cat" is likely a reference to Henry Fuseli's painting *The Nightmare* (1781). In this painting, an incubus sits on the unconscious chest of a woman in a way very similar to the descriptions of the black cat in the tale. Poe directly references Fuseli briefly in "The Fall of the House of Usher," which shows that he is familiar with the painter.

The final scene offers a literal embodiment of what the narrator's story implies metaphorically: that the wife and the domestic animal are interchangeable creatures in this household. The black cat and the nameless wife becoming one hybrid speaking entity; they stand together as one being to speak out against the domestic abuse they both endured. In a demonstration of homicidal bravado, the narrator raps on the wall where his wife's body is hidden as detectives search his basement. His manic overconfidence is "answered by a voice from within the tomb! – by a cry, at first muffled and broken, like the sobbing of a child, and then quickly swelling into one, long, and continuous scream" (606). The narrator hears the sounds from behind the wall and, without visual corroboration, he describes what he hears as human. People do not normally describe animals as having "voices"—a voice is a distinctly human characteristic. Typically, animals make sounds and these sounds are not easily confused for a human voice. A cat's meow is not an angry human scream. When Poe withholds the physical appearance of the animal (as he will similarly do in "The Murders in the Rue Morgue"), bystanders confuse the animal voice for a human's and describe it as emotional and emulating patterns of human speech. The narrator uses a distinctly human vocabulary to describe the cat's noises. In this final scene, the cat speaks for a woman who has not been able to say one word in this male-dominated story. As Colleen Boggs notes in her essay "Animals and the Letter of the Law," the "beast has come to occupy the seat of cognition and reason the head—and from there speaks with the 'informing voice' that condemns the narrator 'to the hangman.' The cat's vocal testimony, not the narrator's own confession to the crime, convicts the killer" (120). This "informing voice" reveals the true nature of the domestic space and "consigned me [the narrator] to the hangman" for breaking the

domestic contract. The first-person male voice is overpowering, but in this scene it is finally subverted.

As the woman and the cat metaphorically merge in this final scene, their body becomes a "monstrous" and posthuman hybrid figure who, in a story filled with blurred classifications, throws the categories of woman and animal into crisis. The bodies of two murdered beings stand together: "The corpse, already greatly decayed and clotted with gore, stood erect before the eyes of the spectators. Upon its head, with red extended mouth and solitary eye of fire, sat the hideous beast whose craft had seduced me into murder, and whose informing voice had consigned me to the hangman" (606). This is the first moment in this narrative where another character has spoken. Until now, the narrator has been the actor, the drinker, the abuser. As soon as the cat breaks this silence, the realities of this domestic space are revealed. In his last moments, the narrator cries, "I had walled the monster up within the tomb!" (606). This exclamation does not refer to the cat, but to the amalgamation of woman and animal that "stood erect" (606) as the narrator's walls crumble. Confronted with the gory body of his wife and the red mouth and eye of the black cat, the narrator sees a monster, but in the most traditional sense of the word. In one of the word's earliest usages, "a monster was defined as a mythical creature which is part animal and part human, or combines elements of two or more animal forms, and is frequently of great size and ferocious appearance" (OED). Monsters, according to the definition of posthumanism I outline in Chapter One, are often posthuman figures. This hybrid figure visually confuses the categories of human and animal. For Neil Badmington, the posthuman functions to interrogate the human, or, to be more poetic about it, posthumanism consumes (or cannibalizes?) the human that remains. When we

see the hybrid figure of the cat and woman, her body is decaying and merging with the black cat. The boundaries around these bodies are visually breaking down and the human that remains is transformed into a grotesque hybrid figure with the power to challenge the systems upon which these categories, which disenfranchise and subjugate both of them, are based.

Karen Weekes writes that, typically in Poe's stories, the "dying woman passes silently from this life, rarely expressing her feeling on the matter" (150). However, the hybrid figure of cat and wife undermines this silence. This reading of "The Black Cat" shows the muted domestic abuse and its consequences, demands that the narrator be held accountable for the murder of his pet and his wife, and subverts the power of the male discourse. Without the figure of the animal, justice would not have been heard. This is a story where Poe degrades mankind and corrupts and taints his ability to reason. Poe constructs "experiences that trade on unspeakable slippages between men and women, humans and animals, life and death" (Dayan 184). These slippages complicate the categories used to separate, control, and exploit different beings in the domestic sphere, and Poe uses these slippages to critique domesticity in antebellum America. As a result, at the end of the story, readers are confronted with a corpse, a ghost, and a murderer. Through categorical uncertainty, a hybrid figure, and an animal voice, Poe gives his domestic figures the power to speak out against their abuser.

hapter Three nity, Slavery, and Animality in "The the Rue Morgue" A Posthuman Shave: Muro

When Poe penned the first detective story, he created a narrative celebrating man's 43 ability to reason. C. Auguste Dupin is a detective figure and the protagonist of the tale, and his intellect and powers of deduction are unmatched; no one questions his ideas, lines of inquiry, and eventual conclusions. Dupin's voice of reason is the driving voice of this text—overwhelming even the first-person narration of events. The nineteenth century in America was a period of rapid urbanization and increasing population density and crime.44 The detective is a hero well suited to this period—a man able to penetrate the dark and dangerous city with his intellect alone. In this story, Dupin and his unnamed companion solve the impossible murders of the L'Espanayes. At the end of the tale, however, there is an unexpected outcome; Dupin charges an animal with murder. Unlike Poe's other stories featuring this famous first detective ("The Purloined Letter" and "The Mystery of Marie Rogêt"), in "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" ("Rue Morgue") Dupin does not find a man at the end of his quest for reasonable answers. He matches wits not with a supervillain⁴⁵ or a hardened criminal, but with an orangutan. Dupin's analysis is only capable of determining who perpetrates the grisly murders of an elderly woman and

⁴³ Because Dupin is male and because I have used the male pronoun to define the human, I am using "his" intentionally here.

⁴⁴ Urban spaces were growing rapidly in the United States. The best example of this is New York. Between 1800 and 1850, the population of this city expanded dramatically. In 1800, the population was 60, 515. By 1850, it had skyrocketed, reaching 515,547 people (Campbell, "Table 3. Population of the 33 Urban Places: 1800, and "Table 8. Population of 100 Largest Urban Places: 1850"). The beginnings of criminology coincide with rising crime rates in increasingly dense urban areas in America during the nineteenth century.

⁴⁵ Today, when we hear the term supervillian, figures like the Joker, Lex Luthor, or Magneto may come to mind. The nineteenth century did not have these famous comic book villains, but figures like the Dead Man from George Thompsons *City Crimes* (1849) or even James Moriarty (1893) from Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes story "The Final Problem" were beginning to appear in fiction. The archetype of hero and villain was present in the nineteenth century in an earlier formation. Fredric Jameson's idea of genre sedimentation captures this idea for me. For a reading of genre sedimentation, see Jameson's *The Political Unconscious*, 103-50, especially 140-1.

her daughter in the aptly named Rue Morgue. He cannot understand the motives or passions prompting the murders because he does not believe the animal killer capable of them. The tale leaves the reader with an orangutan behind bars and no satisfactory motive for the brutal deaths of two wealthy women "[W]hat does it mean," asks Christopher Peterson, "that Poe ushers in this genre with a murderer whose nonhuman form challenges the very principle of accountability?" (153). In a story that spends much of its time glorifying the power of analysis, this failure encourages the reader to resist Dupin's voice of reason and turn, instead, to the voice of the animal.

The animal voice in this story undermines the certainty of Dupin's analysis and confuses the boundary between human and nonhuman. These speaking animals are examples of posthuman slips that occur in both "the Black Cat" and "Rue Morgue." Poe does not have his narrator say that the cat "meows"; the black cat "howl[s]," "wails," "scream[s]," and "sob[s]" ("The Black Cat" 606). Similarly, the orangutan does not "ooo ooo" or "ah ah": instead, he has a "shrill" voice ("Rue Morgue" 408) with an intonation that seems to express emotion. This chapter will emphasize how the orangutan's behavior and the manner in which Poe describes his voice problematize his biological and social classification as animal only. Recently, scholars have considered the story in the

⁴⁶ While the truth or falseness of Dupin's conclusions are not the focus of this chapter, it is relevant to note that very few scholars question Dupin's conclusions or motives. He is a popular and complex character that appears in three (possibly four) of Poe's stories. One would expect a few skeptical scholars to question the pure objectivity of Dupin's character.

⁴⁷ For this thesis, as noted in Chapters One and Two, a posthuman slip is a term I use for instances in which a character unthinkingly confuses animal for human or human for animal.

⁴⁸ Two interesting pieces about animal emotion are Marc Bekoff's "Wild Justice and Fair Play: Cooperation, Forgiveness, and Morality in Animals" and Jeffrey Masson's and Susan McCarthy's "Grief, Sadness, and the Bones of Elephants."

⁴⁹ I have been very conscious of pronouns in this thesis. I gender the orangutan male because the text explicitly genders him as male.

context of the relationship between the orangutan and the nineteenth-century slave. My reading will use this historical context to show how we can read the orangutan as a standin for a slave in America during this period. Next, by focusing on three key scenes in which the animality of the orangutan slips, I will argue that "Rue Morgue" critiques the dehumanization of black Americans by insisting on the orangutan-slave's humanity. Deviously, I am not suggesting that the orangutan is literally becoming more human. This kind of biological evolution takes millions of years, and, as I noted earlier, this thesis does not argue that Poe was an animal rights activist, *per se*. These slips create a figure that is in-between the animal and the human and thus able to critique the legitimacy of these larger categories. This confusion enables a politicized reading of slavery in "Rue Morgue".

3.1 Orangutans, Slaves, and What They Meant to Poe

In the nineteenth century, the orangutan was a politically charged animal figure. Poe chooses the orangutan intentionally to capture the social interest, concern, and strange unrest the liminal humanness of the orangutan was generating. As we have seen, animal rights movements were emerging across America and Europe. In addition, the scientific community was debating the relative humanity of the great apes. Scientists, writers, and even politicians were linking these animals to black Americans, using metaphorical concepts like the Great Chain of Being and new scientific ideas such as the emerging

 ⁵⁰ See especially Ed White's "The Ourang-Outang Situation" and Christopher Peterson's "The Aping Apes of Poe and Wright: Race, Animality, and Mimicry in 'Murders in the Rue Morgue' and *Native Son*."
 51 "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" is not straightforward in its critique of slavery. This slave figure behaves in ways that portray black Americans in stereotypical and negative ways.

discourse on the evolution of species to animalize and thus marginalize black Americans. My reading situates Poe's story in its historical context and shows that there was a social, political, and scientific connection between the nineteenth-century black American and the orangutan. I will examine the implications of the orangutan-slave connection in order to highlight the racial politics at work in Poe's tale.

Beginning in the early nineteenth century, the American public began to interact with and think about animals differently. People were interested in orangutans (and other wild animals) and sought the presence of these wild animals in urban spaces (Mason 72). This interest was manifested in a variety of public displays, such as menageries, public exhibitions, stuffed museum exhibits, and an outpouring of public literature. The nineteenth-century middle and upper classes enthusiastically purchased "natural history in the form of magazine articles, school textbooks, layman's science books, engravings, newspaper reports, encyclopedia entries, and exhibits in museums" (Lemire 178). Jennifer Mason describes how menageries had started to appear in populated areas. By the mid 1800s, wild predatory animals had become scarce, and so a travelling menagerie could expose people to "native wild animals as well as a range of species (both native and exotic)" (2). Additionally, Mason explains that from "the mid-eighteenth century onward, an increasing number of itinerant exhibitors of 'sagacious,' 'learned,' or 'educated' animals clamoured for the attention and surplus income of the citizens of New England's urban centers" (72). In 1836, in The American Magazine of Useful and Entertaining *Knowledge*, then editor Nathaniel Hawthorne writes about "equestrian exhibitions," where horses were forced to dance (Turner 337). Horses would "keep perfect time to the music, and flourish their four legs" with grace (237). In this same entry, Hawthorne notes

that "it is said to be frequently the case, that horses drop down dead in the performance of the dance," but goes on to suggest that because "physical exertion, during the dance, does not seem to be great, the fact must be accounted for by the tension of intellect, with which the poor horse adapts his motions to the music" (237).⁵² Dancing horses are just one example of the kind of urban animal exhibitions taking place across the United States.

As mentioned above, there was public demand for stuffed exhibitions, and the public was particularly interested in apes, monkeys, and other simians. Peterson notes that a "number of public exhibits and pictorial representation of orangutans appeared in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, many of which depicted the animals in clothing or standing upright, thus redoubling the similitude with humans" (154). Mr. Peale's Museum, founded in Philadelphia after the American Revolution by artist and naturalist Charles Wilson Peale, regularly exhibited stuffed monkeys (Sellers 1). In his book Mr. Peale's Museum, Charles Sellers says that monkeys were and "would long remain a popular feature" (207). Stuffed monkeys were displayed as poets, painters, blacksmiths, and many practitioners of other trades (207). Elise Lemire suggests that the razorwielding orangutan of Poe's tale "would have been less puzzling to local readers, for at the time Poe's tale was published in Philadelphia, the city's own Peale's Museum displayed stuffed monkeys dressed and arranged to depict the life of a barbershop" (183). In fact, a live display of an orangutan may have been what inspired "Rue Morgue." While Poe lived in Philadelphia in 1839, he may have seen an exhibit of a Liberian orangutan (Lemire 179). The unsettling humanness of Poe's orangutan may reflect the way public

⁵² It seems that Hawthorne is also an example of the deeply misunderstood nature of animal intellect in this period.

exhibitions humanized their animal actors. "Wild" animals were often forced to behave in ways that mimicked the humans who paid to look at them. This fascination (much like the emerging scientific interest) represents a widespread curiosity: what are these unknown animals and how human are they? Or, to use the terminology of this project, how much do these two categories mix?

Naturalists and other writers were beginning to posit more scientific connections between humans and apes. Charles Darwin would not publish On the Origin of Species until 1859, but naturalists were exploring the relationship between human beings and other animals long before then. Carl Linnaeus (1707-1778), known as the father of modern taxonomy, "classified humans in the same genus as apes" (Peterson 154). Georges-Louis Buffon, influential naturalist and mathematician, said that the orangutan is an "animal so singular that man cannot regard it without contemplating himself" (154, qtd. in Peterson). Nathaniel Hawthorne saw and contemplated the likeness between man and ape, but unlike other thinkers and scientists, Hawthorne was quick to redraw the line: "we might almost allow them to be our cousins," but "we deny them the name of brethren" (qtd. in Turner 209). Hawthorne goes on to say that "However close upon our heels the inferior tribes of creation may seem to tread, there is one great and invariable mark of distinction between Man with a soul, and the Animal without one" (qtd. in Turner 209-10). People were re-examining animals in different ways, and many were reacting to their possible humanness—although, in spite of the similarities, still insisting on their inferiority to man.

Even the president of the United States⁵³ was using the orangutan's humanness to rationalize the subhuman treatment of black Americans. In this period, the discourse of species constructed the black American as an animal other. Thomas Jefferson's placement of the orangutan directly below the black man on the Great Chain of Being is a famous example of this animalization of black Americans.⁵⁴ When speaking about the reasons why white Americans "could not incorporate the blacks into the state," Jefferson stresses "the real distinctions which nature has made" between black people and white people. He writes that black people preferred white people physically in the same way that orangutans preferred black women to orangutan women. According to Jefferson, "their [black people's] own judgment of the whites, declared by their preference of them" is similar to the "preference of the Oranootan [sic] for the black women over his own species. The circumstance of superior beauty, is worthy attention in the propagation of our horses, dogs, domestic animals; why not in that of man?" (84). Jefferson makes explicit what many writers and scientists in this period implied. Andrew Smith links Jefferson's statements to famous naturalist Georges Cuvier's writings on the imitative humanity of the ape. Smith writes that this humanity "reflects, through Jefferson, a model of black experience which implies that such subjects are less than human" (64). Christopher Peterson echoes Smith, saying that "In addition to portraying nonhuman primates as the closest analogue to the human, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century discourses also frequently equated apes with blacks, whose ostensibly lower rank on The

⁵³ Thomas Jefferson was in office from 1801-1809 (*American President*).

⁵⁴ Within the parameters set down by this thesis, the black man was a hybrid figure. His categorical uncertainty was so powerful that a country would erupt into civil war to begin to resolve it.

Great Chain of Being created the perfect alibi for their enslavement" (156-57). The human was equated with whiteness and was closer to the angel on The Great Chain of Being than to the animal. Alternatively, slaves were darker and therefore more animal. The racial other was animalized and "thus worked to disavow evolution by insisting on the polygenetic history of human (white) and animal (black) species" (160). White American culture projected animal and ape-like characteristics onto Africans. Prevailing symbols like The Great Chain of Being upheld a hierarchy of categorization, which enabled a rationalization of exploitation. If we see Africans as animals, this justifies their subjugation and abuse.

This link between the orangutan and the black American has not gone unnoticed by Poe scholars. As we have seen, Poe's life in Philadelphia may have influenced his creation of the character of the orangutan; moreover, the historical events that occurred in Philadelphia when Poe lived there may have also informed the racial politics in "Rue Morgue." In 1838, Poe moved to Philadelphia, and would live there for the next six years (Lemire 177). Lemire describes the rioting and racial tension in Philadelphia in the year 1838. She says that

the specific anxieties about race that culminated in the May riot go a long way toward explaining both what may have prompted Poe to place a murderous orangutan in the bedroom of two white women as well as how his contemporary readers would have read the violent encounter. (178)

There was a pervasive anti-abolitionist sentiment circulating throughout Philadelphia at the time. In the spring of 1838, these public frustrations became violent. That year on May 15, the Pennsylvania Hall for Free Discussion hosted the Antislavery Convention of

African Women. Interracial marriages, most often between white women and black men, were beginning to occur in Philadelphia (and in other free states). Even the possibility of these unions generated intense anger and anxiety in Philadelphia and across the United States, and "Rue Morgue" makes this intense stigmatization explicit, despite being set in France. Members of the public in Philadelphia, reacting against a mixed-race assembly and the possible presence of a white woman who had married a black man, formed mobs, threw bricks through windows, and eventually, on May 17, 1838, burnt the building to the ground; the Pennsylvania Hall for Free Discussion had only been open for three days. The reaction to this violence is perhaps the most telling detail: in the weeks and months that followed, the people responsible publicly defended their actions, explaining that they had harassed individuals, vandalized property, and committed arson out of a fear of racial amalgamation. One newspaper described the Pennsylvania Hall as "A Temple of Amalgamation" (qtd. in Lemire 195). A lithograph represented the Hall as "an interracial brothel. Interracial couples embrace in each window, and others link arms and more in the street" (qtd. in Lemire 195). Another paper referred to the gathering at the Hall as a "disgrace and degradation to the whites of better morals" (qtd. in Lemire 195). The anxieties about racial mixing and interracial marriage were socially intense and violent and these social issues are subtly present in the pages of "Rue Morgue." Poe's description of the L'Espanayes' murders, including hair pulling and the thrusting of the young woman's corpse up a chimney, are subtly sexualized. Additionally, the setting of the crime is sexually charged: the orangutan kills the women in their bedroom; their hair is unpinned and they are wearing only their bedclothes. The black body in the private space of two white women captures the social anxiety about interracial mixing.

Unlike many of Poe's other animals, the orangutan of "Rue Morgue" has received significant scholarly attention. For Ed White, it is the "obvious" reading to see the orangutan as a representation of the nineteenth-century American slave:

Here we have a humanoid captured in a distant land by sailors; brought to a metropolitan center for sale, but sequestered until healed of an injury in transit; holed up in a 'closet' from which it spies upon the master shaving, thus learning the use of a razor; frightened by the master's whip into fleeing into the streets, where it finds two white women who are killed with brutal ferocity; ineptly hiding the bodies before fleeing again; and upon recapture, being sold once again. Given the loaded connotations of key terms of the narrative—"escaped," "master," "dreaded whip," "fugitive," "razor," and of course the "Ourang-Outang" itself—it would be nearly impossible to ignore the strong suggestions that this story is about slavery, and specifically about slave resistance. (95)

The events and the key words that White notes are racially charged and their combination makes a racial reading of the story apparent.

In "The Aping Apes of Poe and Wright: Race, Animality, and Mimicry in 'Murders in the Rue Morgue' and *Native Son*" (2010), Christopher Peterson accepts White's connection between slave and orangutan and then builds on White's reading by shifting the focus: White gives the animal a human face by suggesting the metaphorical link between orangutan and slave, while Peterson gives the human an animal face by discussing how the story animalizes humans. In many ways, Peterson adds to White, acknowledging the allegorical reading of ape as slave, but then also considering how it

"invokes not only the racist ideology of black animality but also those emergent scientific discourses that threatened to locate all humans squarely within the domain of the animal" (157). Peterson highlights how an understanding of race was often connected to discussions about species. White's initial reading of the primary text and Peterson's larger historical insights are vital to understanding that the orangutan can be read as an orangutan-slave. 55

White's and Peterson's readings highlight the story's tenuous boundaries of human and nonhuman. The orangutan was especially compelling because it is a species that is simultaneously strange and familiar to ourselves. For a few moments in "Rue Morgue" the orangutan is not just an animal. Witnesses hear his human-like voice, the sailor sees him shaving his face, and Dupin himself acknowledges that an orangutan is capable of murder. In these momentary slips, the orangutan is a powerful figure who forces people to question the concept of the human.

3.2 Changing the Conversation: The Language of Africanism and Detection

Toni Morrison famously asserts that "No early American writer is more important to the concept of American Africanism than Poe" (32). This claim is surprising at first, not only because Poe does not explicitly thematize race in his fiction, but also because he was publicly silent on the tumultuous racial issues that shook his world. According to extant literary scholarship, Poe was a controversial figure at best and an unspoken racist

⁵⁵ Now that I have substantiated the connection between the orangutan and the slave using historical, social, and critical literature, I will refer to the orangutan in "Rue Morgue" as the orangutan-slave.

at worst.⁵⁶ For Morrison, however, Poe's work embodies a definitively Africanist presence⁵⁷ coded into the images of darkness in his texts. Morrison focuses her analysis on *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*, but this Africanist presence exists in several of Poe's other texts, particularly in the figure of the orangutan in "Rue Morgue."

One of the first subtle racially coded moments occurs when Poe introduces the analytical detective C. Auguste Dupin. In Dupin, Poe creates a character able to untangle and understand the darkest corners of humanity using only his mind. As a result, "Rue Morgue" is a story that pits reason against the unreasonable or human intellect against animal savagery. According to Lindon Barrett, Poe's basic setup of this dichotomy is already a political move: "In terms of the cultural logic of the United States, to speak of Reason is already to a very significant degree to make a racially exclusive move" (160). Barrett contends that "In Antebellum United States, both North and South, open dismissals of Blackness in this particular vein [white reason vs. black nonreason] are all too easy to document" (159). One example cited by Barrett is authored by Ralph Butterfield (M.D.), who, in 1858, said that "Everybody knows that negroes are deficient in reason, judgement, and forecast—that they are improvident, and thoughtless of the future, and contented and happy in the enjoyment of the mere animal pleasures of the

⁵⁶ Apart from the infamous Paulding-Drayton review (a review that was an open defence of slavery, arguing that the bond between a master and slave made slavery beneficial for both groups), Poe did not speak publicly supporting or rejecting slavery (Whalen 6-11). James Harrison originally included this review in *The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe* (1902). Since then, the authorship of what has come to be known as the Paulding-Drayton Review has been attributed to Beverly Tucker. See Beverly Tucker "Review of Slavery in the United States and The South Vindicated." *The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe.* V. VII. Ed. James Harrison. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell & Company Publishers, 1902. 265-75. *Internet Archive America Libraries.* Web. 04 February 2014.

⁵⁷ For Morrison, Africanism is "a dark and abiding presence, there for the literary imagination as both a visible and an invisible mediating force. Even, and especially, when American texts are not 'about' African presences or characters or narrative or idiom" (46-47).

pleasant moment" (qtd. in Barrett 159). According to this categorical scheme, the white male intellectual is gifted with extreme powers of reason, analysis, and deduction, while the slave is savage, stupid, and ruled by his animal instincts. "Rue Morgue," however, contains slips that suggest that the orangutan-slave is not always subhuman and animalistic.

3.3 Posthuman Shaves, Human Voices, and an Unexpected Murderer

The (non)Human Voice and Dupin's Voice of Reason

In spite of his overpowering voice of reason, Dupin loses temporary control of the narrative when the animal is given a voice that cannot be distinguished from a human's. For most of the text, Dupin's voice is able to dominate the story and its progression by overtaking the first-person narrator's voice and identity, and by carefully crafting his words to control his audience's reaction to his narrative. When I first read "Rue Morgue," I often forgot that Dupin was not the narrator. A closer analysis of Dupin's monologue can help explain why this may happen to a reader, showing how Dupin often speaks for other characters in the text. For example, before the narrator can speak, Dupin often uses the pronoun "you" to tell the narrator what he will think, what he should think, or what Dupin will tell him to think next: "You will say that it might have been the voice of an Asiatic" (416); "You will say that I was puzzled; but if you think so, you must have misunderstood" (418); "You will say, no doubt" (420); "You will see" (421); "You will perceive" (423); and, "If now, in addition to these things, you have properly reflected upon the odd disorder of the chamber" (423). This syntactical pattern also creates, for the reader, the sense of being directly addressed by a first-person narrator. When the narrator

does speak in the first person, it is often in blind and uncomprehending obedience to Dupin's dominating voice of reason. For example, when Dupin is preparing to confront the sailor, the narrator has already internalized Dupin's solution—before ever hearing him explain. When Dupin hands him a gun, the narrator says, "I took the pistols, scarcely knowing what I did" (414). There are occasional exceptions to this dominance and submission in the narrative pronouns; however, this story is remarkable in that a character other than the narrator dominates and directs the narrative, rising above the narrator's descriptions to seize the reins of the story. Dupin also uses his voice of reason to control his audience's reaction to the orangutan, catering his language for his listener (the narrator), and timing his shift in diction with the listener's knowledge. Dupin begins by referring to "murders" (412, 414, 417, 418), but eventually describes them as "a butchery without motive" (423), perpetrated by "animal" (424, 425, 426, 427, 428, 429, 430), "beast" (424, 426, 428, 430), "brute" (429, 431), and "creature" (429). This subtle evolution in word choice reflects Dupin's awareness that the criminal is not, in fact, a human being. With this animal language Dupin re-inscribes the categories before the identity of the animal is revealed.

The voice of the orangutan-slave is referenced briefly and repeatedly in various ways. The animality of the orangutan-slave is obscured when the citizens describe his voice. The media control the phrasing of this information, and so Dupin's control of this raw data is limited.⁵⁸ In these accounts, the first witness says that he "believed the

⁵⁸ The other obvious voice in this story is the voice of the media. Different newspapers report the events of the L'Espanaye's deaths in great detail. Their first words on the subject call the deaths of the L'Espanayes "Extraordinary Murders" (405). Next, they say that "To this horrible mystery there is not as yet we believe, the slightest clew [sic]" (406). Later in the tale, the deaths become "The Tragedy in the Rue Morgue" (406).

language to be Spanish" ("Rue Morgue" 407); the next witness says that he believed "The shrill voice...was that of an Italian. Was certain it was not French" (408); the next says that "The shrill voice was that of a man—of a Frenchman" (408); the next that "The shrill voice...appeared to be that of a German" (409); the next that "The shrill voice was that of an Englishman" (410); and finally, one of the witnesses believes it to be "the voice of a Russian" (410). At no point does anyone suggest it could be the voice of an animal. When the visual of the orangutan-slave is absent, its voice is confused for human. Here, Poe describes the voice of the orangutan in distinctly human terms, and once again confuses the categories of the human and the animal.

Dupin, however, dismisses the humanness the voice repeatedly and blatantly refutes the testimony of two men who say that it was the intonation of the voice that persuaded them of the language they heard. One witness says that "The shrill voice was that of an Englishman—is sure of this. Does not understand the English language, but judges by the intonation" (410). The next says that he "Could not distinguish the words, but was convinced by the intonation that the speaker was an Italian" (408). Intonation refers to the sound patterns of sentences that reflect changes in tone and emotion. Another witness goes so far as to identify emotions in the voice. He could "not distinguish the words uttered. They were loud and quick—unequal—spoken apparently in fear as well as in anger" (408). Each witness confuses the orangutan-slave's voice with a foreign language and three witnesses state that they recognized speech patterns and emotional tones in this

Then, a newspaper describes the deaths as this "frightful affair" (406). Finally, the papers go so far as to wonder "if indeed a murder has been committed at all" (411). The media paints a much more mixed picture of the murders. Granted, they do not have the information that Dupin has, but this only further emphasizes how Dupin controls the distribution of information in this story.

voice. Dupin, on the other hand, says that "no syllabification could be detected" in the voice of the orangutan (421) and that the voice was "foreign in tone to the ears of men of many nations, and devoid of all distinct or intelligible syllabification" (423). To refute the narrator's assumption that it was a madman who committed the crime, Dupin says that "Madmen are of some nation, and their language, however incoherent in its words, has always the coherence of syllabification" (423). Dupin glosses the details several of the witnesses offer and corrects for the humanization of the orangutan-slave. Obviously, when one considers this behaviour pragmatically, Dupin is just trying to make sense of these unlikely circumstances; however, if we consider this behavior thematically (and not literally), we see that the voice of reason tends to silence and rewrite the other voices in this text.

The Shave

While the human voice of the orangutan-slave is ultimately silenced by Dupin's voice of reason, there are other moments in which the orangutan's animality slips. As the sailor returns to his apartment after a night of drinking, he witnesses the orangutan-slave doing something strange: "Razor in hand, and fully lathered, it was sitting before a looking-glass, attempting the operation of shaving, in which it had no doubt previously watched its master through the key-hole of the closet" (428-29). Socially, shaving one's face symbolizes masculinity and civility; it is a distinctly human activity. An orangutan's face is covered with hair—hair that is one of the key distinguishing features separating humans from apes. To shave off this animal hair is to strive to look and act human: Poe even goes so far as to suggest that the orangutan-slave had "no doubt" watched the sailor shave and was now imitating him (429). The razor in this scene is a tool—not a murder

weapon—that the orangutan-slave uses to clear himself of his excess animal hair, humanizing his face. In this moment, an animal behaves like a human and throws the categories of human and animal into crisis. The lathered face of the orangutan-slave confronts the reader, showing them a being that does not fit neatly into the category of animal any longer. Here, it is possible (although unverifiable) that the ape looks into a mirror and sees, not just an animal, but an imitation of a man as well.

This scene features one of the more evocative moments of doubling in "Rue Morgue," and adds to the liminal humanity of the orangutan-slave.⁵⁹ There are three easily identifiable sets of doubles in this text. The first, and most obvious, is the doubling of Dupin and the narrator,⁶⁰ the next, the doubling of the L'Espanayes,⁶¹ and finally, the

⁵⁹ For a reading of Dupin and narrative doubling, see Derrida's "The Purveyor of Truth," in which he suggests that "The Purloined Letter" is a text that doubles in its language, its structure, and its narration. For a cross-story summary of the different doubling techniques Poe uses, see Miriam Fernández-Santiago's "Edgar Allan Poe's Narrative use of Literary Doubling."

⁶⁰ Poe consistently pairs Dupin and the narrator in "Rue Morgue." First, the narrator of the text highlights their similarities, frequently conflating their identities with the more inclusive pronoun 'we.' Second, the two men first meet at "an obscure library in the Rue Montmartre," searching for "the same very rare and very remarkable volume" (400)—an accident that reveals their common interests. Poe emphasizes the rarity of both the library and the book and how both men were coincidentally searching for it. Third, they both live in the same gothic mansion, where their "seclusion was perfect. We admitted no visitors. Indeed the locality of our retirement had been carefully kept a secret from my own former associates; and it had been many years since Dupin had ceased to know or be known in Paris. We existed within ourselves alone" (401). This passage highlights the tone of the men's near-incestuous closeness. Finally, the narrator admits that "I often dwelt meditatively upon the old philosophy of the Bi-Part Soul, and amused myself with the fancy of a double Dupin" (402), imaging himself and Dupin as two parts of one consciousness. On one of their nightly strolls, Dupin successfully replies to an unspoken thought of the narrator, explaining, step by step, how he was able to follow the narrator's mental thought process. Scenes like this one show how Dupin and the narrator exist as echoes of one another.

⁶¹ Poe does not show the reader the inner details of the L'Espanayes' lives, but the basic details he does provide describe two very similar women. The women are frequently referred to as "the L'Espanayes" instead of by their own individual names and titles. The mother L'Espanaye is not even given a name, referred to only as Madame. Additionally, witnesses describe the mother as childish (407), emphasizing the likeness between mother and daughter. Both women lived retired lives and, much like the narrator and Dupin, did not frequently leave their home. Witnesses had only seen "the daughter some five or six times during the six years" (407). Like Dupin and the narrator, these women are reclusive, living privately, existing together, rarely interacting with others, and doubling one another.

doubling of the orangutan and the sailor.⁶² In this shaving scene, the sailor is looking at the orangutan, who had looked out of the closet at the sailor, who is looking at himself in the mirror, trying to physically imitate the sailor's actions and appearance. This sentence, like this sequence of the tale, shows these two beings as doubles of each other. The animal contemplates the human and the human contemplates the animal. Poe pairs man and ape intentionally, showing how one literally strives to become the other (the evolution of species resonates in this moment). This doubling emphasizes the similarities between each paring and, in this scene, blurs the boundaries around the human and the animal.

We have seen how stuffed orangutans were dressed in human clothes, armed with razors, and put on display in Philadelphia when Poe was writing. Elise Lemire describes a specific social connection between black Americans and barbers; as an entrepreneurial profession, barbering signalled black upward mobility, but the figure of the black barber triggered white racial anxiety (186). Recall the display at Peale's Museum in Philadelphia, which was likely a manifestation of this anxiety. Although these displays

⁶² The sailor and the orangutan are an unexpected pairing that mimics both the detective duo and the L'Espanayes in that they both live in close quarters together. In his confession to Dupin, the sailor says that "After great trouble, occasioned by the intractable ferocity of his captive during the home voyage, he at length succeeded in lodging it safely at his own residence in Paris, where, not to attract toward himself the unpleasant curiosity of his neighbors, he kept it carefully secluded" (428). We later discover that the orangutan was kept in the closet and that it is through a tiny hole in the door that he is able to watch his captor. The physical descriptions of the two beings are also similar: the narrator describes the sailor as "a tall, stout, and muscular-looking person, with a certain dare-devil expression of countenance, not altogether unprepossessing" (426). The muscular body of the sailor is subtly mirrored in the "muscular arm" (430) of the orangutan later in the text, as it strangles the life out of Camille L'Espanaye. Both creatures are described as powerful beings and their physical abilities as ape and sailor overlap. For example, the orangutan uses the lightning rod to gain access to the L'Espanayes bedroom window. The sailor is only able to observe the murders of the L'Espanayes by climbing the same structure. As he explains, "A lightning-rod is ascended without difficulty, especially by a sailor" (429). Where most individuals would be restricted by the physicality required to climb up a lightning rod, both ape and sailor do so with ease.

humanized the animal, they ultimately objectified him as other and nonhuman. Much like at the end of "Rue Morgue," when the handler sells the orangutan to a menagerie to be held in a cage until his death, these displays reinforce animal objectification and containment.

While the orangutan-slave in the scene above is humanized by his use of the razor, another scene features the razor as a weapon of extreme brutality. ⁶³ For much of the story, the figure of the orangutan-slave is aggressive, dangerous, and uncanny, and to read the orangutan as an allegory for a slave does not, initially, paint a flattering picture of black Americans during the period. The horrified sailor recalls the final scene, saying that "the gigantic animal had seized Madame L'Espanaye by the hair...and was flourishing the razor about her face, in imitation of the motions of a barber" ("Rue Morgue" 430). Seeing the orangutan in this scene as an orangutan-slave highlights white anxieties around black male sexuality. The orangutan-slave breaks into the private space of two reclusive women, ambushing them in their bedclothes. In this excerpt, the mother's hair is down and flowing (a sexually coded image), vulnerable to the giant hands of the monstrous orangutan. The initial position of the orangutan atop the "headboard of the bed" (429) implies sexual violence. And while the orangutan's behavior is "probably pacific" (430) until the women's screams change the "purposes of the Ourang-Outang into those of

⁶³ It is important to understand that this critique is not a perfect one. The story's resolution of the conflict is the best example of Poe's imperfect critique. Boggs is right to say that the "judicial system never brings anyone to justice for the deaths" (112). However, while the story does not use the legal system to bring the orangutan to justice, Poe himself cages the orangutan at the end of the text; the narrator relates how the orangutan is "subsequently caught by the owner himself, who obtained for it a very large sum at the Jardin des Plantes" (430) (the Jardin des Plantes was a large botanical garden in France). In the orangutan's final moments, Poe strips him of his power to look back. At the end of the story, the orangutan-slave is no longer able to speak, shave, or murder. As we have seen and will see in the final chapter of this thesis, the animal voices in this story do not speak as loudly as they do in the other texts.

wrath" (430), this concession does little to soften the harsh representation of a black man as physically and sexually dangerous. The description of the orangutan's actions is so grisly that it precludes any sympathy:

With one determined sweep of its muscular arm it nearly severed her head from her body. The sight of blood inflamed its anger into phrenzy. Gnashing its teeth, and flashing fire from its eyes, it flew upon the body of the girl, and imbedded its fearful talons in her throat, retaining its grasp until she expired.... In conclusion, it seized first the corpse of the daughter, and thrust it up the chimney, as it was found; then that of the old lady, which it immediately hurled through the window headlong. (430)

The abuse of the female body in this scene is excessive. Poe represents the female figures as pale victims, helpless to defend themselves. The daughter swoons, rendering her body completely vulnerable to abuse, and the mother, who manages to scream, is quickly silenced by the razor. The medical examiner reinforces the difference in size and strength of the victims' bodies compared to that of their attacker by stating that only a very strong man could have inflicted these kinds of wounds and that "No woman could have inflicted the blows with any weapon" (411). The over-the-top imagery of severed heads, face-to-face strangulation, and a body being thrust up a chimney is animalistic. The orangutan's superior strength is emphasized in the musculature of his arms; "Gnashing its teeth, and flashing fire from its eyes" his ferocity shines through (430). The orangutan's animalized physicality radically opposes Dupin's calm rationality: the orangutan is all body where Dupin is all mind. This drastic contrast reemphasizes the racially coded reason-nonreason binary—additional evidence for a racial reading of the orangutan. However, in this

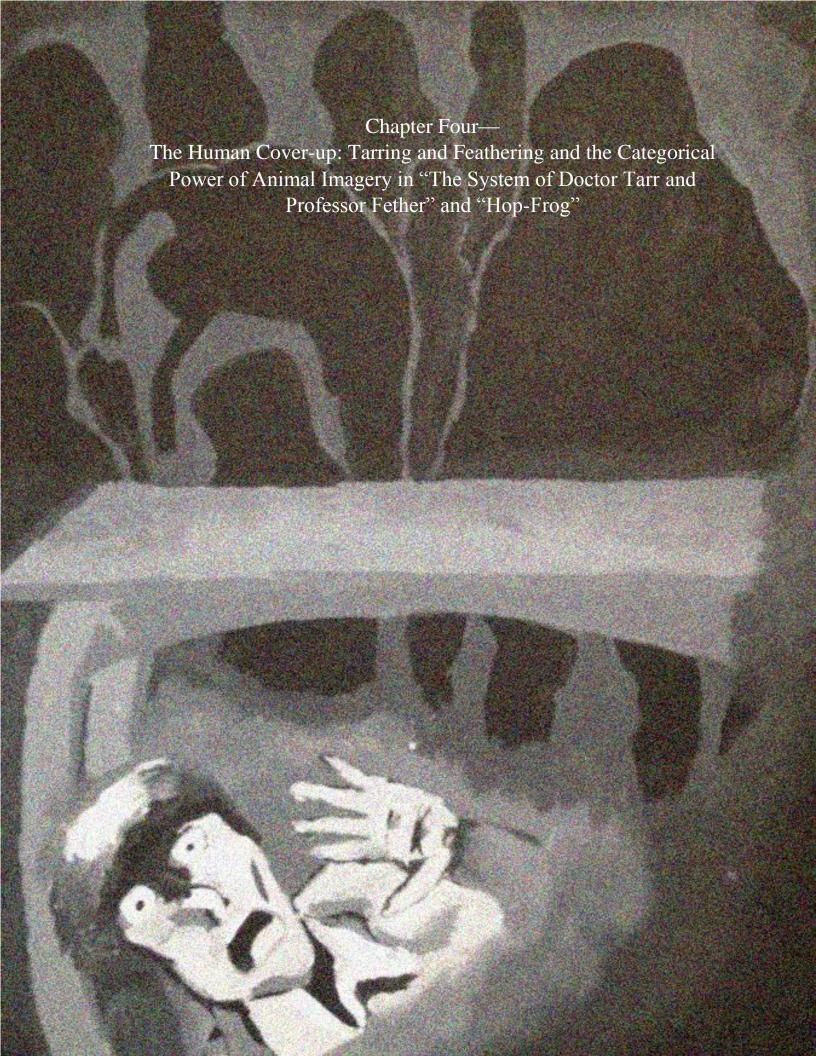
moment, there is no sympathy for this killer. The human reflected in the mirror has completely vanished in the eyes of the reader. This violent nonhuman behavior highlights the tenuous nature of the mixing categories in this story; Poe shows us a humanized orangutan-slave, but he also shows us a murderous monster.

The Murder

The orangutan's liminal humanity is reflected in the title of the tale. The word murder in the title prepares the reader for a human perpetrator. The "murders" in the Rue Morgue, however, are committed by an animal and should not be considered murders at all. Murderers are unquestionably human by definition. By definition, a murderer is "A person who murders another; a person guilty of murder" (OED). Only humans can murder and only humans can be murdered. "The question the story raises and fails to resolve," says Colleen Boggs, "is precisely 'Who dunit?"—that is, whether the Ourang-Outang has the forethought, the moral capacity, and the legal standing required to commit murder" (112). Murder and accountability, according to Christopher Peterson, require "the capacity to reason, to comprehend right and wrong, to think causally in order to connect deeds to an authorial subject. It presupposes, in other words, a consciousness that humans have historically denied to animals" (151). At the end of the story, the orangutan is still an ambiguously categorized animal who committed murder.

In both "The Black Cat" and "Rue Morgue," the animals that appear in the stories are never just animals. In "Rue Morgue," Poe introduces an orangutan who speaks like a man, who shaves his face, and who commits murder. Based on the historical, political, scientific, and social connection between slaves and great apes, "Rue Morgue" is a story that asks its reader to consider the basic humanity of the black American. Toni Morrison

is right when she says that there is a darkness in Poe: within these dark figures is a commentary on Africanism in nineteenth-century America. The orangutan in Poe's story embodies a posthuman hybridity that challenges a reader to reconsider the humanity of the slave in nineteenth-century America.



In the previous chapters, we saw how Poe's animal characters speak for subhumans who are otherwise denied a voice. Something different is at work in "The System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether" ("Tarr and Fether") and "Hop-Frog." The biological animal is absent from these stories and the subhumans are speaking for themselves, but they use explicit animal images to do so. In both stories, we will see subhuman characters use tar, flax, and feathers to animalize and control their captors. Poe creates two very similar animal images in these two stories, both of which occur at the tales' violent climaxes. In addition to these powerful climactic moments, Poe weaves more subtle animal imagery into both of these stories. In "Tarr and Fether," there is an extensive lexicon of animal imagery that thematically merges the categories of human and animal. In "Hop-Frog," the story's title character and anti-hero is a metaphorical merging of man and animal something that his name makes evident. Poe uses this animal imagery to dehumanize his characters. This cover-up animalizes the stories' once powerful human figures. Once the king of the court and the doctors in the asylum are "made" into animals, the subhumans can assert their dominance, subverting the power structures that were in place. In this final chapter, I will show how the categories of the human, subhuman, and nonhuman have symbolic power and how subhuman figures seize this power, once used to control them, to escape their categorical cages. The animals speak in this story as dangerous examples of the categorical powers currently in place during Poe's historical moment, and ask the reader to consider the institutionalization and dehumanization of the mentally ill as well as the abuse of the physically disabled.

When I say "made" into animals, I do not mean biologically; no one can change a human's biology so that it becomes like an animal's—at least not yet. When I say that the

subhumans make their human superiors into animals, I mean that they do so symbolically. Subhumans use the symbols of tar (blackness, linked to animality or ape-like-ness) and feathers (chickens or bird-like animals) to cover up the human. As I will argue, this cover-up effectively silences and animalizes these human characters. Even though they are still biologically human, the story shows them crippled by symbolic tar, flax, and feathers.

4.1 Asylum Reform and the Mentally Ill in "Tarr and Fether"

Until recently, scholars writing on Poe have not typically considered him to be a social critic. Shawn Rosenheim and Steven Rachman suggest that "This critical dismissal of Poe has followed from Poe's own seeming disengagement with American culture, as if Poe and his critics had silently agreed to turn their backs on one another" (viii). As we saw in Chapter Three, this critical tendency is beginning to change. Some scholars have considered stories such as "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*, and even "The Black Cat" as tales that may have something to say about issues like slavery. "Tarr and Fether" is, arguably, another story where Poe engages with social issues. Those who have written on the tale typically read the story as a satirical fictionalization of the asylum reform sweeping across America. While I agree that this satire is present, I argue that Poe uses "Tarr and Fether" as a subtle commentary on the institutionalization of the nineteenth-century madman.

⁶⁴ William Tuke and Philippe Pinel were the primary pioneers of this treatment. Much like earlier methods, rigid separation was a mandate: "This [method] consists in removing patients from their residence to some proper asylum...strictly exclude[ing] visitors...[and] forbid[ding] their returning home too soon" (Whipple 122-23, qtd. in *One Hundred Years of Psychiatry* 122).

Poe depicts madness in many of his tales: one of Poe's most famous stories, "The Tell-Tale Heart," features a madman as its protagonist. Similarly, in "The Black Cat," the narrator flirts with madness, insisting from the beginning of the story that "mad I am not" ("The Black Cat" 597), while telling a story that he admits any onlooker would undoubtedly perceive as mad. In "Tarr and Fether," Poe introduces a narrator who visits an asylum where the patients are allowed to roam the grounds uninhibited. The narrator is thus surprised to hear from Monsieur Maillard, his host for his tour, that the "system of soothing" for which the asylum was known had been abandoned ("Tarr and Fether" 701).⁶⁵ The narrator describes the system of soothing as a method where "punishments were avoided...confinement was seldom resorted to...[and] the patients, while secretly watched, were left much apparent liberty, and that most of them were permitted to roam about the house and grounds, in the ordinary apparel of person in right mind" (700). During a dinner the narrator finds very odd, the other guests talk about and enthusiastically demonstrate their patients' insane, frequently animalistic behaviours. He learns how a stricter system had to be put in place after the asylum patients rose up against the doctors and locked them in the patients' cells. After some commotion and an escalation in the strange behaviour of the narrator's fellow guests, ten figures that the narrator takes "to be Chimpanzees, Ourang-Outangs, or big black baboons of the Cape of Good Hope" (716) break through the glass windows, attacking everyone in the room and

⁶⁵ The Maison de Santé and the "system of soothing" the doctors used within are an obvious imitation of what "was referred to in the psychiatric circles of the time as 'Moral Treatment.'" William Whipple argues that "The general satire against the leniency used in handling insane people is clear even in the bare outline of the story" (121). David Shen also argues that Poe explicitly satirizes this asylum reform in "Tarr and Fether," showing "in a highly dramatic manner the adoption of the 'soothing system' at the Maison de Santé, a system that frees the insane from all punishments and, in most cases, from confinement" (342).

causing complete mayhem. The final few paragraphs reveal that those ten figures were, in fact, the asylum staff who had been overtaken, tarred and feathered, and locked up by the lunatics, and the guests at dinner, including their leader, Monsieur Maillard, were themselves the rebellious patients. In this story, as in his other tales, Poe makes it difficult for his characters and his readers to distinguish between madness and sanity. Even at the end of the story, the narrator, who obviously does not quite understand his own story, expresses dismay at having failed to find an edition of the "works of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether," despite looking in "every library in Europe" (716). The reader is left, perhaps, to question the narrator's sanity. Poe takes on the role of social critic and, using multiple examples of animalized characters, asks his readers to question the easy categorization of the mentally ill.

To support this claim, I will first show how, in this period, people separated, institutionalized, and animalized the mentally ill. These three key points were historical realities that dehumanized the madman. With its representation of the asylum as a place run by lunatics, Poe subverts the typical nineteenth-century institution. Poe depicts madness in unknowable terms: as the narrator of this story quickly discovers, you cannot look at someone and know them to be insane. Additionally, the historical animalization of the mentally ill is represented thematically in this story. The tar and feathers physically alter the appearance of the doctors at the end of the tale and, as the plot of this story indicates, this transformation strips them of their power. The patients shift the doctors from the category of human to the category of animal, inverting the typical nineteenth-century institution where the doctors animalized the patients. In "Tarr and Fether," Poe

poses questions about the nature of insanity and subtly challenges the categorization of the madman as other, separate, and subhuman.

Mental illness was a new concept in this period and the ideas surrounding it were both emerging and evolving. Medical professionals were beginning to emphasize the need to separate the mentally ill from healthy society, which was a very different approach than the more inclusive attitude and response to mental illness during the colonial period. The primary difference between the colonial and antebellum American perspectives on mental illness was the shift from locally managed inclusion to large institutional exclusion (Rothman 1).

David Rothman argues that "The colonial attitudes and practices toward the poor and the criminal, the insane, the orphan, and the delinquent were in almost every aspect remarkably different from those Americans came to share in the pre-Civil War decades" (1). In the eighteenth-century, colonial Americans used the term "poor" to describe a huge group of citizens: the mentally ill, the homeless, the disabled, widows, orphans, and several other groups. In this period, it was "[the] fact of need, and not the special circumstances it, [that] was the critical element in the definition" (4). Generally speaking, "[the] colonists normally supported the poor in community households, not in separate institutions. They found little reason to penalize their needy—poverty seemed trouble enough without adding the pain of separation" (31). 66 This inclusive feature of the eighteenth-century system of relief "at once reflected the colonists' easy acceptance of the

⁶⁶ Historians can glean essential characteristics of the colonial period from the documents that survived but the records that exist are sparse, and Rothman notes that it is important to be wary of generalizations about the ways that colonials approached solutions to poverty (Rothman 30).

poor and itself encouraged this perspective" (35). Mental illness was just another part of the larger issue of poverty, which was typically handled at the local community level during this period.

Conversely, in Jacksonian⁶⁷ America, there was a drastic and widespread ideological shift from inclusion to separation that fixed the madman as a lesser subhuman figure who required containment in institutions. Psychology began to define madness pathologically, and institutions for the mentally ill popped up across the country.

Beginning in 1820 and for several decades afterwards, asylums, penitentiaries, almshouses, and houses for orphans were erected in the United States (Rothman 1).

Buildings were constructed to house the mentally ill, and "The first postulate of the asylum program was the prompt removal of the insane from the community" (137). These asylums were typically located near but outside city limits—to maximize separation.

According to Rothman, "Almost all the institutions constructed after 1820 were located a short distance from an urban center" (141). The institution initiative spread quickly. After 1850, "almost every northeastern and Midwestern legislature supported an asylum; by1860, twenty-eight of the thirty-three states had public institutions for the insane" (Rothman 130).⁶⁸ Foucault describes this phenomenon as "The Great Confinement"

⁶⁷ This period occurred while Andrew Jackson was president and lasted from 1828-45 ("Jacksonian Era") and was characterized by the accelerated development of technology and transportation, economic development, and tensions between white Americans and slaves (*American President*). Andrew Jackson was only president until 1837; the era ends with his death in 1845.

⁶⁸ According to Rothman, this change was not what many historians have called a natural progression in an increasingly industrial world. He writes that "There was nothing inevitable about the asylum form, no self-evident reason why philanthropists should have chosen it" (xiv). These institutions did not always exist and were not always the answer to the problems of poverty and illness.

(*Madness and Civilization* 38).⁶⁹ The institution isolated the madman and society isolated the asylum.⁷⁰ Punishment shifted from "being an art of unbearable sensations" to "an economy of suspended rights" (*Discipline and Punish* 11). Institutions like the asylum did not need physical violence to control their occupants.

Individuals deemed mad were dehumanized by the prevailing rhetoric of madness and its tendency to animalize the mentally ill. During this historical period, physicians believed that the mentally ill were people without the ability to reason. As noted in the previous chapter, the reason-nonreason binary can result in one group of animalized individuals; "Tar and Fether" is another story that makes the consequences of this binary evident. Physician Benjamin Rush (1745-1813) "believed that the mentally ill had degenerated into an animal-like state through their loss of reason" (Tannenbaum 148) Rush likened "people with mental illness to wild beasts, and physicians to animal trainers" (148). In discussing the asylums of the nineteenth century, historians Lynn Gamwell and Nancy Tomes explain that the caretakers in these institutions were often cast in the role of animal tamer (35). André du Laurens, a French doctor from the late sixteenth century, wrote that when you "consider the action of a frenetic or maniac, you'll find nothing human there; he bites, he screams, he bellows with a savage voice...Look at a melancholic and how he lowers himself so that he becomes a companion of beasts"

⁶⁹ Foucault works primarily from a European perspective, but his ideas are applicable to events occurring in Europe and North America.

⁷⁰ The ideological shift during the age of the asylum (and the asylum reform I discussed earlier) aligns with Foucault's discussion the body of the condemned in *Discipline and Punish*. Society kept dirty beings separate and ceased to punish them physically. By the early nineteenth century, "the great spectacle of physical punishment disappeared" (*Discipline and Punish* 14). "One no longer touched the body," Foucault says, "or at least as little as possible" (*Discipline and Punish* 11).

⁷¹ Initially, physicians believed that patients had deficient or reason-less minds; they also believed, however, that the mentally ill could "recover their reason" (Gamwell 32).

(Laurens, qtd. in Reiss 151). The animalization of the mentally ill is "nowhere more evident than in the hospital's custom of allowing outsiders to come and gape at the patients as if they were animals in a zoo" (Gamwell 35). This custom was not uncommon during this time period (see figure 2 for an example) and the acts as one type of example

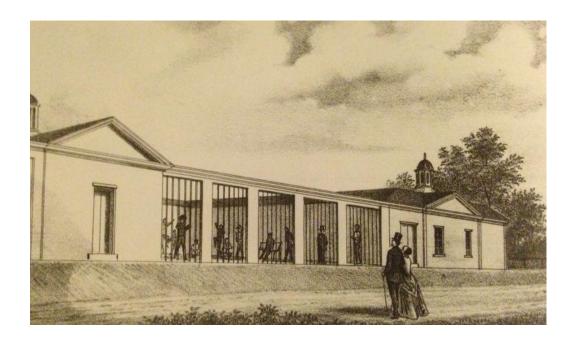


Figure 2: A Couple Viewing the Lunatics, in Ebenezer Haskell (Haskell 10-11). of this behaviour. As the public gaze animalized the insane, the mentally ill assumed subhuman status.

When considering the birth of the American asylum, one cannot help but turn to Foucault. Foucault is known best for his work on the institutionalization of power, and he examines madness and the asylum in *Madness and Civilization* (1961) and its sequel, *The Birth of the Clinic* (1963), as well as incarceration more generally in *Discipline and Punish* (1975). As we have seen, the asylum separated the madman from the rest of society—physically and categorically. Foucault, using language much like Haraway and

Douglas', argues that "Generally speaking, all the authorities exercising individual control function according to the double mode; that of binary division and branding (mad/sane; dangerous/harmless; normal/abnormal)" (*Discipline and Punish* 199). To exert power over another individual, one must divide and brand, or, to use the language of this thesis, to categorize.

At first glance, the soothing system of "Tarr and Fether" may seem like an improvement or a softening of the institutional power of the asylum. Physical punishment and restrictions, however, are not the only, or even the most effective, way to exercise power over another being. Foucault says that the asylum of the eighteenth century was one where power was exerted using "material force, and in a sort of real combat" (Madness and Civilization 252). In the asylum of the nineteenth century, "the combat was always decided beforehand, unreason's defeat inscribed in advance in the concrete situation where madman and man of reason meet. The absence of constraint in the nineteenth-century asylum is not unreason liberated, but madness long since mastered" (Madness and Civilization 252). The system of soothing may let the madman out of his cell, but as the end of the story will demonstrate, he will never escape the asylum.

4.2 The Ambiguity of Patient and Doctor in "Tarr and Fether"

As the plot of "Tarr and Fether" progresses, the distinction between sanity and insanity becomes gradually more difficult to distinguish. Poe confuses these categories progressively: when the reader waits with the narrator outside the asylum, the categories of sane and insane are rigidly separate; after crossing the threshold and stepping inside, the categories begin to get confusing; and by the end of the story, you cannot discern who

is sane and who is insane any longer. As the narrator stands outside of the Maison de Santé, the separation of sane and insane cannot be more stark. Poe paints a deliberate picture of a place as distant from civilization as anything a reader can imagine. The path to the asylum turns "from the main-road," leading to "a grass-grown by-path, which, in half an hour, nearly lost itself in a dense forest, clothing the base of a mountain. Through this dank and gloomy wood we rode some two miles, when the Maison de Santé came in view" ("Tarr and Fether" 699). Poe obviously imitates the mid-nineteenth-century directive to build asylums in rural locations. Even the descriptions of the journey to the institution suggest that, the closer the two men approach, the farther from civilization and closer to madness they become. The narrator strays from the main road, the path he follows loses itself in a dense forest, and the asylum hides within the dark shadow of a mountain; these images evoke a feeling of uncertainty, of a dark unknown. Geographically, the madmen are kept at a distance. Thematically, the sane stand outside of the building while the insane await within. While our narrator is interested in entering the Maison de Santé, the narrator's companion is decidedly against it, resolved to ride on and wait for the narrator to catch up with him—he prefers to keep the categories of sane and insane safely separate. This companion experiences "a very usual horror at the sight of a lunatic" ("Tarr and Fether" 699), and while he agrees to assist the narrator, "his feelings on the subject of lunacy would not permit of his entering the house" (699). This scene plays on the contemporary trend to separate the sane from the insane, but also shows the strange fascination that people (like our narrator) exhibited towards the mentally ill: we do not want to live with them, but we do want to look at them. This scene, like Figure 2, captures this uncanny fascination aptly and emphasizes the ways that people animalized the mentally ill. People, like our narrator, want to observe the subhumans who are strange but also familiar. As the tale begins, sane and insane are rigid categories that separate, objectify, and dehumanize the madman.

Once the narrator steps through the front doors, these categories become more complicated. After crossing the initial threshold out of the wilderness and into the asylum, every person the narrator interacts with could be mentally ill—although the narrator and the reader do not know this yet. In the Maison de Santé, "the patients, while secretly watched, were left much apparent liberty, and...most of them were permitted to roam about the house and grounds, in the ordinary apparel of persons in right mind" (700). Without any of the tell-tale codes that one might use to identify a patient at a mental institution (a straitjacket or uniform, for instance), the narrator is incapable of determining the difference between doctor and patient—exposing the unstable nature of these labels. Monsieur Maillard is the first person the narrator meets and he seems perfectly sane at first. Maillard, however, is a strong example of this categorical instability: he appears perfectly sane even when the narrator discovers he was insane for the duration of his stay at the Maison de Santé. The narrator greets Maillard before entering and Maillard speaks with him for the entire duration of his visit, presenting himself as head of the institution and creator of the asylum's "system of soothing." While the narrator gradually suspects others of being insane, Maillard is able to deceive him until the very end of the tale.

Another example of the narrator's inability to categorize the people he meets in the asylum occurs early on, when he sees a beautiful young woman at a piano:

at my entrance, [she] paused in her song, and received me with graceful courtesy. Her voice was low, and her whole manner subdued. I thought, too,

that I perceived the traces of sorrow in her countenance, which was excessively, although to my taste, not unpleasingly pale. She was attired in deep mourning, and excited in my bosom a feeling of mingled respect, interest, and admiration. (700)

The narrator's description of this woman does not reveal any characteristic of mental illness. In fact, the narrator remarks that "She replied in a perfectly rational manner to all that I said; and even her original observations were marked with the soundest good sense" (700-01). Primed with suspicion, the narrator is unable to discern who is sane and who is insane. This initial scene foreshadows the events that follow, revealing that there is a "slim likelihood of correspondence between someone's appearance as insane and the actual status of their sanity" (August 6). First impressions fail the narrator and begin the breakdown of the sane/insane binary.

As the narrator moves deeper into the asylum, the boundary between sanity and insanity continues to blur. The narrator spends the bulk of the tale dining with the patients of the institution, assuming that they are the asylum staff. As he takes his seat, he notes that "Upon the whole, I could not help thinking that there was much of the *bizarre* about every thing I saw," but he quickly disregards this feeling, open-mindedly surmising that "the world is made up of all kinds of person, with all modes of thought, and all sorts of conventional customs" (705). Yet, over dinner, the narrator is constantly second-guessing who is sane, who is not, and what being insane means. As the narrator witnesses behavior that seems mad, he repeatedly makes excuses for his own assumptions. His justifications are plausible, and, as one critic puts it, "the narrator's rationalizations of the behavior he sees are insidiously logical and quite convincing to use under the circumstances" (Bryant

38). For example, the narrator asks if one of the older women at the table is "Only slightly touched?" ("Tarr and Fether" 711) and Maillard insists that she is perfectly sane. Eccentricity should not be confused with madness: "you know, all old women—all *very* old women—are more or less eccentric!" (711). Additionally, when the "staff" begin to behave even more strangely, the narrator accredits it to the nature of "southern provincialists" (704); as John Bryant puts it, "These staffers are not lunatics; they are merely French" (41). The narrator describes the madmen at once as cunning, clever, and stupid, but the story complicates these definitions even further when Maillard says that "When a madman appears *thoroughty* sane, indeed, it is high time to put him in a strait jacket" ("Tarr and Fether" 713). Sane and insane, eccentricity and genius, old age and French-ness, are all blended, made indistinguishable from one another. It is this slippery categorization that challenges the nineteenth-century belief that the madman was somehow less than human.

The madman and the medical professional in this story are both animal-like. Poe's animal metaphors and images show the reader how both doctors and the mentally ill can be animalized. As the story progresses, Poe animalizes every character—both patient and doctor. While the narrator is dining with the masquerading patients, many of them describe former inmates who believed themselves to be animals and objects. There are champagne bottles, pumpkins, and tea pots. Notably, however, there are several examples of people who believe that they are animals. A dinner guest describes how one patient, Madame Joyeuse, "found, upon mature deliberation, that, by some accident, she had been turned into a chicken-cock...She flapped her wings with prodigious effect—so— so—and, as for her crow, it was delicious! Cock-a-doodle-doo!—cock-a-doodle-doo

describe Joyeuse as moving, sounding, and believing that she is a chicken. During dinner, they also discuss a man "who mistook himself for a frog, which, by the way, he resembled in no little degree." They go on to say that "if that man was not a frog...it is a pity he was not. His croak thus—o-o-o-o-gh—o-o-o-o-gh!—was the finest not in the world" (707). At the end of the story, the patients begin behaving in the exact way as the ones they had described, hinting that they had really been talking about themselves: "the frog-man croaked away as if the salvation of his soul depended upon every note," "the continuous braying of a donkey arose over all" and Madame Joyeuse stood up "in a corner, by the fire-place," and sung out, "at the top of her voice, 'Cock-a-doodle-dedooooooh!"(715). The patients do not just believe that they are animals; their physical bodies become animalized and thus dehumanized. Maillard's name also has subtle animal links. There are several possible origins for the surname Maillard, one of which is "an occupational nickname for a hunter of wild geese, or a nickname for a person who it was considered in some way to resemble a mallard, and therefore perhaps one who wore bright colours or was continually on the move" (Internet Surname Database). Maillard's name, like so many of the other patients discussed at dinner, is linked to an animal—in this case, a mallard duck. This animalized merging destabilizes the human, subhuman, and nonhuman categories.

While the dinner scene animalizes the patients, the final scene of "Tarr and Fether" animalizes the doctors. Considering the link between insanity and animality during Poe's period, the patients should be the only animalized figures. By choosing to animalize both patient and doctor, Poe complicates the binary of the sane and the insane that was

becoming more rigid during the nineteenth century. Maillard describes the imprisoned doctors as "lunatics, [who] every now and then, get up a howl in concert; one starting another, as is sometimes the case with a bevy of dogs at night" (710). The doctor's voices only ever "howl," and Poe never shows them speaking. Historically, it would have been the madman who was without a voice. As Foucault notes in *Madness and Civilization*, "The science of mental disease, as it would develop in the asylum, would always be only of the order of observation and classification. It would not be a dialogue" (250). Poe inverts our expectations by giving the madman a voice that we assume is a sane one, and by doing so, he problematizes the divide between sane and insane.

Poe represents this initial metaphorical animalization again in the traumatic finale as a stampede of what appears to be wild apes breaks into the dining room:

the ten windows were very speedily, and almost simultaneously, broken in.

But I shall never forget the emotions of wonder and horror with which I gazed, when, leaping through these windows, and down among us *pêle-mêle*, fighting, stamping, scratching, and howling, there rushed a perfect army of what I took to be Chimpanzees, Ourang-Outangs, or big black baboons of the Cape of Good Hope. (715-16)

It becomes clear to the reader that these Chimpanzees, Ourang-Outangs, and big black baboons are the previously imprisoned doctors.⁷² Yet, in this passage, the narrator describes these men as leaping through broken windows, "fighting, stamping, scratching,

⁷² The ten windows corresponds with the ten "patients" that Monsieur Maillard said he held. They resemble orangutans, baboons, and chimpanzees because they have been tarred and feathered according to the system of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether that Maillard spoke of.

and howling" (716). Their behavior is rampant and unquestionably animal. The narrator even states that "I received a terrible beating," further emphasizing the indiscriminate, violent behaviour of the creatures. Poe does not portray the doctors as sane, rational, or even human. This final scene throws the categories that once structured the narrator's perceptions of sanity and insanity into full crisis.

The narrator's descriptive abilities break down in this final scene, enhancing the chaos and violence caused by this categorical collapse. Description of the scene ends with the narrator, after being beaten (presumably by the "sane" doctors), laying prone beneath a sofa while what seemed to be wild apes rampaged above his hiding place. Poe never shows the doctors stripped of their tar and feathers, never de-animalizes them, and so never re-establishes them as sane medical professionals. Perhaps the most substantive evidence of this categorical uncertainty is the narrator himself. As the story comes to its close, he still believes in the works of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether. In this final moment, Poe calls our faith in the seemingly sane status of our narrator into question. Earlier in that story, the narrator says that he has "a long acquaintance with the metaphysics of mania [that] had taught me to put no faith in such evidence of sanity" (701) but until this final moment, we have never wondered why. Inside this asylum, "it is never clear on whom the straightjacket should be placed" (August 7), or whether it should be worn at all. At the end of this tale, Poe asks his reader to consider the legitimacy of categorizing some people as insane and others as sane. After reading a story filled with unexpectedly sane madmen and unexpectedly insane doctors, I think Poe would ask us to take Maillard's advice: "Believe nothing you hear, and only one half that you see" ("Tarr and Fether" 703).

4.3 Carnival in the Courts of "Hop-Frog"

Much like "Tarr and Fether," "Hop-Frog" is a story that does not just problematize the existing categories determining a person's rights and status—it violently inverts these classificatory systems by animalizing and thus dehumanizing the human figures. "Hop-Frog," is the story of a tyrant king's jester, who, after years of abuse and ridicule, exacts his revenge upon those who have mistreated him. At the beginning of the story, the king and his seven councillors animalize Hop-Frog, categorizing him as a subhuman. Hop-Frog, however, is able to invert this rigid power structure; he deliberately animalizes the king and his councillors by covering up their humanity. By making them animal, he is able to deny their human rights and silence their human voices. For one grotesque moment in the ballroom of the king, the lowest citizen, by making man into orangutan, reigns over his oppressive ruler.⁷³

Historically, the figure of the fool has always had a selective kind of power⁷⁴—Bakhtin says that "Clowns and fools…were constant representatives of the carnival sprit" and "stood on the borderline of life and art, in a peculiar midzone as it were" (8). Bakhtin

⁷³ Hop Frog visually stands at the top of a chain, looking down on the king and his most powerful councillors. As we saw in Chapter Three, the Great Chain of Being was a popular and powerful image. Poe places Hop Frog above the king, who—in some versions of the Great Chain of Being—stood closest to, or even represented, God.

⁷⁴ The figure of the fool has a long history. According to Sandra Billington, "it was in the sixteenth century, when Fools became popular" (ix). The fool is a figure who historians have typically viewed as English, and their popularity in sixteenth and early seventeenth-century England has been vigorously documented in primary historical texts (examples of this include the works of Enid Welsford, C.R. Baskervill, Walter Kaiser, and William Willerford) (32). Their origins, however, stretch back to the middle ages, where they had "a recognizable relation to a figure in cap and bell" (1). These fools were often jesters to kings and headed carnival entertainment. In this setting, the fool could impose a "period of disorder as welcome to the people as unwelcome to the authorities" (1). By the eighteenth century, "there was a change by some from Fool status to that of respectable comedian. And at the same time Harlequin and then the clown filled the gap" (ix).

uses language that resonates with the work of Douglas and Haraway and suggests that the figure of the fool exists in a powerful in-between space. While for much of their history, fools were not necessarily respected figures, court jesters always possessed a comic power, able to joke kings out of even the darkest of moods (Billington 33-34). Bakhtin's concept of the carnival captures the type of power Hop-Frog, the fool, wields in this tale. This idea derives from the medieval carnival when a degree of otherwise unpermitted freedom was granted to ordinary people and to lampoon the figures of authority associated with the church and state. Thus, the carnival involves a temporary reversal of the order of power enacted through the rituals, games, mockeries, and profanities in which the polite is overthrown by the vulgar and the king upended by the fool (Bakhtin 5-8).

The reversal of power in "Hop-Frog" is not a scheduled event designed to relieve tension, but it does mimic the medieval carnival. Hop-Frog begins the tale as a crippled, dwarfish fool. After Hop-Frog sees the king strike and cover Trippetta (his friend and fellow dwarf) in wine, he decides to exact his revenge. At a costume ball, Hop-Frog arranges for the king and his most powerful advisors to be dressed as orangutans and chained together as a form of amusement for the court. And when these costumed men enter the ballroom, Hop-Frog hoists them up by their chain with a hook, leaves them dangling from the ceiling, and ultimately sets them on fire. The position of fool and king

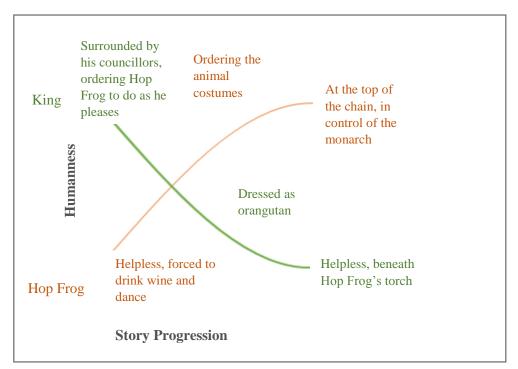
are inverted in the final scene, as Hop-Frog stands over the tarred black men. Hop-Frog uses this carnivalesque moment to exert his power and take his revenge.⁷⁵

At the beginning to the story, Poe uses multiple animal images to describe Hop-Frog. For example, Hop-Frog's name was "not that given to the dwarf by his sponsors at baptism, but it was conferred upon him, by general consent of the seven ministers, on account of his inability to walk as other men do" (900). The court ministers give Hop-Frog an animal name to reflect his physical disability, using his frog-like walk to dehumanize him. We learn that while the king and his councillors call his gait frog-like, "the prodigious muscular power which nature seemed to have bestowed upon his arms, by way of compensation for deficiency in the lower limbs, enabled him to perform many feats of wonderful dexterity, where trees or ropes were in question, or anything else to climb" (900). Here, his upper body and physical abilities resemble an ape's. The narrator adds to this description, using multiple animal images to describe Hop-Frog's body: "he certainly much more resembled a squirrel, or a small monkey, than a frog" (900). In this moment, Poe explicitly describes Hop-Frog as a cripple and a dwarf in a position of severe inferiority in a situation that persecutes him. Poe does this in order to ensure that, initially, the reader sees Hop-Frog as a victimized, sympathetic subhuman figure. The narrator points out that Hop-Frog, the "fool, or professional jester, was not only a fool,

⁷⁵ For other readings of the carnivalesque in "Hop-Frog," see Katrina Bachinger's "Together (Or Not Together) Against Tyranny: Poe, Byron, and Napoleon Upside Down in 'Hop-Frog'" and Shawn Wayne Stugart's "'The Man in the Mask': Edgar Allan Poe and the Danse Macabre."

however" (899). Hop Fog is animalized, but he is also sympathetic⁷⁶—a move Poe makes that enables Hop-Frog's eventual triumph.

The king animalizes Hop-Frog initially, but Hop-Frog assumes more and more human power as the story progresses. Conversely, the king begins the story human and in control, but his trajectory is the inverse of Hop-Frog's. This progression of protagonist and antagonist shows how power shifts with the animalization of these characters (see figure 3). The king first dehumanizes Hop-Frog when he forces him to consume wine:



⁷⁶ Several scholars have noted that Hop Frog (much like the orangutan in "Rue Morgue") is a less-than-subtle stand-in for a slave. The slave, as noted in Chapter Three, is another marginalized figure and linking Hop Frog's character once again casts him in a subhuman role. The story of Hop Frog's and Trippetta's origins mimics a slave's passage to America. Hop Frog and Trippetta were taken from an unknown land a great distance from the setting of the story. It was a "barbarous region," and they were taken from their home by force. Teresa Goddu writes that Hop Frog is "Depicted in terms of the racial stereotypes of 'blackness'—a monkey—as well as of enslavement—he is a 'captive' who has been 'forcibly carried' from some 'barbarous region'" (108). Paul Christian Jones also highlights this connection, writing that "Poe connects the dwarf to images of animals, notably primates, consistent with antebellum uses of such images to dehumanize blacks" (Jones 245).

Figure 3: Animality and Power as the Plot of "Hop-Frog" Progresses

"He knew that Hop-Frog was not fond of wine; for it excited the poor cripple almost to madness.... But the king loved his practical jokes, and took pleasure in forcing Hop-Frog to drink and (as the king called it) 'to be merry'" (901). This passage demonstrates an important shift in the tone of the story. The quotation marks around the phrase "to be merry" suggest that the narrator is being sarcastic, emphasizing the vast gap between the king's personal enjoyment and the subsequent pain it causes another being. This same technique is used again in response to Hop-Frog's drunkenness: "They [the councillors] all seemed highly amused at the success of the king's 'joke" (902). This critical distance between the narrator and the story, enabled by the quotation marks the narrator uses to emphasize the word joke, demonizes the king. The shift in narrative tone continues to create critical distance. When Hop-Frog later refuses to drink, the king's response is violent: "Drink, I say!' shouted the monster" (902). The narrator now describes the "king" as a "monster"; the cruelty of this character has reduced him to a nonhuman being in the eyes of the narrator as well as the reader.

The narrator's skeptical dehumanization of the king is meaningful for the reader, shifting the sympathy from the powerful figure to Hop-Frog. The king's treatment of the character of Trippetta shifts the sympathy of the reader even further from the monarch and his men. The narrator describes how Trippetta, "on account of her grace and exquisite beauty (although a dwarf,) was universally admired and petted" ("Hop-Frog" 900). This brief description has serious implications. Trippetta is cast as the most likable and physically beautiful character in the tale, most notably when compared to the king, who the narrator describes as having a "protuberance of his stomach and a constitutional

swelling of the head" (900). This line, specifically the word "petted," also hints at the potential sexual abuse of this "exquisite" and petite character. The word "petted" is also one more example of a human figure animalizing a dwarf. In a moment that evokes compassion, Trippetta falls to her knees to beg the king, who is forcing Hop-Frog to consume more and more alcohol, to stop tormenting her friend. The king, "without uttering a syllable...pushed her violently from him, and threw the contents of the brimming goblet in her face" (902). It is hard to imagine oneself sympathizing with a character who concludes a story by burning eight men alive. However, Poe portrays the king and his men as cruel, villainous, monsters—which advances the reading of Hop-Frog's actions as retaliation for a lifetime of cruelty.

In the context of the story, Hop-Frog's animalization of the king is crucial in his eventual destruction of the monarch. This dehumanization is deliberate:

The king and his ministers were first encased in tight-fitting stockinet shirts and drawers. They were then saturated with tar. At this stage of the process, some one of the party suggested feathers; but the suggestion was at once overruled by the dwarf, who soon convinced the eight, by ocular demonstration, that the hair of such a brute as the ourang-outang was much more efficiently represented by flax. A thick coating of the latter was accordingly plastered upon the coating of tar. A long chain was now procured. First, it was passed about the waist of the king, *and tied*, then about another of the party, and also tied; then about all successively, in the same manner. (904-

Hop-Frog is known for his abilities to fashion realistic costumes, and the details of the above passage emphasize this meticulous craftsmanship. This scene shows the total control that Hop-Frog has taken over the king and his councillors. By the end of this sequence, these eight beings are no longer men. From this point on until the end of the story, not a single one of these now black orangutans will speak another word. Hop-Frog has effectively silenced their voices. Earlier, in his initial excitement, the king says to Hop-Frog, "O, this is exquisite!"... 'Hop-Frog! I will make a man of you" (904). What the king does not know is that Hop-Frog will become a man who stands atop the flaming bodies of the king and his brood, but Hop-Frog will accomplish this himself, by making the king into a black, voiceless, powerless animal. Their positions as human and subhuman will be inverted: but it will not be because the king raised Hop-Frog up, making a man of him; it will be because Hop-Frog pushed the king down, making him into an animal.

The climax of this story makes plain what the other events have suggested: this is a story about the power of categories to shape identity. As Hop-Frog hoists the eight, chained orangutans up on a hook—creating a grotesque imitation of a chandelier—he says, "'Leave them to me!'... 'Leave them to me. I fancy I know them. If I can only get a good look at them, I can soon tell who they are" (906). At this moment, the people in the room are laughing, convinced that the masks are pretend; what they do not know is that Hop-Frog has covered up the humanity of these dangling figures. Holding down his

⁷⁷ This is not what an orangutan actually looks like. Orangutans are orange, typically. However, especially considering the grey hair discovered on Madame L'Espanaye's body in "Rue Morgue," it is likely that this is just a technical error and not a stylistic decision. However, if this was intentional, the choice to make the orangutans black is also racially charged.

"torch to examine the group of ourang-outangs," Hop-Frog screams, "I shall soon find out who they are!" (907). Hop-Frog stands physically above the eight writhing black bodies, wielding the threat of a flaming torch; his position is one of complete domination. Before he kills them, Hop-Frog says again: "Ah, ha! I begin to see who these people *are* now!" (905). With these last words, he murders them. The tar catches fire and, completely out of the reach of any of the people on the ground, the king and his councillors burn alive. Surveying the bodies, Hop-Frog condemns these charred beings, revealing their true nature. "I now see *distinctly*," says Hop-Frog, "what manner of people these maskers are. They are a great king and his seven privy-councillors—a king who does not scruple to strike a defenceless girl and his seven councillors who abet him in the outrage" (908). As the story ends, the narrator describes the corpses: "The eight corpses swung in their chains, a fetid, blackened, hideous, and indistinguishable mass" (908). Hop-Frog has stripped the beings of all identity, erasing their human status and denying them their human voices. Hop-Frog manipulates the categories structuring his society, enabling revenge and escape.

The ending of this story, much like the ending of "Tarr and Fether," is ambiguous. "It is supposed," says the narrator, "that, together, they effected their escape to their own country: for neither was seen again" (908). Hop-Frog and Trippetta leave the king's court as murderers and fugitives and are never seen again. Hop-Frog is able to seize power and enact his revenge, but at a great personal cost. Hop-Frog loses his humanity as he brutally murders eight people. In this bittersweet moment, Poe gives us a figure who used the categories that oppressed him to his advantage—but also shows us the cost of this type of exploitation.

This story does not problematize the concept of the human as the other tales do; instead, it shows the power of such concepts and how they can be used to marginalize and exploit beings. Hop-Frog decides to use the rigid categorical hierarchy present in this tale: god (the king) over the human (the councillors) over the subhuman (Hop-Frog) over the nonhuman (ape imagery). This hierarchy highlights the classifications that structure the world of the story and shows how those classifications dictate the rights to which beings were entitled. Only by making the king into an animal can the subhuman take his vengeance. At the end of this violent tale, Poe gives the subhuman both a voice and the power to subvert the powers that bind him.

Conclusion

Through brick and mortar and after brutal murder, Poe's animals speak to us. In each story, the animal figure's power derives from its posthuman hybridity. At each moment of categorical uncertainty, the animal figure challenges an ideology of power. These animals are able tell the stories of oppression and subjugation endured by black men, all women, the mentally ill, and the physically disabled in nineteenth-century America. In the four stories I analyze in this thesis, Poe writes animal characters that are at the heart of the tales: what would "The Black Cat" be without the cat?; "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" without the murderous orangutan?; "The System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether" and "Hop-Frog" without the apes, frogs, and chickens? These animals and animal images are central to each story, and yet these animals are a relatively unexplored area in the otherwise vast body of scholarship dedicated to Edgar Allan Poe. This project adds to existing scholarship by connecting the animals of individual stories under one theme. The posthuman categorical crisis answers the question scholars rarely address: what is the animal doing in these stories?

As we have seen in "The Black Cat" and "Rue Morgue," Poe's physical animals create ambiguity and confusion wherever they roam. These physical animals speak in voices that people describe as human—that on its own shakes the foundations of the pedestal on which we have placed the human. The dominant discourses of patriarchy and human reason falter when the animal voices are speaking. "Tarr and Fether" and "Hop-Frog" take this animal disruption one step further. The black cat and the murderous orangutan speak for the subhumans in their stories, but as the tales come to a close, the

woman is still dead and the orangutan-slave caged. The subhumans of "Tarr and Fether" and "Hop-Frog" do more than just speak; they manipulate the systems of categorization to take control of their human captors. Both use tar to transform men into animals and both are then able to control, cage, and even destroy doctors and kings. Animal imagery proves to be just as potent as the physical animals in the earlier stories, and these two stories show the dangerous powers of categorization.

By listening to these animals, we can see the problems and the power of the categorical systems we use to order our lives. Categories are necessary but they are also dangerous—a lesson that the subhumans of this thesis should teach us. Accepting the existing categories as they are allows us to ignore the unnamed wife and blame her abuse and murder on alcoholism; to disregard the cruel treatment of a dwarf because he is the king's fool; to see the dark figure of the orangutan as incidental to Dupin's virtuosic display of rational deduction; and to accept that the patients of the Maison de Santé are confined because they are mad. By challenging these categories, we can see that the wife's treatment is the result of a fundamentally unequal categorical system; we can recognize the documented historical tendency to animalize black Americans in order to rationalize slavery; we can understand how the exploitation of another being for "fun" is only possible because we have dehumanized the physically disabled; and we can see how the forced confinement of the mentally ill is an exercise in institutional power.

Categories are often subconscious and implicit social structures that we do not interrogate very often. We must confront the categorical assumptions that we make in our lives so that we may fully understand why we label beings the way we do and how this categorization affects them. Today, we are faced with an impossible paradox. In America,

the dog has ascended to the position of man's best friend. We share emotional connections with our domestic companions and we exercise an incredible amount of purchasing power to ensure these animals are comfortable. The animal is now a part of the family. In contrast, we consume the bodies of other animals in record numbers: in 2012, Americans consumed 52.2 billion pounds of meat (Larson). Using the framework proposed by this thesis, we see that this paradox is made possible by the categories we use to structure our worlds. The domestic animal is a family member and the animals we eat are food. These categories allow us to eat hot dogs and love our pet dogs at the same time. As a result, much like the animals in Poe's work, there are countless liminal animal figures emerging in contemporary literature that challenge these dominant categories.

In this thesis, we hear an abusive husband speak and we hear detective Dupin insist upon the superiority of human reason. In response, Poe gives us a wailing black cat and a shrieking orangutan. The white male narrators embody the existing categorical structures and the animals shake these categories to their foundations. Now, as then, when the human speaks, the animal responds. We just have to make sure we are listening.

⁷⁸ This amounts to 270.7 pounds per person. The United States is second only to Luxembourg in the average meat consumption per person (Larson). The United States meat consumption peaked in 2007 and has fallen slightly since then: "Higher prices combined with a weak economy have led people to put less meat in their grocery cart" (Larson).

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