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Feeling Animal: Pet-Making and Mastery in the *Slave's Friend*

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Abolitionist Sentiment and the Animal Metaphor

In 1835, the American Anti-Slavery Society planned a series of periodicals intended to extend the reach of the abolitionist message throughout the nation.[1] One of these was a juvenile reader, the *Slave's Friend,* which ran from 1836 to 1839. A single-signature, sixteen-page monthly, published by the New York Anti-Slavery Society, the *Slave's Friend* was edited by New York abolitionist Lewis Tappan and printed by R. G. Williams.[2] The editor placed great hopes in the power of children to create change. In one vignette, he describes this episode:

> A few months ago, two gentlemen were traveling in a stage coach. One was a slaveholder and the other an abolitionist. The abolitionist gave the slaveholder some anti-slavery pamphlets to read. One of them was a Slave's Friend. The slaveholder turned over the leaves, looked at the pictures, and read some of the stories. He then said, "Now I begin to fear. If you make children abolitionists slavery must come to an end."[3]

The editor goes on to declare that "slavery will come to an end if the children read, talk, and act about it," suggesting that children "may have some influence with your parents, and persons who are older than you." And in a list of "a few things that you can do," he admonishes children to "be very kind to colored people. Treat them as well as you do white people. Above all, pray for colored people, whether bond or free."[4] Kindness and prayers were intended to create a sense of sympathy for the slave in the middle-class child readers of the tract. The tract also included numerous representations of children with animals and allegorical vignettes featuring animals, which provided another model of kindness and the moral exercise of power for the periodical's child readers.

The ethical equation between slavery and animal cruelty was common in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century representations of slavery. Slaveholders

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deployed a dehumanizing metaphor in describing slaves as brutes, and under chattel slavery—which involves the outright ownership of slaves and their posterity and was historically often racially based—slaves were reduced to living property, in legal status little more than animals. As Markman Ellis describes it, "Slaves, like animals, were degraded to the status of things, considered as property, and as such, not human—or at least, not human in the same way as the master."[5] Later, as Stephen Michael Best points out, in response to abolitionist challenges, "Slavery's apologists narrowed their claims to property rights in slaves to a claim to their labor, and a right to labor for the most part warranted a further right to obedience."[6] This logic, according to Joanne Pope Melish, "alienated the enslaved from their humanness along with their freedom" because, as property, the enslaved "had value only in relation to ownership, use, and exchange by persons," and under the law the ontological status of the enslaved was defined as property, and a slave's existence had meaning only when owned, used, and exchanged.[7]

Animal imagery is ubiquitous in abolitionist writing, in general, but is particularly prevalent in texts marketed to children. Abolitionists, who drew a moral equivalency between the torture of animals and the abuse of slaves by their masters, also used animal metaphors in describing slaves. Slave children in particular were described using animal metaphors, and both domesticated pets and wild animals often appeared as allegorical figures in abolitionist literature, representing slaves and free blacks. These allegorical animals were deployed in an attempt to create sympathy for the enslaved, suggesting that the feelings produced by witnessing representations of animal suffering, and from observing animals' behavior toward humans, could stimulate sympathies that would lead to abolitionist sentiment. This practice exploited a continuum of anti-cruelty thought that, while creating sympathetic identification with both the suffering slave and the suffering animal, dehumanized slaves by placing them metaphorically in the same status as animals. Allegories of pet-making in abolitionist writing provided white children with a model for negotiating their relationship with free blacks and for asserting their class-entitled mastery in general.

Children were perceived both as particularly vulnerable to the depredations of slavery and as particularly effective advocates for its abolition. Concurrent with the trend of depicting children as victims of slavery, bourgeois white children from the 1830s forward were increasingly the desired audience for abolitionist writing. This targeting of children resulted from a dual valence in sentimental culture. On the one hand, abolitionist authors found writing for children to be a safer way to engage in public-sphere political discourse than other genres or media because the moral education of children fell within the bounds of the domestic sphere, and thus children's literature existed in an interstitial zone between the literary public sphere and the domestic. Secondly, as Deborah De Rosa has argued, children, and in particular boys, represented

a second wave assault on the institution of slavery, an interpretation which suggests that, should these authors fail to influence adults to effect political change, the rising generation of boys were the next best hope of reformers, abolitionists, and educationalists to see their vision enacted in the public sphere.[8] Abolitionist periodicals carried a heterogeneous blend of content, mixing proto-journalistic essays with polemical prose, along with a variety of poetry, including verse intended for children. Pamphlets and periodicals specifically for children also proliferated in the antebellum print marketplace.

More than 250,000 copies of the *Slave's Friend* were produced in the years of its run. The magazine was available by subscription and sold both singly and in bulk—one cent per issue, ten cents the dozen, eighty cents the hundred, and a thousand for $6.50. As with other tracts, readers were intended to pass them on or leave them in public places, and copies were also distributed free through the mails with the intent that some would find their way to children in the South. Christopher Geist points out that those periodicals shipped to the South were unlikely to reach readers since postmasters commonly rejected materials they deemed "incendiary"; one of the first shipments to reach South Carolina was seized and destroyed.[9]

Among recent engagments with the *Slave's Friend,* DeRosa connects the periodical to the foundation of juvenile anti-slavery societies, while Lesley Ginsberg relates figurations of girls with domestic animals in the *Slave's Friend* to discourses of citizenship in antebellum America.[10] Holly Keller acknowledges the influence that juvenile abolitionist literature, and the *Slave's Friend* in particular, had on Harriet Beecher Stowe in crafting her master work, noting that "in many ways [*Uncle Tom's Cabin*] was a summation of the methods and arguments developed in adult and juvenile antislavery texts before 1850."[11] Following Caroline Levander's assertion that "the child operates as a rich vehicle for constituting U.S. national identity through the idea of racial purity," in this essay I argue that representations of animals in the *Slave's Friend* participate in a metaphorical strategy which produced a problematic discourse of pet-making that protected the class status and racial identity of white children exposed to abolitionist writing. Before turning to the *Slave's Friend,* it is worth stepping back to examine the discourse of pet-making from which these metaphorical associations draw power and to look briefly at the discourse of animal cruelty that informs much abolitionist poetry for children.

The Making of Pets

In *Dominance and Affection,* an influential and controversial analysis of pet-making, philosopher Yi Fu Tuan argues that the affection that produces the pet-making impulse is based in a compulsion to dominate the creature that is the object of human affection. According to Tuan:

> affection is not the opposite of dominance; rather it is dominance's anodyne—it is dominance with a human face. Dominance may be cruel and exploitative, with no hint of affection in it. What it produces is the victim. On the other hand, dominance may be combined with affection, and what it produces is the pet.[12]

For Tuan, pet-making is an exercise in power which compels its object—whether animal or plant, slave or child—to conform to specific behavioral standards in order to receive affectionate attention and material support from its master. In Tuan's formulation, power operates to reduce animate creatures to the status of mechanical things. From the control of human labor by mechanical clocks to the regulation of animal behavior in the service of agriculture or blood sports, the natural is subsumed to the will of power elites who benefit from their dominance of both men and animals.

In the animaculture of nineteenth-century America, the making of pets involved the operation of a sentimental displacement of human affection away from human objects within the family and toward domesticated animals. According to Tuan, human affection became more difficult to articulate as "modern society . . . began to segment and isolate people into their private spheres."[13] Pets largely do not provide a service in the household but rather fulfill aesthetic and emotional needs for their masters. (The benefit to the pet is arguable.)[14] Cats and dogs that serve as mousers and ratters sometimes blur this distinction, but more often a household in which animals are kept for these purposes will also include house pets not used for labor. The services provided by mousers and ratters connect them in the minds of their nominal owners to the feral origin of their species, and the killing of vermin causes them to be perceived as unsanitary. They are excluded from the domestic sphere as "outside dogs" or "barn cats," though sporting dogs used for hunting can be exceptions to this rule.

Tuan likens the process of domestication to the arts of topiary or bonsai, in which plants are transformed through meticulous husbandry into unnatural shapes. The sentimental aestheticization of the pet has produced an array of morphological changes in the species to which humans have become most attached—from toy breeds of dogs, some of which are unable to give birth without caesarian section, to hairless cats and the endless varieties of goldfish, the operation of power has been inscribed onto the bodies of these animals. Generations of pet-loving critics, who also love the image of themselves as loving their pets, have reacted strongly to Tuan's formulation. Erica Fudge, who describes Tuan's thesis as "uncomfortable," declares that "pet ownership is premised on the notion that it is possible to extend one's capacity to love beyond the limits of species; that one can have a truly affectionate and meaningful relationship with a being that is not human."[15] Tuan allows for the role of love in the human-pet relationship but contends that love masks the violence inherent in the process of creating the "docile and friendly pet."[16]

There seems to be an almost instinctive rejection of Tuan's logic on the part of pet owners, though the vehemence of the rejection, and the forms it takes, seem to reinforce his point. Clare Palmer points out that "discomfort with the traditional word 'pet'" has resulted in the adoption of the term "companion animals" for pets and the use of "guardian" instead of "owner" in modern legal and social usage: "Animals are to be regarded as companions, not as beings to whom we condescend."[17] More radically, Donna Haraway has proposed a model for interaction with companion species (she is particularly concerned with dogs) based on what she describes as "significant otherness," in which she claims that the human-dog relationship is based on co-evolution and mutual agency.[18] In describing her relationship with her dog, Ms Cayenne Pepper, Haraway exults in the difference and transgression she perceives between companion species:

> We have had forbidden conversation; we have had oral intercourse; we are bound in telling story on story with nothing but the facts. We are training each other in acts of communication we barely understand. We are, constitutively, companion species. We make each other up, in the flesh. Significantly other to each other, in species difference, we signify in the flesh a nasty developmental infection called love. This love is a historical aberration and a naturalcultural legacy.[19]

But by devolving the relationship to love, an anthropomorphizing slip which seems quite deliberate, Haraway reinscribes the old pet-making paradigm. For, after all, what do we love when we say we love our pets? Certainly we have affection for the animal itself, but do we not also love the sensation of dominance, the feeling of power over another living being? I would contend, with Tuan, that these linguistic turns, however jubilant and sophisticated, are simply continued attempts to efface the psychic and physical violence that inhere in the pet-making process.

Following John Locke's admonition that caring for pets "taught diligence and good nature,"[20] pet keeping was thought, in the nineteenth century, to be beneficial to children, and it offered certain parallels with ideas of child development. In being made a pet, the indoor animal becomes what Lori Merish describes as the "bestial (domestic) Other" which, through its "sentimental erotic appeal—its 'cuteness'" inspires affectionate devotion and, through its vulnerability and its capacity for suffering, teaches the limits of domestic power.[21] Children learn to be kind by observing their companion animals' capacity for suffering and dependence. The editor of the *Slave's Friend* declared to his readers that "a good boy, who is kind even to a dog, will, when he becomes a man, be kind to every being," implying that the lessons derived from interacting with animals could then be transferred metaphorically to other Others—based on race or class—with whom the children might interact. According to

Jennifer Mason, "individuals' everyday encounters with nonhuman life could offer valuable moral lessons and cultivate the virtues—such as discipline and benevolence—valued by the middle class," and "companion animals—and especially the dog—exhibited the qualities parents wished to inculcate in their children."[22] However, as Sianne Ngai has argued, cuteness—with its implications of "smallness, compactness, simplicity and pliancy—call[s] forth specific affects: helplessness, pitifulness, and even despondency" and also inspires conflicting impulses of "ugly or aggressive feelings, as well as the expected tender or maternal ones."[23] The vulnerability to power implicit in the infantilized state of the pet invites by its very softness and malleability the improper exercise of power. Sentimental reformers, including but not limited to abolitionists, recognized this impulse, particularly in boys, and worked to educate against it.

Children and Their Animals

The presence of animals in writing for children and the use of animal allegories to represent a discourse of mastery and to describe appropriate behavior for children toward subordinates are as old as Æsop. As Seth Lerer describes, Roman children were given beast fables as allegories of mastery as part of their earliest initiation into literacy. Beast fables are arguably the oldest genre of literature for children, and children's literature continued to draw from this tradition well into the modern era and continues to do so today.[24] Throughout the eighteenth century, even as naturalists were providing increasingly scientific explanations of animal anatomy and behavior, animals retained their allegorical signification, and fables remained popular. The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries saw numerous editions of Æsop's fables printed in England and America, and the fables were "a staple of the Latin grammar school curriculum," both in Latin and in bilingual editions.[25] Beast fables were also taught to African American children. According to Jennifer Monaghan, Mrs. Ayres, an instructor at the Negro Charity School in Philadelphia in the 1760s, included Æsop's fables along with a speller and the New Testament on her curriculum.[26]

The boundary between humans and animals is central to the problem of the ethical treatment of animals. The biblical doctrine of dominion, defined in Genesis 1:26, has been argued by some to justify the exploitation of animals and the natural world in general.[27] For Descartes, the ability to reason and the capacity for speech are indicators that humans possess a soul, while animals are beast-machines, unfeeling automata.[28] Earlier, Montaigne had reasoned the opposite, declaring that animals indeed had souls and arguing for their care. As historian Linda Kalof describes it, Montaigne "not only considered animals no more 'brutish' than humans, but also as participants in cross-species communication and capable of acts of kindness and reciprocity." His view would

be overwhelmed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as the Cartesian model took hold and animals became objectified by the Enlightenment's new experimental science, which demanded vivisection of live animals, a practice justified by Cartesian ideas that animals did not feel pain.[29]

But not everyone accepted the idea that animals were without sensation, and violence perpetrated by children toward animals became a preoccupation of many reformers from the late seventeenth century on. In *Some Thoughts Concerning Education,* John Locke emphasized the importance of preventing children from tormenting animals: "For the custom of tormenting and killing of beasts will, by degrees, harden their minds even towards men."[30] Eighteenth-century reformers like Jeremy Bentham attempted to make moot the question of reason in relation to the ethics of animal cruelty: "The question is not, Can they reason? nor, Can they talk? but, Can they suffer? Why should the law refuse its protection to any sensitive being?"[31] Bentham included slaves in this equation, and abolitionists deployed this argument to sidestep racialist claims about the inhumanity of slaves in favor of an ethical position based on the ability of the slave to articulate suffering, creating an ethical continuum that included both animals and slaves. As historian Elizabeth Clark points out, "the story of the suffering slave" became a central trope of abolitionist literature and "in the 1830s began to play a crucial role in an unfolding language of individual rights."[32] Concern for animals was the norm in reformist works, but a type of paternalism marked much animal welfare discourse, enacting the ethical positions of Locke and Bentham but still bearing the marks of Cartesian hierarchies of being and the Biblical discourse of dominion. Though generally reinforcing a benevolent attitude toward animal nature, representations of children and animals together make it clear that this relationship is hierarchical; within this hierarchy, children fall somewhere between animals and adult humans. While simultaneously teaching both obedience to adults and dominance over animals, this liminal status also allows children themselves to be treated as pets.

If it seems startling that children should be regarded as pets, it is worth looking at the origins of the term and the way it has been applied to children historically to see how this notion has been naturalized. In *Why the Wild Things Are,* her analysis of animals in the lives of twenty-first-century children, Gail S. Melson declares, "The association of children and pets has strong historical and intellectual underpinnings," and she observes that, etymologically, "the term 'pet' itself first applied to the indulged, spoiled child," suggesting a relationship between the status of pets and the status of children in the household.[33] According to the *OED,* it was only in the sixteenth century that "pet" began to apply to favorite domesticated creatures and small farm animals. Indeed, it appears that small domestic animals' similarity to children in both status and affect prompted the shift in the word's association, and some of the citations provided by the *OED* demonstrate the persistence of this notion, like the example from John MacTaggart's 1824 *Scottish Gallovidian Encyclopedia:* "A *pet* is

always a dangerous creature; thus a child, *petted* by its parents, plays the devil some day in the world; a sheep *petted,* is apt to turn a *duncher.*"[34] Tuan argues that "the small child is a piece of wild nature that must be subdued and then played with—transformed into cute, cuddly, beings or miniature adults as the mother or the surrogate mother sees fit." For Tuan, pet-making is inherent in the process of parenting, for power over a child "is not quite perceived as power over another fully human individual. The child, in other words, is a pet and is properly treated as such."[35]

That the petted child could "play the devil" was a preoccupation in the world of conduct fiction, which made a particular obsession of the perceived caprice, cruelty, and violence of young boys. In the anonymous sketch "Cruelty to Animals; or The Boys and the Squirrel" from New Haven printer S. Babcock's 1841 collection *Instruction and Amusement for the Young,* a "beautiful little squirrel" is attacked by a group of boys, mutilated with a knife, and thrown to dogs, who dismember the smaller animal. "Perhaps there is no vice to which some boys are so much addicted, as cruelty to the brute creation; they seem to think that because animals can not speak, they can not feel pain," agonizes the narrator, who claims that, because of his "humane parents, I never shared in such cruel sports, [but] I could not avoid witnessing the cruelty of other boys."[36] The narrator attempts to create a sense of sentimental reciprocity with the tortured animal, invoking the trope of motherhood and abandoned children familiar from sentimental fiction and slave narratives to stir feeling in his readers, speculating that "perhaps it might have been a mother, and its little ones died of starvation."[37] Child readers are asked to consider the consequences of their actions in terms of the disruption to the animal family, a trope that echoes back and forth between conduct manuals for children and juvenile abolitionist literature.

The Young Emancipators

Targeted to children as young as two, the *Slave's Friend* contains many references to adults reading the tract to pre-literate children and to toddlers crying out "I *am* an abolitionist!"[38] in response to their parents' earnest inquiries. It also includes numerous graphic representations of violence against slaves along with iconic illustrations of the tools of slavery, including whips and restraints. One chilling image that recurs in the *Slave's Friend* is a Bowie knife engraved with the motto: "Death to Abolitionists."[39] Readers are cautioned that those knives are available in New York City, implying that their support for abolition put them in physical danger, even in the North. This tactic is designed to create a feeling of sentimental reciprocity between the white Northern child and the slave child by implying that slavery exposes both groups of children to bodily harm. But, curiously, the *Slave's Friend* rarely represents white and

black children interacting. In those rare instances in which these interactions are depicted, the white child is shown acting paternalistically toward the black child, as in Figure 1, in which a white girl, Charlotte, is shown teaching Peggy, a black girl, to read while a small dog looks on attentively. (The cross-hatching in the engraving of the dog indicates that it is lighter in color than the black child in the center of the tableau.) This tableau dramatizes the hierarchy of pets and children of different races. Peggy, the black child, is surrounded by the embracing arms of the white girl, who helps support the book with one hand and rests the other on Peggy's shoulder. Peggy's body is framed and contained by the dog, the book, and Charlotte's controlling embrace. The dog, in contrast, is unencumbered even by a collar. The dog's gaze is fixed upon the face of the black girl, as though monitoring her progress, mirroring Charlotte's gaze as she helps Peggy to read. Peggy is both literally and figuratively between the dog and the white child, physically restrained by their bodies and between them in status, not fully a pet, but not equal to Charlotte.

In lieu of representations of black and white children together, the *Slave's Friend* offers many examples of sympathetic reciprocity between white children and a variety of animals—from butterflies to puppies. I contend that animals

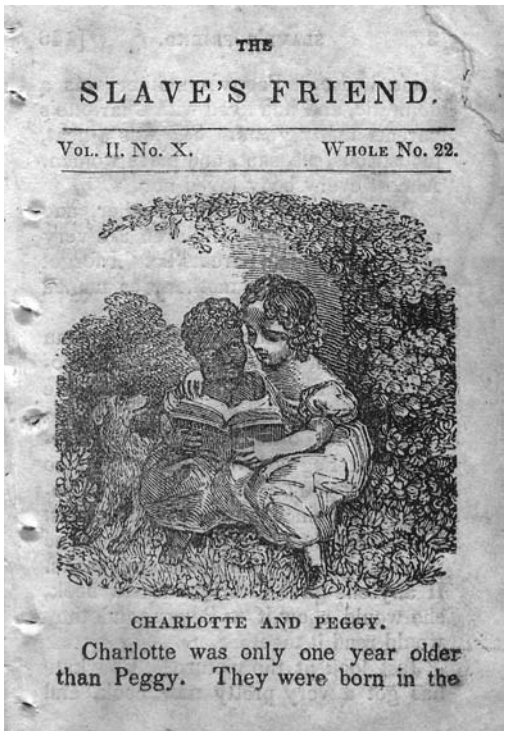
THE
SLAVE'S FRIEND.
VOL. II. No. X. WHOLE No. 22.
CHARLOTTE AND PEGGY.
Charlotte was only one year older than Peggy. They were born in the

FIGURE 1. *Slave's Friend* 2, no.10 (1837). Private Collection.

serve as proxies for freed slave children in the *Slave's Friend,* and white children's interactions with these animals, carried out under the loving, admonitory gazes of their like-minded parents, not only model behaviors based in the "law of human kindness," advocated by Catherine Beecher and other reformers, but also provide examples of benevolent mastery which the child readers of the *Slave's Friend* were intended to emulate in their interactions with animals and with free blacks (and, in particular, free black children).[40] Little girls appear in the pages of the *Slave's Friend* performing an idealized role in the liberation of non-working animals like butterflies or birds. Critical engagement with the pamphlet has tended to focus on the girl children, perhaps in part because these representations fit easily into a discourse of citizenship and emancipation that is the standard interpretation of abolitionist literature.[41] But, in keeping with the examples we have seen from conduct literature, little white boys are objects of particular scrutiny in the *Slave's Friend* and outnumber girls as the objects of address or as characters or speakers in the poetry at a ratio of nearly two to one. This compulsion to interpolate and discipline bourgeois white boys results at least in part from the residual influence of eighteenth-century conceptions of the caprice and violence of boyhood.

Abolitionist writing deploys the ambivalent dog as a frequent trope for an idealized interaction with freed slaves. For example, this little didactic rhyme from the *Slave's Friend* explicitly echoes the Lockean formulation of animal abuse:

> A boy who is cruel to a dumb animal will be so to another boy; and a cruel boy generally becomes a cruel man. While a good boy, who is kind even to a dog, will, when he becomes a man, be kind to every being.
>
> I'll never hurt a little dog,
> But stroke and pat his head;
> I like to see him wag his tail,
> I like to see him fed.
>
> Then I will never beat my dog,
> Nor will I give him pain;
> Poor fellow! I will give him food,
> And he'll love me again.[42]

While the introductory stanza implies the gender—male—of the speaker of the poem, the first person perspective of the poem compels the child reader to ventriloquize the speaker, performing the poem rather like a Sunday School recitation. The child reader is required to recite the pledge that opens the poem and, further, to imagine that he not only loves his dog but also may

have already injured his pet. For what is curious here is that the cruelty the boy speaker seems to be refuting seems already to have taken place—why else would there be the need for coerced forgiveness in the final line? It would appear that the boy, having erred by hurting his dog, now understands (perhaps from his reading in the *Slave's Friend*) how to properly exercise control over his pet without recourse to violence. But it is only through a system of rewards—food and physical affection—that the sentimental economy of reciprocation is maintained. Reading the poem allegorically, then, which the published context invites us to do, allows us to see that both animal cruelty and the abuse of slaves constitute a misuse of a master's power, which should be amended through demonstrations of affection. The goal is to raise children, and especially boys, who are "kind to every being," dogs and slaves alike.

Another dog poem from the *Slave's Friend* negotiates this relationship a little differently. Rather than affection and reward, the dog here seems naturally inclined to obedience and service:

> Behold the Dog! so good to guard
> His master's cottage, house or yard,—
> Dishonest men away to keep,
> And guard us safely when we sleep.
>
> For, if at midnight, still and dark,
> Strange steps he hears, with angry bark
> He bids his master wake and see,
> If thieves or honest folks they be.
> At home, abroad, obedient still,
> His only guide his master's will;
> Before his steps or by his side,
> He runs or walks, with joy and pride.
>
> He runs to fetch the stick or ball,
> Returns obedient to the call;
> Content and pleas'd, if he but gains
> A single pat for all his pains.[43]

The dog knows his place, voiceless and grateful, at his master's side. When danger threatens the household, he serves solely as the alarm and lacks the capacity to interpret the threat; that requires the master to "wake and see, / If thieves or honest folks they be." The "master's will" provides the dog's "only guide" for interpreting and interacting with influences from outside the household. The master provides guidance and a sort of condescending affection, offering "a single pat" as reward to the dog, who receives it "with joy and pride" and remains "content and pleas'd," despite "all his pains." Though

the child reader is interpolated with the apostrophic "Behold the Dog!" of the first line, in the final line of that verse, the first person plural "us" again allows the reader to identify with the voice of the speaker and, subsequently, with the master introduced in the second verse. The child is permitted to identify not with the obedient dog but with the paternalistic master, whose conduct provides a model of distant, benevolent power, exercised with restraint. Again, given the context of the poems, an allegorical reading in which the dog is the stand in for the slave—and in this case the freed slave—seems to be invited.

Representations of wild animals offer a different affective dynamic between humans and animals from those of domestic animals but one that manages agency on the part of the freed slave in a strikingly different way than the paternalistic pet making discourse of the dog poems. "The Hedgehog" by Mary Howitt first appeared in Lydia Maria Child's *National Anti-Slavery Standard* in May 1841.[44] Child prefaces the poem with a tidy encapsulation of the evangelical project of sentimentalism:

> Anything which excites the tenderness of the human heart, and directs it toward heartless customs and cruel prejudices is doing the work of a missionary in the world's redemption, though it be in the forms of a little child like poem. Who can estimate the blessed influence of Mary Howitt on future generations! The small seeds she plants with such living diligence, will grow into spreading trees and nations rest in their shade. Hear her pleas for the persecuted Hedge hog.[45]

Child's description of the poem as "child like" signals its audience—the children of readers of the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*—and provides a guidepost for identifying the genre of this particular lyric.

The hedgehog is not a native of North America, but it would have been recognizable to American readers from natural history compendia like Alexander Anderson's 1804 New York reprint of Thomas Bewick's *A General History of Quadrupeds* and from English sporting prints and paintings popular in the nineteenth century. This school of painting is exemplified by Scottish painter Edwin Landseer, known for his anthropomorphic portraits of dogs in "animated scenes of devotion and heroism."[46] Landseer's *Portrait of a Terrier* (1828), commissioned by Owen Williams, the dog's owner, is a bold, iconic image in which the startlingly white body of the terrier fills the center of the canvas, visually dominating the hedgehog, a tiny ball of dark quills cowering in a prickly clump, seemingly desperate to disappear under the nearby overhang of rock. The portrait was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1828 but did not otherwise circulate in the nineteenth century.[47] The animals' pose, though, is a stock hunting tableau, evidenced by an 1838 woodcut from *Parley's Magazine* illustrating the fable of "The Disobedient Hedgehog," which echoes the tableau

in the Landseer painting.[48] Hedgehogs also turn up in a surprising number of stories and articles in American periodicals, including natural history articles declaring the hedgehog to be a periapt against poisons, as well as fables and poems for children. Howitt's poem inverts the sentimental object of the Landseer painting, offering up the oppressed hedgehog rather than the valiant dog for our sympathy. (See Figure 2.)

The apostrophe in the first half of poem is directed not at the reader, but at the English Porcupine: "Thou art a creature meek and mild, / and would'st not harm a sleeping child." Even in these opening lines, there is something strange at work in the description of the hedgehog, which is a tiny creature and probably could'st not harm a sleeping child. The poem goes on to describe the hedgehog's "foes," "the urchin rabble" who pursue the creature with "terrier curs to hunt thee out." These lines vividly and deliberately recall the scenes so common in slave narratives of runaways being hunted by packs of dogs. (Later, Stowe's *Dred* would include a particularly gruesome scene of a slave

FIGURE 2. Edwin Landseer, *Portrait of a Terrier, The Property of Owen Williams, ESQ., MP* (*Jocko with a Hedgehog*), 1828. Oil on canvas. Milwaukee Art Museum, Gift of Erwin C. Uihlein. http://www.mam.org. Used with permission.

hunter bragging about the efficacy of his pack in such hunts.[49]) Again, an echo of the Lockean formula of childhood cruelty producing adult atrocity is no doubt present here, suggesting that the "urchin rabble" have the potential to commit greater evils as adults if they are allowed to persecute the hedgehog.

As the object of address shifts from the hedgehog to the reader, interpollated here through the first person plural point of view, this paternalism becomes clearer:

> How hard it must be to be kicked about
> If by a chance his prickly back peep out;
> To be all his days misunderstood,
> When he could not harm us if he would!

"When he *could* not harm us if he *would!*" This insistence on the harmlessness and lack of agency of the hedgehog makes reasonable sense if we are discussing a tiny echinoderm. But, by 1841, knowledge of the slave revolts in the South, most notably Nat Turner's rebellion of 1831, and of the bloody revolution in Haiti was universal and along with it the knowledge that sometimes slaves could harm "us" when and if they *would.* Depicting the slave—via the metaphor of the lowly hedgehog—as without agency in this context, while designed rhetorically and aesthetically to excite the tenderness of the heart of the sentimental reader, also walks a similar ethical tightrope to that of the dog poems. But while the dog poems suggest a means of peaceful coexistence that maintains the mastery of the white child, the hedgehog neither invites nor inspires the pet-making impulse:

> . . . all he needs
> Lies under the hedge, among the weeds.
>
> He robs not man of rest nor food
> And all that he asks is quietude;
> To be left by him as a worthless stone,
> Under the dry hedge bank alone!

Howitt's poem, with its insistence that the animal stand-in for the slave desires only to be left alone, may undo some of the paternalistic discourse of the dog poems, but, with its denial of agency on the part of the animal, and the declaration of the animal's worthlessness, it may align the poem more closely with the Colonization abolitionists who sought to return freed slaves en masse to Africa. The animal metaphor in Howitt's poem allows the ambivalence of the relationship between the white child reader and the imagined free slave to go unresolved through its insistence on the helplessness and isolation of the animal that stands in for the oppressed.

Educationalist Eliza Lee Follen's poem "The Slave Boy's Wish" (1845), which appeared in her collection *Hymns and Songs for Young People,* uses the animal metaphor in a strikingly different way, portraying a slave child imagining himself transformed into animals and natural things (a cloud, a brook, a deer) as a strategy of resistance to his servitude. Structurally, the poem follows conventions that would have been familiar to any nineteenth-century child reader, featuring first person point-of-view and hymnal meter (8–6–8), a mnemonic metric scheme that is naturally catchy and easily sung (and was a favorite of both William Blake and Emily Dickinson, as well as many writers of children's verse). The first person point-of-view is provocative, compelling, as it does, the white child reader to speak in the voice of the slave child.

Each of the imagined transmogrifications has agency: the bird sings and flies, the brook "runs so swift along," the "wild, wild deer" flies "swifter than an arrow . . . / Through the forest far away." It is easy to imagine a child reader being caught up in the imaginative embrace of the poem, which makes what follows all the more startling. The tone shifts abruptly in the last three verses when the speaker declares:

> I'd rather be a cunning fox,
> And hide me in a cave;
> I'd rather be a savage wolf,
> Than what I am—a slave.

The flat declarative line is leaden after the lighter, imaginative verse of the preceding stanzas. The boy goes on to declare all virtues null and void in the face of his enslavement and sees death as his only hope for emancipation and religious salvation: "My Heavenly Father, let me die, / For then I shall be free." This is potent rhetoric in a deceptively simple package that relies on what Marcus Wood describes as "the visionary qualities of the childish imagination" to create a sympathetic response in Follen's reader.[50] In "The Slave Boy's Wish," the animal metaphor is deployed to allow the slave access to agency—even to cunning and savagery—and acts as an antidote to the discourse of pet-making and denial of agency in the other poems. Child readers of Follen's poem are invited, through the first person narration, to directly identify with the slave child, at last fully realizing the equation of sentimental reciprocity.

In these images and poems, both pet-making and emancipation become lessons in the proper exercise of white power and class privilege. By training the child's responses to both domesticated and wild animals, these poems cast the abolitionist child in the paternalistic role of steward, both of their companion animals and of the free blacks for whom these creatures stand in. Both animal cruelty and the abuse of slaves become in this discourse more a problem of the misuse of power than of moral or ethical transgression. In the cultural program of sentimental reform, early reader periodicals like the *Slave's Friend*

presented a curriculum in which the child was trained to feel—and to act, modeling Stowe's classic formulation for the responsibilities of the sentimental activist. But the discourse of mastery and race and class privilege, which encouraged precisely the sort of paternalism that Stowe would be criticized for a generation later, was reinforced and naturalized along with children's emerging abolitionist sentiment.

NOTES

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[1] Christopher D. Geist, "The *Slave's Friend:* An Abolitionist Magazine for Children," *American Periodicals* 9 (1999): 27–35. The other publications were *Human Rights,* the *Anti-Slavery Record,* and the *Emancipator.*

[2] John R. Edson, "*Slave's Friend,*" *Children's Periodicals of the United States,* ed. R. Gordon Kelly (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1984): 408–11. Edson claims that the periodical "disappeared abruptly in 1838," but American Antiquarian Society holdings include, along with the first three volumes (1836–1838) bound together as annuals, two issues from 1839, volume 4, numbers 1 and 2. The Library Company of Philadelphia copy of Vol. 1 is likewise bound as a single volume, using a ribbon-embossed book cloth binding that was popular in the 1840s for editions of collected periodicals. See Andrea Krupp, "Bookcloth in England and America, 1823–50," *Papers of the Bibliographic Society of America,* 100, no. 1 (March 2006): 25–87, 39–40, 77.

[3] *Slave's Friend* 3, no. 2 (1838): 8.

[4] *Slave's Friend* 3, no. 2 (1838): 9.

[5] Markman Ellis, "Suffering Things: Lapdogs, Slaves, and Counter-Sensibility," in *The Secret Life of Things: Animals, Objects, and It-Narratives in Eighteenth Century England,* ed. Mark Blackwell (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2007), 92–116.

[6] Stephen Michael Best, *The Fugitive's Properties: Law and the Poetics of Possession* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 8. The earliest example of this late line of reasoning that Best provides is 1849.

[7] Joanne Pope Melish, *Disowning Slavery: Gradual Emancipation and "Race" in New England, 1780–1860* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 60.

[8] Deborah C. De Rosa, *Domestic Abolitionism and Children's Literature, 1830–1865* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), 6–9.

[9] Geist, "The 'Slave's Friend'," 27.

[10] See De Rosa's *Domestic Abolitionism,* and Lesley Ginsberg, "Of Babies, Beasts, and Bondage: Slavery and the Question of Citizenship in Antebellum American Children's Literature," in *The American Child: A Cultural Studies Reader,* ed. Caroline F. Levander and Carol J. Singley (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 85–105.

[11] Holly Keller, "Juvenile Antislavery Narrative and Notions of Childhood," *Children's Literature* 24 (1996): 86–100, 97.

[12] Yi-Fu Tuan, *Dominance and Affection: The Making of Pets* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 1–2.

[13] Tuan, *Dominance and Affection,* 112. "Animaculture" refers to the use which a culture makes of animals. The word is derived by Una Chaudhuri from "Donna Harraway's inspired term 'naturecultures,' itself derived on analogy with the ubiquitous 'technoculture'." Una Chaudhuri, "(De)Facing the Animals: Zooësis and Performance," *TDR: The Drama Review* 51, no. 1 (2007): 8–20, 10 n.5.

[14] Tuan, *Dominance and Affection,* 6. The ethics of pet-making remain a cornerstone debate in Animal Studies. Marjorie Speigel draws direct parallels between the ownership and use of animals and human slavery in *The Dreaded Comparison: Human and Animal Slavery* (New York: Mirror Books, 1996). See also Gary L. Francione, "Animals—Property or Persons?" 108–42; Richard A. Epstein, "Animals as Objects, or Subjects of Rights," 143–61; and David Favre, "A New Property Status for Animals: Equitable Self-Ownership," 234–50, all in *Animal Rights: Current Debates and New Directions,* ed. Cass R. Sunstein and Martha Nussbaum (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[15] Erica Fudge, *Pets* (Stocksfield, UK: Acumen Publishing, 2008), 111, 116.

[16] Tuan, *Dominance and Affection,* 108.

[17] Clare Palmer, "Killing Animals in Animal Shelters," The Animal Studies Group, *Killing Animals* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 170.

[18] Donna Haraway, *The Companion Species Manifesto* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2003), 2–3.

[19] Donna Haraway, *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 16.

[20] John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* and *Of the Conduct of the Understanding,* ed. Ruth W. Grant and Nathan Tarcov (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1996), 91.

[21] Lori Merish, *Sentimental Materialism: Gender, Commodity Culture, and Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 128–29.

[22] Jennifer Mason, *Civilized Creatures: Urban Animals, Sentimental Culture, and American Literature, 1850–1900* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 12, 19.

[23] Sianne Ngai, "The Cuteness of the Avant-Garde," *Critical Inquiry* 31, no. 4 (2005): 811–47. Ngai also notes both the feminine and American origins of "cute" in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (814).

[24] Seth Lerer, *Children's Literature: A Reader's History from Aesop to Harry Potter* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 30–36. On animals in contemporary children's literature, see Gail S. Melson, *Why the Wild Things Are: Animals in the Lives of Children* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001).

[25] Jennifer Monaghan, *Learning to Read and Write in Colonial America* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2005), 307.

[26] Monaghan, *Learning to Read and Write in Colonial America*, 259–60.

[27] Genesis 1:26 (KJV): "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth." For parallel translations see: Biblos.com <http://bible.cc/genesis/1–26.htm> Accessed May 8, 2012.

[28] Rene Descartes, *Discourse on Method* and *Meditations on the First Philosophy*, trans. John Veitch (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 2004). For a useful explication of Descartes' ideas on animals and their ethical implications, see Peter Harrison, "Descartes on Animals," *Philosophical Quarterly* 42, no. 167 (1992): 219–27.

[29] Linda Kalof, *Looking at Animals in Human History* (London: Reaktion Books, 2007), 95–99.

[30] Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, 90–91.

[31] Jeremy Bentham, *An Introduction to the Theory of Morals and Legislation* (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 2008), 284–85.

[32] Elizabeth B. Clark, "'The Sacred Rights of the Weak': Pain, Sympathy, and the Culture of Individual Rights in Antebellum America," *Journal of American History* 82, no. 2 (1995): 463–93.

[33] Melson, *Wild Things*, 35.

[34] A duncher is a goat prone to butting. The *OED* asserts an etymology deriving from Scottish Gaelic, *peata*, for a tame animal.

[35] Tuan, *Dominance and Affection*, 115.

[36] "Cruelty to Animals; or The Boys and the Squirrel," in *Instruction and Amusement for the Young* (New Haven, CT: S. Babcock, 1841), 21–22.

[37] "Cruelty to Animals; or The Boys and the Squirrel," 22.

[38] Children are Abolitionists," *Slave's Friend* 3, no. 4 (1838): 12.

[39] *Slave's Friend* 3, no. 2 (1838): 1.

[40] Katherine C. Grier, *Pets in America: A History* (New York: Harcourt, 2006), 174.

[41] See Ginsberg, "Of Babies Beasts and Bondage," 89.

[42] *Slave's Friend* 3, no. 5 (1838): 10–11.

[43] *Slave's Friend* 3, no. 9 (1838): 13–14.

[44] Howitt was an English poet and editor, from 1847–1851, of *Howitt's Journal of Literature and Popular Progress*. See Florence S. Boos, "The 'Homely Muse' in Her Diurnal Setting: The Periodical Poems of 'Marie,' Janet Hamilton, and Fanny Forrester," *Victorian Poetry* 39, no. 2, (2001): 255–85 n.6.

[45] Marcus Wood, ed., *The Poetry of Slavery: An Anglo-American Anthology, 1764–1865* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 472.

[46] Franz Schulze, *Building a Masterpiece* (Milwaukee: Milwaukee Art Museum, 2003), 82.

[47] James Dafforne, *Pictures by Sir Edwin Landseer, RA* (London: Virtue and Co., 1873). Internet Archive, via Cornell University Library <http://www.archive.org/stream/cu31924032188538/cu31924032188538_djvu.txt> Accessed July 15, 2010. A review of the painting in *The Athenæum* declared that it was "capitally executed. The animal is, every inch of him, alive." See "Fine Arts," *Athenæum Literary and Critical Journal* 31 (1828): 491.

[48] The Disobedient Hedgehog," *Parley's Magazine* 6 (1838): 49.

[49] Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Dred; or a Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp* (New York: Penguin Books, 1999).

[50] Wood, *Poetry of Slavery*, 523.