On September 2, 1865, the *Christian Recorder* reprinted a story by the white minister John Todd, in which a young dog learns to trust a benevolent and knowing “master” despite initial suspicions of cruelty. In this context of the African Methodist Episcopal Church’s weekly publication, the story’s initial framing of a cruel master makes one expect an antislavery message. Todd’s “master” is aligned not with racial oppression, however, but with a benevolent God to whom Christians have a duty of obedience. Despite this Christian message, a story about obedience to one’s master seems an odd choice for publication in this venue. It leaves one wondering how we might evaluate a story that analogizes a dog’s trust in and obedience to his master as a model presented to African American children.

More broadly, the *Christian Recorder*’s inclusion of this story invites us to interrogate writing by white authors in light of the publication’s reframing for an African American child audience. As Eric Gardner argues elsewhere in this volume, we must consider “what happened and what was intended when African American editors chose a specific ‘white’ text for African American (child) readers.” Because, as Gardner notes, most *Christian Recorder* subscribers were African Americans and most lived in homes with children, stories like Todd’s present questions specific to the study of African American child readers as an audience intended by the periodical’s editors. Would these children be more likely to read themes of enslavement and racial oppression into terms like *master*? Ought we to read racial themes more carefully when African American audiences are present? Should such texts be reconsidered in terms of their relation to the African American–authored texts accompanying them in the *Christian Recorder*’s pages? The reprinting of white-authored texts in the Child’s Cabinet and The Family sections of the *Christian Recorder* also poses problems of genre. As Jacqueline Rose has indicated, children’s...
literature’s “impossibility,” unlike other identity-based literatures, lies in its definition by its audience rather than its authors. Might we therefore consider any texts presented to African American children as falling within the category “African American children’s literature”? If so, what does this category mean if it can refer to texts not written by (or expressly for) African American people?

Taking a liberal approach to these questions, I stipulate that the placement and framing of such stories in an African American literary context such as the Christian Recorder suggest that they ought to be considered among “African American children’s literature” insomuch as they were read by or to African American children. This is not, by any means, to diminish the importance of texts for children authored by early African American writers, such as Susan Paul or Amelia E. Johnson. It is, however, to argue that we must also consider African American children among the readership for white-authored children’s literature, and to read these stories in light of their relevance to African American literary contexts. The reprinting of stories by white children’s authors in the Christian Recorder presents an apt opportunity to do so.

This chapter calls us to seriously consider African American child readers of stories republished in the Christian Recorder’s children’s sections. Discerning how African American children may have understood these stories necessitates reading them in conversation with the larger context of African American literature in addition to within their original contexts of literature framed for (assumedly white) children. It also necessitates acknowledging the racialized content of such stories as perceptible, even for a child audience. African American child readers become more visible when these stories are read keeping in mind the overlap of—rather than the distinction between—literature for children and literature for African Americans.

Here, I consider African American child readers by reading the various and sometimes contradictory ways in which dogs and cats appeared in the 1865 Christian Recorder and related texts, and the particular implications of these pet stories for African American children. It is unsurprising to find stories about family pets in the children’s sections of the Christian Recorder, because pets figure in other children’s periodicals, such as Robert Merry’s Museum, Parley’s Magazine, St. Nicholas’ Illustrated Magazine, and Our Young Folks. Educational stories about pet keeping were common by mid-century. As Katherine Grier has noted, “[B]y the 1860s, a good bit of this literature was directed to children, reflecting the assumption that all children kept, or should keep, pets.” In publications primarily circulated to a white middle-class audience, pet keeping thereby became one marker of white middle-class domesticity.

However, pets must also be considered beyond their relations to white middle-class domesticity. Although pets were associated with instructing children in racially and class-coded values of kindness and care for others, in practice, pets were not
respected only for white people or for the elite. Children's relationships to pets were complicated by the various social hierarchies in which children and animals figured. Nineteenth-century relationships to pets were constructed not only through human-animal power relations but also through humans' relative positions of social and political power. I begin the work Gardner deems necessary to recognize black children as intended and real readers by acknowledging these texts' racial content. Additionally, I provide literary readings that center African American child readers by refusing to assume racist readings that many literary critics have taken as readily accepted or absorbed by white children. Dogs and cats have racial significance in stories reprinted in the Christian Recorder, and that racial content is relevant to their framing for African American child readers, whose editors likely saw their potential for nonracist readings rather than the racist readings more often associated with white child readers. The significance of race for animal stories plays out in several simultaneously operating and potentially competing roles for animals in the children's sections of the 1865 Christian Recorder, each of which works against potentially degrading associations with animals in pseudoscientific hierarchies of race and species. Animals function, first, as familiar beings in their capacity as pets, thereby incorporating family pets into African American models of domesticity; second, as racialized subjects themselves, thereby evoking comparisons of domesticated animals' position with that of oppressed African American people; and, third, as violent adversaries in moments where dogs are engaged in what Sara E. Johnson has termed “canine warfare” or in competition for an assumedly limited national sympathy.

We also need to read the Christian Recorder's stories in view of how pets appear within the overlapping contexts of other contemporaneous texts associated with both African American adults and white children. By reading white-authored children's literature in the Christian Recorder, we see how these stories illustrate not just human-animal relations but explicitly racialized human-animal relations. Moreover, their comparisons and points of identification between animal characters and readers are not necessarily oppressive but become useful tools for illustrating racial oppression for African American children.

African American Children and Animal Stories

Originally published in the Philadelphia-based Sunday School Times in March 1865 and reprinted in the Christian Recorder that September, Todd's “Ponto and Flirt” tells the story of two dogs. The old dog, Ponto, “seemed to live in the past” but is content with his life. The younger Flirt is not so content and explains to Ponto, “I'm tired of my master.—You have always said he was one of the kindest of masters. But I know better.” Flirt has discovered his master filing the teeth of “old Cub, the brown horse,” in a very painful scene. “If that ain't cruelty, I would like to
know what is! I am going to run away! The man will be sawing my teeth next! Who knows?"¹⁰

Ponto then shows Flirt “Cub . . . eating hay as he never ate before” and explains that, by filing Cub’s teeth, his master has relieved him of a painful ailment, the correction of which now allows him to eat properly: “So, you young dog, see that it was not cruelty, but kindness in our master to file old Cub’s teeth.” Hearing Ponto’s explanation, Flirt exclaims, “Oh, I see it, I see it all. What a fool I was! I will never doubt my master again!” The story’s final paragraph tells its reader, “O child! you will often meet things in Divine Providence that seems strange to you, and which looks as if God was not wise or good. But when those things come to be explained hereafter, we shall see that in every thing God is wise, and good, and merciful. We cannot always understand what he does, but ‘just and true are all his ways.’ Remember Flirt when you are tempted to doubt his wisdom or his goodness!”¹¹

In the postemancipation moment of this story’s reprinting, this “master” rhetoric seems ill suited for an African American audience. The analogy in which an African American child might identify with an obedient dog leaves antiracist readers uneasy. “Ponto and Flirt” might therefore seem more appropriately placed in contexts for predominantly white child audiences, where it was more arguably divorced from allusions to enslavement.¹² The popularity of Todd’s religious writings for children no doubt influenced the republication of several of his stories in the *Christian Recorder*. In 1865, Todd was pastor of the First Congregational Church in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, and was known for his writings in religious and moral education. Nevertheless, this story leaves one wondering whether Todd ever considered its implications for an audience of African American children. Although Todd may not have intended or predicted that “Ponto and Flirt” would be read by African Americans, this was not the first of his stories to be presented to black children. Todd’s 1834 *Lectures to Children*, in addition to being continually reprinted in English, translated into several languages, and printed with raised letters for blind readers, was “used as a schoolbook by the liberated slaves at Sierra Leone.”¹³ Perhaps this fact influenced *Christian Recorder* editor Elisha Weaver to include several stories by Todd alongside the newspaper’s other offerings.¹⁴

Addressed to both an actual and a figurative “child,” the story ends in a last paragraph that addresses not only children but “children of God” in this Christian context. If “Ponto and Flirt” risks a potentially racist comparison between African American people and animals, it also resembles common critiques of racial oppression. Implicit in the story’s religious message is the relegation of this relationship of subordination and stewardship to God alone. Juxtaposed with the *Christian Recorder*’s conversations about emancipation, the story might be read as opposing the subjection of enslaved people to slaveholding “masters.” Even in this reading, however, the subtext of slavery emerges. This antislavery reading makes sense in a
context in which similar messages frequently circulated and were therefore expected. Pet stories reprinted in the Christian Recorder exist in what Jean Marie Lutes calls “dynamic print environments in which multiple texts self-consciously respond to each other.” In this environment, Flirt’s master resonates hierarchies of both species (in the context of other pet stories) and race (in the context of antislavery and “uplift” writing). Although human animalization often signifies racism, by reading this story’s animalizations as applying to all people, a potentially racist reading is avoided and the Christian Recorder’s reprinting of “Ponto and Flirt” makes sense.

Refusing to read a racist message does not, however, mean refusing to read racial themes. As Robin Bernstein has argued, children’s supposed innocence about race and racism not only is false but also constructs the figure of the child as white. African American children, as people likely to directly experience racism, could not afford to be racially “innocent.” These children were not divorced from conversations of race and racism—particularly when such topics were intertwined with both notions of social identity and culture, and questions of legal standing and personal safety. In the mid-nineteenth century, even free and economically secure African American children’s safety depended upon understanding racism to some degree, be it in relation to (former) slaveholders in Kentucky or segregated streetcars in Pennsylvania.

Lesley Ginsberg argues, convincingly, that children’s literature about animals (including Stowe’s stories in Our Young Folks, some of which I will discuss here) ought to be read with recognition of their racialized content, via nineteenth-century connections between race and species. Although Ginsberg reads this literature in its larger cultural context, she still assumes the predominantly white readership of their original publication, on which her argument of these stories’ apparent racism is based, reading “a regressive fantasy of social and racial harmony through a sentimentalized version of slavery.” Attending to these stories’ implications for African American child readers, my readings work against necessarily racist readings. It is reasonable to assume that some African American children would have registered the themes of race and racism in this literature, or that their parents would have explained these to them. Such themes, though noticeable in texts by popular white authors, were even more prevalent among African American authors. Assumptions about what readerships might be more open to themes of race and racism have influenced how writers discuss African American children’s literature, even when no overt discussion of race is present, as with Amelia E. Johnson’s Clarence and Corinne. We can assume that the editors of the Christian Recorder would have regarded these themes not only as recognizable but also as somehow beneficial, rather than oppressive, to the paper’s child readers.

If African American child readers were not meant to read a racist message in Todd’s story, the larger context of the Christian Recorder is evidence for such a reading. The Christian Recorder’s “dynamic” environment included stories about
household pets alongside content on religion, abolitionism, and racial uplift. Considering these stories within this larger context is important for understanding how African American child readers encountered them.

Children and African Americans have historically read texts not specifically intended for them. African American children’s reading practices would undoubtedly have followed similar patterns. The *Christian Recorder*’s children’s sections may have been read aloud by adults or older children, and they may have been read by young readers independently. Appearing in the last half of the paper, *The Family and Child’s Cabinet* are not entirely separate from but are positioned in conversation with the paper’s other content. In 1865, for example, we find children’s literature amid national news stories; advertisements; poetry; the serialization of Julia C. Collins’s novel *The Curse of Caste*; and reflections on the recent assassination of President Lincoln.

The children’s and family sections contained stories, poems, and texts dedicated to moral instruction. Many texts in these sections were unattributed, but some bylines indicate white authors, such as the abolitionist Reverend Todd, Gail Hamilton, and the internationally famous Harriet Beecher Stowe. Many nineteenth-century American periodicals engaged in what Meredith McGill has dubbed a “culture of reprinting,” and Daniel Hack has examined the practices and significance of African American recirculation and citation of Anglo-American and English literature. In this vein, some pieces in the *Christian Recorder* were reprinted from periodicals that have been overwhelmingly associated with a white middle-class child audience, such as *Our Young Folks*.

The racial baggage that animals carried in nineteenth-century discourses of slavery and racism is significant for African American child readers. These stories’ reprinting demands that we ask how readers of the *Christian Recorder* may have understood their racialized animals. Therefore, these animal stories must be read with attention to their racialized content, while their inclusion in this larger African American context suggests readings that are not simply racist. Next, I will discuss the convergence of stories about pets and stories about race and the relevance of this convergence for African American child readers.

**Conflations of Race and Species and Animal Racialization**

Whereas “Ponto and Flirt” compares humans and animals, many children’s stories reflected popular practices and values of pet keeping by inviting children to identify with human narrators. Following the common appearance of pets in children’s literature, stories in the *Christian Recorder*, such as Gail Hamilton’s “Transactions” (published in the August 26, 1865, issue), often present dogs and cats as familiar companions to child characters. The *Christian Recorder*’s pet stories collectively
reveal a complicated relationship between African American people and pets, calling readers to identify with pet-keeping protagonists while also revealing the similar oppressions of African American people and animals. This juxtaposition does not simply equate black people with domesticated animals, as in racist propaganda of the period, but reveals a parallel common to antislavery literature, showing how people and animals might be similarly treated by oppressors. In an era of African American literature’s attention to racial uplift, acknowledging this facet of racism would have provided important instruction for African American children, whose relationship to pets was a racialized one. The dog and cat stories in the Christian Recorder elucidate similarities of white writing about race and species, preparing readers for experiences of racism that overlapped with the treatment of animals despite humans’ position of relative power over animals.

One example of such writing about race and species was a series of pet-themed stories by Harriet Beecher Stowe, originally appearing in the Boston-based children’s periodical Our Young Folks between March and July 1865. Selections from this series were reprinted in the Christian Recorder’s Child’s Cabinet section on June 17, July 1, and August 5 that year. Stowe’s “Our Dogs” stories recount a family’s acquisition of various pets and their subsequent deaths or departures, told from the point of view of the family’s children. I will briefly discuss the first story in Stowe’s series, originally published in Our Young Folks in March 1865 (though not known to have been reprinted in the Christian Recorder), in order to show how Stowe’s racialized language became perceptible to at least one reader in that original context, suggesting how racial connotations in later installments would have been available to readers of the Christian Recorder.

This initial story opens with the narrator’s reminiscence of a beloved pet: “Carlo was a great, tawny-yellow mastiff, as big as a calf, with great, clear, honest eyes, and stiff, wiry hair . . . He loved one and all; but he declared himself as more than all the slave and property of our little Prince Charley” (178). Stowe presents Carlo’s supposed resignation to be the “slave and property” of a white middle-class child as an acceptable enslavement, in part because it signifies as figurative—a chosen declaration of loyalty rather than a forced condition of servitude. Unlike the account of human slavery for which Stowe is best known, this story is not a sentimental account of oppression but a familiar tale of domestic life with animals—one with which her young readers might easily identify.

This story rings even more familiar because of this dog’s name, Carlo. Also the name of St. John Rivers’s dog in Charlotte Brontë’s 1847 novel, Jane Eyre (which was extremely popular in the United States), Carlo became a popular dog name through the mid- to late nineteenth century. Emily Dickinson reportedly named her dog Carlo after the novel, and one needs only to glance through an array of dog stories from this period to find Carlo appearing at least as frequently as other names commonly associated with dogs, such as Fido. There is a particular irony
in this appellation in Stowe's story: “Carlo” means “free man.” The name's common use for dogs seems therefore to imply a compliment meant to elevate many a canine companion to a particular status of respect. But in light of Stowe's characterization of the slavelike fidelity of her Carlo, the appellation is ironic.

In October 1865, *Our Young Folks* published what Ginsberg has called a recasting of Stowe's story, Louise Chollet's “Dog Carlos.” Chollet's story exposes similarities between how animals and enslaved people appeared in children's literature by exchanging Stowe's dog Carlo for Carlos, an enslaved African American boy. Chollet writes, “Dog Carlos was not a Newfoundland, a mastiff, a terrier, or a dog of any of the breeds with which you are used to romp. He had a smooth, yellow skin, large, soft eyes, could fetch and carry, and understand all that was said to him.” Stowe's story, though evoking the figure of the slave, is not explicitly about race. But Chollet's shows how Stowe's language was recognizably racialized, revealing that her own “Dog Carlos” “was in fact a very lively mulatto lad, who, happening to have been born in South Carolina, had been given when only six years of age by Mr. Seabrook to his son Harry, as his dog; that is the name by which such little slaves are called.” The trick of Chollet's story illustrates what is troubling about Stowe's. When we read that the boy Carlos “was a fine and valuable animal,” the elision of humanity in the production of chattel is apparent. The resemblance between Stowe's dog and Chollet's enslaved child conflates categories of race and species, a conflation that cannot escape the underpinning degradation of nineteenth-century racism.

The doubling of Carlo and Carlos also brings to mind, for readers of nineteenth-century African American literature, another doubling of child and dog: Frado and Fido in Harriet Wilson's narrative *Our Nig*. The story of Frado and Fido gives some insight into reading dogs in the larger contexts of African American and children's literature. Wilson's relation between pet and person serves as a reminder of the similar positions of African American children and dogs in a society that devalued both and whose laws sufficiently protected neither. Moreover, the affinities between Frado and Fido exist in lieu of other beneficial human relationships. Although most child readers of the *Christian Recorder* were relatively privileged, the ease of Chollet's shift from Carlo to Carlos and the stakes of racialized animalization raised by Wilson's Frado-Fido pairing remind readers that dogs and African American children were similarly framed in at least some nineteenth-century literatures, in both potentially racist and antiracist comparisons.

As Ginsberg argues, Chollet effectively “amplifies the latent allegories of race relations in Stowe's piece.” Chollet's “amplified” racial reading gives us one alternative to readings of these stories that would ignore themes of race and racism. The fact that Chollet could write a story about an enslaved boy that reads initially as though it were about a dog hints at both the overlapping languages of race and species categorizations and the troubling associations between enslaved people and
domesticated pets, which Ginsberg shows existed more widely in antebellum children’s literature such as *The Slave’s Friend*. As Ginsberg argues, the racial connections between these stories were available to nineteenth-century readers. Although Chollet’s story is not known to have been among those reprinted in the *Christian Recorder*, it makes sense that the kind of racial reading Chollet models would have been possible for African American child readers of similar stories in Stowe’s series.

Stowe’s “Our Dogs” installments that are known to have been reprinted in the *Christian Recorder* contained racialized language similar to that of early installments. In part, these played on racialized and nationalized descriptions of dog breeds. As Chollet explains that Carlos is not of “the breeds with which you are used to romp,” she signifies both that Carlos is not one of the familiar kinds of dog that her readers might be expecting in this story and that he does not belong to a race of people with whom most white northern children were used to associating. The overlapping meanings of *race* and *breed* signify here; types of dogs were also deemed “races” in nineteenth-century discourse. Similarly, the word *breed* was used to denote racial categories, often with derogatory connotations, as in the term *half-breed*. Stowe reveals the overlap of *breed* and *race* in her description of Carlo as “having all the good points of his race” (179). The interchangeability of these terms is one reason for Chollet’s revisionary play on Stowe’s dog works: the shared language of breed and race makes it difficult to tell these kinds of descriptions apart. This difficulty also shapes later stories in Stowe’s series.

The *Christian Recorder*’s June 17 “Our Dogs” introduces Florence, one of “a very nice breed of King Charles Spaniels, which are called Demidoffs” (96). The narrator’s family has acquired Florence while vacationing in Italy, and has named her accordingly. Although Florence is a dog, she is described in human terms, characterized as “a perfect little Italian,” in descriptions that both exoticize and racialize her. Popular abolitionist writers such as William Wells Brown, Lydia Maria Child, and Stowe herself sometimes described mixed-race characters as looking “Spanish” or “Italian,” allowing these European nationalities to stand in for non-Anglo gradations of amalgamated almost-whiteness. Florence’s breed works both to frame national affiliations and to shape understandings of her assumed temperament. This use of breed also echoes racialized descriptions in abolitionist sentimental novels.

As Stowe recounts Florence’s beauty and temperament, the dog resembles popular depictions of mixed-race women, who appeared frequently in antebellum abolitionist literature—most prominently in Eliza Harris, from Stowe’s popular *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852), read by adults and children alike. Just as Stowe anthropomorphizes Florence, she also racializes her. Florence has “soft, beseeching eyes” and “glossy, wavy hair.” Stowe describes her as “sensitive, intelligent, nervous, passionate, and constant in her attachments, but with a hundred little whims and fancies that required petting and tending hourly,” descriptions that also match
normative gender roles for “a perfect little fine lady” (96). Florence's racialization is clearly gendered.

Like enslaved people, Florence passes from owner to owner. Recounting her final keeper, Stowe tells us that “[t]he family physician . . . fell violently in love with her, and by dint of caring for her in certain little ailments, awakened such a sentiment in return, that at last she was given to him” (96). Florence's precarious health is reminiscent of beautiful “tragic mulatta” figures who suffer in similar sentimental fashion in popular texts like Child's “The Quadroons,” Brown's Clotel, and—in the Christian Recorder's pages during 1865—Collins’s The Curse of Caste. Despite the benefits Florence enjoys, her human companions are called her “mistresses”—a designation that, like the word master in “Ponto and Flirt,” held connotations of enslavement and domestic service, two positions in which many African American children were bound. Florence's adherence to her mistresses' wishes differentiates her as an unfree being in a relation of assumed stewardship. Florence is expected to obey, for her own good. Reading these descriptions, one can easily forget that Florence is a dog. Moreover, given Florence's similarities to enslaved characters, even young readers might imagine the dog as not only humanized but as racially embodied.

More explicit slippages between race and species appear when Florence, in her old age, becomes sickly and is given a water cure, which involves wrapping her in wet blankets. We read, “She looked out of her wrappings, patient and pitiful, like a very small old African female, in a very serious state of mind” (381). The transformation of the dog into an old African woman animates comparisons like Chollet's doubling of Carlo and Carlos. This slippage between race and species raises an important question for readers of the Christian Recorder: (How) did its readers perceive these racialized dogs as somehow “like” black people? I now turn elsewhere in Stowe's stories, where racial references not only compare African American people to racialized pets but also invite readers to identify with animals in positions of oppression. The Christian Recorder's African American child readers may have read these further similarities between the treatment of dogs and African American people as decrying racism as well as animal cruelty.

“No Rights That Any Body Is Bound to Respect”:
Dogs and Cats as Oppressed Others

Although breed classifies Stowe's dogs, her representative animal characters are also individualized. Stowe's “Dogs and Cats” was reprinted in the Christian Recorder on August 5, 1865. A coda to the “Our Dogs” series, this piece reprised ideas illustrated in previous installments, particularly animal individuality. Stowe writes, “Every animal has his own character, as marked and distinct as a human being” (124). This would become a familiar lesson in animal welfare, but this argument
about individuality within a species also maps easily onto antiracist discourse. However, Stowe’s argument about individuality quickly turns to the shared characteristics of breeds. Stowe does not use the word *breed* here but refers alternately to a “race,” “tribe,” or “species” of dog as having “a strongly marked [shared] character” (124). Although Stowe describes animals as individuals, she also presents them both as representative of their respective “races or large divisions” and as having the potential to transcend common characteristics (124).

Notwithstanding general characteristics of the “race,” individuality is most emphatic in Stowe’s description of mixed-breed dogs: “All dogs which do not belong to some of the great varieties, on the one side of their parentage or the other, are classed together as curs, and very much undervalued and decried; and yet among these mongrel curs we have seen individuals quite as sagacious, intelligent, and affectionate as the best blood-dogs” (124). This description parallels that of virtuous, intelligent, and sensitive mixed-race characters in Collins’s *The Curse of Caste*, published in these same issues of the *Christian Recorder*. Collins’s protagonist, Claire, displays better moral character and musical abilities than her white relative Isabelle.39 The *Christian Recorder*’s readers would therefore have seen both “mongrel curs” and mixed-race people represented positively, with potential to be just as good as or better than their “pure-blooded” counterparts.

Stowe similarly argues that cats are better understood as individuals than through generalizations. “Dogs and Cats” describes Juno, “the most beautiful and best trained cat I ever knew,” who was “carefully trained by such a [wise] mistress, [and] was a standing example of the virtue which may be formed in a cat by careful education” (124). It is difficult not to read the rhetoric of racial uplift into this description of Juno’s education. This discussion maps easily onto the *Christian Recorder*’s content on African American social uplift. The paper promoted educational, social, and political advancement not only for mixed-race or middle-class African American people but for all members of the African American community. In the July 29 issue, for example, a brief address describes “the capacity of the colored race for every kind of intellectual culture.”40 An essay by Olivia Ross appearing in the August 26 issue notes the importance of education following emancipation: “Let us educate ourselves and children, and show to the world that we are the personification of noblemen.”41 Stories for children and pieces directly relating to children’s education, such as “What Young People Should Know” (appearing on the same page as “Dogs and Cats”) and Harriet Frances’s “Our Visit from Aunt Cassy” (appearing in The Family section on August 12), promote children’s self-sufficiency with the ultimate goal of their being helpful to others.42

In these texts, not only knowledge but also virtue results from education. Juno’s virtues—good manners and a genuine love for her mistress—are a product of careful training. The idea that “[c]ats are often said to have no heart,—to be attached
to places, but incapable of warm personal affection” rings familiar for readers of abolitionist writing that refuted similar proslavery arguments dismissing African American affective ties with family members and other loved ones (124). Ross’s essay quotes William Cowper’s poem “The Negro’s Complaint,” conveying the sentiment that “Skins may differ, but affection / Dwells in white and black the same.” Refuting a similar argument about cats’ apparent lack of care for humans, Stowe presents Juno’s love and fidelity to her “wise” mistress in defiance of stereotypes in order “to refute this slander on her race” (124). However (as with Stowe’s Uncle Tom), this is accomplished only through poor Juno’s martyrdom. Her previous owner’s having moved away, leaving her in the care of another woman, Juno “died for love of her mistress, as truly as any lover in an old ballad” (124).

The moral of “Dogs and Cats” is one of animal welfare, directing children to be kind to pets and to care for them properly. Just as the history of enslavement has long been regarded as a hindrance to African American uplift, Stowe emphasizes a past history of oppression in her argument that human mistreatment and failure to provide animals with proper training are the real causes of pets’ misconduct, rather than any inherent faults. Even more interestingly, she describes cats’ failure to gain respect by citing the common understanding of a cat as “a miserable, half-starved beast, never fed, and always hunted and beaten, and with no rights that any body is bound to respect” (124). It is virtually impossible to ignore a racialized reading here, as this last clause bears a striking resemblance to Chief Justice Roger Taney’s notorious decision in the 1857 Dred Scott v. Sanford Supreme Court case. Taney denied the possibility of African American citizenship, because he believed that the founding fathers held black people to be “so far inferior that they had no rights which the white man was bound to respect.” Animal-welfare writers used the language of abolitionism in arguments against animal abuse—often while problematically ignoring postemancipation racial oppression. However, such sentiments were less likely to elide racial oppression for African American children who read this story in the context of the Christian Recorder’s other antiracist literature.

Stowe’s beloved dogs appear within a human-dominated hierarchy that resembles contemporary racial hierarchies. Florence’s relegation to a status beneath her human companions is most evident in an account of a train ride in which dogs are restricted to the “dog-car.” Florence’s keepers, unwilling to relinquish her to that space, take her with them in the human car, hiding her in a basket among their other parcels. Florence’s distressed sounds are audible and recognizable, however, and they are detected. Fortunately, a “gentlemanly” railway director chooses to ignore this transgression and leaves the children and Florence undisturbed for the duration of their trip. For readers of the Christian Recorder, this account may well have brought to mind the segregated trains and streetcars offered as a notorious
example of American racism in the North. Segregation was legal in Philadelphia, where the *Christian Recorder* was published, and child travelers would not have been exempted from such experiences of racism.

A scene in Frank Webb’s novel *The Garies and Their Friends* (1857) illustrates young Charlie Ellis who, while traveling with his white benefactress, Mrs. Bird, is threatened with ejection from the “white car” of the train. In this scene, Mrs. Bird makes a common comparison between the treatment of African American people and animals. Upon moving herself and Charlie to the segregated car, she declares, “I would not force a dog to ride in such a filthy place.” Whereas Stowe’s story about Florence shows both children and dog evading an inconvenient—and perhaps even unfair—rule, the allusion to segregated trains in this context reminds one that children were not exempted from legally enforced racist exclusion or even threats of racialized violence. Florence’s potential segregation alludes to a common northern form of racial injustice and common comparisons between the treatment of dogs and that of African American people. African American children in Philadelphia would have been aware of streetcar segregation. The issue of public segregation also appeared regularly in the 1865 *Christian Recorder.* Regular readers likely recognized similarities between this local issue and Stowe’s episode.

One final example demonstrates more dangerous stakes of human-animal relations as racialized relationships. Threats of violence to African American people evoke different associations with dogs than the pet stories discussed so far. In the *Christian Recorder,* dogs are presented not only as pets and companions but also as threatening perpetrators of racialized violence. This very different human-animal relationship is commonly described in abolitionist accounts of dogs used to hunt self-emancipated people, and is therefore unsurprising to find in the *Christian Recorder.*

A brief article in the September 16, 1865, issue is titled “A Man Given as Food to the Dogs.” The article describes two slaveholders who “tied a black man on a saw-log, and, when so rendered defenceless, set their blood-hounds upon him. These ferocious animals, whose cruelty agrees so well with the planters, chewed him up. The victim was then turned loose, more dead than alive. He crawled to some recess, where he must have died of exposure and suffering, as he has not been heard of since.” The *Christian Recorder*’s children’s dog stories are located within an even more complex set of relations between race and species when juxtaposed with this story, which may also have been read by children. The portrayal of dogs as potential threats works against stories like those by Todd and Stowe, which invited African American child readers to identify with both pets and pet keepers. The contradictions inherent in these different human-animal relationships illustrate the complex position of African American children, who themselves might occupy any or all of these relations to animals.
Each of these human-animal relationships works against racist associations of African American people with animals and uses pets as figures for explaining not racial difference but racist oppression. Further, these readings of pet stories position animal welfare as potentially aligned with antiracist causes, rather than placing animals and oppressed people in competition for supposedly limited national sympathies. The *Christian Recorder*’s reprintings and recontextualizations demonstrate the imperative for children's-literature scholars to think beyond the standardization of white child readers, which often prioritizes racist readings of associations between animals and nonwhite people, and to consider what readings emerge when African American child readers are foregrounded. As I’ve shown through the *Christian Recorder*’s reprinting of Todd’s and Stowe's stories, recontextualizing animal stories for an African American child audience requires that we attend to their potential for instruction in resistance to racism rather than its reinforcement. Further attention to African American readers and contexts for children’s literature will, no doubt, produce more examples and even richer readings.

**Notes**

1. Following the Civil War, the *Christian Recorder* continued to publish literature depicting enslavement, including Julia C. Collins’s novel *The Curse of Caste; or, The Slave Bride* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), the serial publication of which began in 1865 before the war’s end; and responses to late-century plantation nostalgia such as Frances Harper's *Minnie's Sacrifice* (Boston: Beacon, 1994).

2. Despite the *Christian Recorder*’s sections explicitly directed to child readers, few scholars have discussed the publication’s impact on children, and most do so only with regard to the educational endeavors of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Because of these past omissions, Gardner’s study in this volume is particularly necessary.

3. I repeat the term *master* with some hesitation throughout this chapter. I use this term in the spirit of attending to the original (problematic) language of this text, even though I do not wish to reinforce this language of domination.

4. Chanta M. Haywood explains the changing titles of this first section, which was called Our Children and Child’s Portion at different moments throughout the *Christian Recorder*’s publication. Chanta M. Haywood, “Constructing Childhood: The *Christian Recorder* and Literature for Black Children, 1854–1865,” *African American Review* 36, no. 3 (Autumn 2002): 419.


8. Even enslaved people were known to have kept pets, as Grier observes in records of dogs kept by enslaved people at Mount Vernon (*Pets in America*, 34–35). Harriet Wilson’s *Our Nig*; or, *Sketches from the Life of a Free Black* (New York: Penguin, 2005) depicts a nonelite, free African American child’s relationship with her dog.


11. Ibid.

12. The story was also republished in the *General Baptist Magazine* in 1865 and in John Todd’s collection *Nuts for Boys to Crack* (New York: American Tract Society, 1866).

13. This is mentioned in the preface to later editions, including John Todd, *Lectures to Children* (London: Knight & Son, 1860). See also the posthumously published autobiography compiled and edited by Todd’s son, John E. Todd, *John Todd: The Story of His Life Told Mainly by Himself* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1876), 461.

14. “Ponto and Flirt” was printed in the column preceding the Child’s Cabinet, titled *The Family*, containing various texts such as essays on child rearing, housekeeping, marriage, and education, and sometimes short stories like this one, which suggests an intended audience that might include both children and parents. See Gardner in this volume on the apparent slippage between the *Christian Recorder*’s children’s and family sections.


19. Barbara Hochman makes this point regarding black child readers of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (also addressing the most prominent derogatory representation of an African American child in the nineteenth century, Topsy). Barbara Hochman, “*Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and the Reading Revolution: Race, Literacy, Childhood, and Fiction, 1851–1911” (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2011), especially chap. 7.
20. Gardner’s essay in this volume acknowledges the probable overlap of child and adult reading in the Christian Recorder’s various sections.

21. Gail Hamilton was the pen name of Mary Abigail Dodge, known for her writing on women’s rights.


24. It seems that the entire six-part series was not reprinted in the Christian Recorder. It is possible that other installments appeared in the March 11 and/or May 13, 1865, issues, which have not been recovered (and in which unrecovered chapters of Collins’s The Curse of Caste would have also appeared), as subsequent installments are reprinted in the same month as their original publication in Our Young Folks. Alternatively, Weaver may have included only part of the series for reasons of space, or because he believed Stowe’s recognizable name ensured that even an incomplete series would be read.

25. Uses of the name Carlo for dogs date even earlier than Brontë’s novel and can be found in early nineteenth-century British books such as The Caravan (1806) and The Life of the Famous Dog Carlo (1809). For more on Dickinson’s dog, see Colleen Glenney Boggs, “Emily Dickinson’s Animal Pedagogies,” PMLA 124, no. 2 (March 2009): 533–41.


28. Ibid.

29. Ibid.

30. Overlapping readerships of Stowe’s and Chollet’s stories and Wilson’s narrative are unknown. I mean to regard Our Nig as literature read by some white northern children, as
Eric Gardner has shown, and also to regard Wilson's child subject not only as a literary representation but also as an autobiographical remembrance of childhood, as P. Gabriel Foreman has indicated. See Eric Gardner, “‘This Attempt of Their Sister’: Harriet Wilson’s *Our Nig* from Printer to Readers,” *New England Quarterly* 66, no. 2 (June 1993): 226–46; and P. Gabrielle Foreman, introduction to Wilson, *Our Nig*.


32. Ginsberg, “‘I Am Your Slave for Love,’” 105.

33. Ibid.

34. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, *breed* was used historically to refer to “[r]ace, lineage, stock, family; strain; a line of descendants from a particular parentage, and distinguished by particular hereditary qualities” in nonhuman animals and humans. References to “breeds” of humans appeared as early as the late sixteenth century. See Ali Rattansi, *Racism: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 23.

35. This is the first installment of Stowe’s series in an extant issue of the *Christian Recorder*. The opening, “After Giglio deserted us . . . ,” indicates the continuation of a story begun elsewhere (96). The first three installments in *Our Young Folks* include discussions of breeds and dogs that would be of particular interest in an African American context if any of these appeared in the now-missing issues of the *Christian Recorder*.

36. One also wonders how African American children read Stowe’s depiction of Europe, which likely held connotations of class and leisure. For readers familiar with writing by self-emancipated people traveling there, including Frederick Douglass, William Wells Brown, Harriet Jacobs, and Ellen and William Craft, Europe may have signified the safety of nonslaveholding countries or a greater degree of racial equality.


45. Anna Sewell’s 1877 novel, *Black Beauty*, was named “the ‘Uncle Tom’s Cabin’ of the horse” in some U.S. editions. See, for example, Sewell, *Black Beauty: His Grooms and Companions; The “Uncle Tom’s Cabin” of the Horse* (Boston: American Humane Education Society, 1890).

47. See, for example, “Colored Passengers in Street Cars” (March 24, 1865), “Another Passenger Car Difficulty” (July 7, 1865), and “Shameful” (September 23, 1865).
