8. David Kurnick, *Empty Houses: Theatrical Failure and the Novel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 3.
9. Rachel Ablow, *Victorian Pain* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 3.
10. Alicia Christoff, "Alone with *Tess*," *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction* 48, no. 1 (2015): 18–44, 25.
11. Brilmyer, "Plasticity," 71.
12. Rochelle Rives, *Modernist Impersonalities: Affect, Authority, and the Subject* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 8, 14.
13. Omri Moses, *Out of Character: Modernism, Vitalism, Psychic Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014), 6, 9.
14. Kristy Martin, *Modernism and the Rhythms of Sympathy: Vernon Lee, Virginia Woolf, D.H. Lawrence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 7, 10.
15. This upshot has generally been indirect, though some critics, e.g., Ablow and Rives, consider liberalism and humanism explicitly.
16. For other accounts of the spatiality of depth hermeneutics, in response to recent critical dismissals of it, see Deanna Kreisel, "The Madwoman on the Third Story: Jane Eyre in Space," *PMLA* 131, no. 1 (2016): 101–15, and Zachary Samalin, "Plumbing the Depths, Scouring the Surface: Henry Mayhew's Scavenger Hermeneutics," *New Literary History* 48, no. 2 (2017): 387–410.
17. Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1981), 62.

Child

MARAH GUBAR

"ONE must have a heart of stone," Oscar Wilde allegedly quipped, "to read the death of Little Nell without laughing." It's odd that so many of us know this *bon mot*, since it comes to us not from Wilde himself, but from a second-hand recollection of a conversation with him reported thirty years after he died.[1] Perhaps we've embraced this epigram not just because it's funny, but also because we like to think of Wilde as a witty iconoclast who anticipates our own skepticism about

how the Victorians doubled down on an idealized vision of childhood innocence inherited from the Romantics.

Yet Wilde was not alone in turning a jaundiced eye on his culture's habit of conceiving of children as the epitome of goodness and attractiveness. Even at the very beginning of Victoria's reign, a motley crew of comic writers, artists, and dramatists had already begun producing hilarious send-ups of popular artworks that sacralized and often eroticized children. Studying these forgotten parodies can help us to expand our archive of cultural artifacts that perpetuated the phenomenon Victorian commentators dubbed "babyolatry," "child-worship," and "the cult of the child."[2] It can also assist us in figuring out which of our critical hunches about this cult hold water.

Consider, for example, humorist Thomas Hood's "A Parental Ode to My Son, Aged Three Years and Five Months" (1836).[3] Hood's title invites us to smirk at fond parents and poets who presume that the public cares to know the precise age of child subjects such as Hartley Coleridge, the "faery voyager" who floats through William Wordsworth's "To H. C., Six Years Old" (1807) as well as Coleridge Senior's "Frost at Midnight" (1798).[4] Whereas his predecessors sing the praises of blissful babes who embody peace and joy and evoke a similar serenity in others, Hood's efforts to apostrophize his son in such terms are repeatedly interrupted and undermined by the child's own actions:

> Thou happy, happy elf!
> (But stop,—first let me kiss away that tear)—
> Thou tiny image of myself!
> (My love, he's poking peas into his ear!)
> Thou merry, laughing sprite!
> With spirits feather-light,
> Untouch'd by sorrow, and unsoil'd by sin—
> (Good heav'ns! the child is swallowing a pin!)[5]

This "Ode" parodies the archaic language Wordsworth and company use, as well as the solipsism whereby they reify the child as a symbol of their past selves or present status as advocates of nature, imagination, and sensibility in an increasingly industrialized society. The latter tendency manifests itself strongly in "Frost at Midnight," in which the quiescent baby is such an absent presence that the father-narrator describes himself as enjoying "that solitude, which suits / Abstruser musings" over the course of a remarkably "calm" and "silent" night.[6]

Hood, by contrast, reminds us that writing about and taking care of children are often antithetical activities. *His* father-narrator's efforts to glorify a depersonalized "cherub" keep getting derailed by the necessity of comforting, cleaning, and corralling little John, who snuffles, pukes, grabs a knife off the family table, and so on.[7] Moreover, "A Parental Ode" first appeared alongside Hood's hilarious "Serenade," which anticipates the recent bestseller *Go the Fuck to Sleep* (2011) by rhyming the soothing refrain "Lullaby, oh, lullaby" with desperate lines like "The brat will never shut an eye," "Mary, you must come and try!" and "Two such nights, and I shall die!"[8] Confirming Judith Plotz's point that Romantic poets who celebrate the Child of Nature "practice a kind of forcible repatriation . . . that wrests children away from the female sphere" of home and family,[9] Hood goes the other way in these "Domestic Poems" by highlighting how motherly labor behind the scenes enables the productivity of male artists.[10] After the newly mobile John invades his father's territory—"Thou idol of thy parents—(Drat the boy! / There goes my ink!)"—the frazzled father-narrator of Hood's "Ode" concludes he "cannot write" unless his cherished wife Jane whisks the troublesome tot upstairs.[11]

Digging up forgotten parodies of child-centered art can sometimes help scholars to resolve critical debates about the cult of the child. Recall, for example, the recent kerfuffle in *Victorian Studies* over John Everett Millais's *Cherry Ripe*, which was painted in 1879 and reproduced by the London newspaper the *Graphic* as part of their 1880 Christmas Annual. After Laurel Bradley attributed the popularity of this image of a pretty little girl to its evocation of "timeless purity," Pamela Tamarkin Reis objected that Bradley's account ignores the "pronounced pedophilic appeal" of this picture, whereupon Robert M. Polhemus accused Reis of engaging in a form of presentism that "ascribe[s] to others what she sees herself."[12]

Yet Reis's position gains credence when we discover how a contemporary cartoonist made fun of *Cherry Ripe*. On January 8, 1881, the jokers at *Punch* presented the public with "a Graphic Companion Picture to Mr. Millais' charming *Cherry Ripe*": *Cherry Un-Ripe*, which went unsigned when it first appeared, but was later attributed to one Mr. T. G. Stowers (see fig. 1).

Title, caption, and image work together here to subvert the coy eroticism of the source text. Victorian porn described men who were sexually interested in children as having a taste for "unripe fruit."[13] So the descriptor "graphic" in the caption might have been functioning as a

CHERRY UN-RIPE.

SUGGESTION BY A YOUNG ARTIST (AT HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS) FOR A GRAPHIC COMPANION PICTURE TO MR. MILLAIS' CHARMING "*CHERRY RIPE.*"

Figure 1. "Cherry Un-Ripe," *Punch* (January 8, 1881), 9. Unsigned, but later attributed to Mr. T. G. Stowers when reprinted in *An Evening with "Punch," Being a Selection, from the "First Fifty Years of 'Punch'"* (London: Bradbury, Agnew & Co, 1900), 125. Reproduced with permission of Punch Ltd., www.punch.co.uk.

triple pun that alludes to the periodical in which *Cherry Ripe* appeared, the adjective meaning "drawn with a pencil or pen," and the one that indicates explicit or unexpurgated content. If so, then title and caption together lay bare the pedophilic subtext of Millais's print, as does the cartoonist's decision to alter the very aspects of Millais's image that Reis flags as problematic. *Cherry Un-Ripe* transforms a little girl who is easy on the

eyes into one who is about to lose her lunch: the come-hither gaze of Millais's little charmer has been replaced by a grimace of gastric distress, even as the dark gloves that originally drew our attention to her crotch now clutch her stomach.

Like Hood, Stowers reminds us that children have minds (and desires) of their own. Whereas Millais likens his little girl to fruit—she's a sweet, tempting morsel offered up for adult consumption—Stowers has his little girl consume the fruit. The fact that the cherries make her ill implies that being erotically objectified by adults like Millais is not conducive to the health and happiness of children. But young people, the cartoon's caption hints, need not passively accept such treatment. Instead, like the schoolchild whom the caption credits for drafting *Cherry Un-Ripe* during his Christmas break, they can pick up a pen and represent themselves in order to counter romanticized adult depictions of children.

Was Stowers really underage? Probably not.[14] But one thing's for sure: the Victorians were not as green as they were cabbage-looking. Scholars tend to underestimate how much pushback there was against the middle-class ideology of childhood innocence during the nineteenth century because we generally pay more attention to canonical novels and poetry than to comic verse, cartoons, puppet shows, pantomimes, and other art aimed at mass, mixed-age audiences. We can wise up by close-reading more silly stuff.

Notes

1. Ada Leverson, *Letters to the Sphinx from Oscar Wilde with Reminiscences of the Author* (London: Duckworth, 1930), 42.
2. Quoted in Marah Gubar, *Artful Dodgers: Reconceiving the Golden Age of Children's Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 10.
3. "A Parental Ode" first appeared in Thomas Hood's *The Comic Annual* (London: A. H. Baily and Co., 1837), 159–62. Though dated 1837, this volume actually came out in either November or December 1836 so that people could buy it before Christmas.
4. William Wordsworth, "To H. C., Six Years Old," in *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth: Poems Written in Youth; Poems Referring to the Period of Childhood*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), 247, line 5.
5. Hood, "Parental Ode," lines 1–8.

6. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Frost at Midnight," in *Fears in solitude, written in 1798, during the alarm of an invasion. To which are added, France, an ode; and Frost at midnight* (London: J. Johnson, 1798), 19–23, lines 5–6, 8, 10. I relied on the facsimile of this volume available on Gale's *Eighteenth Century Collections Online* database.
7. Hood, "Parental Ode," line 19.
8. Adam Mansbach and Ricardo Cortés, *Go the Fuck to Sleep* (New York: Akashic Books, 2011); Thomas Hood, "A Serenade," in Hood, *Comic Annual*, 162–64, lines 1, 4, 16, 26.
9. Judith Plotz, *Romanticism and the Vocation of Childhood* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), xvi.
10. Hood, *Comic Annual*, 153.
11. Hood, "Parental Ode," lines 17–18, 57.
12. Laurel Bradley, "From Eden to Empire: John Everett Millais's *Cherry Ripe*," *Victorian Studies* 34, no. 2 (1991): 179–203, 192; Pamela Tamarkin Reis, "Victorian Centerfold: Another Look at Millais's *Cherry Ripe*," *Victorian Studies* 35, no. 2 (1992): 201–05, 201; Robert M. Polhemus, "John Millais's Children: Faith, Erotics, and the Woodman's Daughter," *Victorian Studies* 37, no. 3 (1994): 433–50, 444.
13. Quoted in Ronald Pearsall, *The Worm in the Bud: The World of Victorian Sexuality* (Stroud: Sutton, 2003), 316.
14. T. G. Stowers was most likely Thomas Gordon Stowers (1854–1938), a London-born painter and illustrator who exhibited work at the Royal Academy and the Royal Society of British Artists during the 1880s and early 90s. If he created *Cherry Un-Ripe*, then he did it in his late 20s.

Many thanks to Anna Redcay (who helped me to find *Cherry Un-Ripe*), Mark Szarko (who helped me to figure out who drew it), and Michèle Mendelssohn (who helped me to source the epigram about Little Nell).

Circulation

TANYA AGATHOCLEOUS AND JASON R. RUDY

THIS was supposed to be an entry on the "Global" but there was too much to say—which both begs the question of the usefulness of the