



Playing with Parody in Three Picture Book Favorites

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Parody is a topsy-turvy rule breaker. In the children's picture book world, Margaret Wise Brown's (1947) *Goodnight Moon*, Maurice Sendak's (1963) *Where the Wild Things Are*, and Shel Silverstein's (1964) *The Giving Tree* have long been revered for their psychological impact on young readers and their revolutionary influence on the field of children's literature itself. All three, for example, are included in a recent Top 100 Picture Books Poll (Bird, 2012) and in some canons of twentieth century children's picture books. However, their elevated position as picture book icons and their cultural commentary have been questioned by three recently published parodies: Ann Droyd's (2011) *Goodnight iPad: A Parody for the Next Generation*, Maurice Sendak's (2009) *Where the Mild Things Are* (2009), and Shriell Travesty's (2010) *The Taking Tree: A Selfish Parody*.

While these parodies humorously lampoon the original picture books' texts, illustrations, layout designs, and even the writers' names and biographies, they also cleverly satirize various aspects of current American culture. By recalling features in the narrative or illustrations of the original picture books, readers can critically compare and assess the playful deflation and comic humor in the words and pictures of the three parodies. To enable fuller participation in this game of parody, classroom teachers can assist their students to develop skill in recognizing a text's ludic intent when they discern and interpret the various literary elements that writers of parody employ. Understanding what to notice and how a

narrative is configured to convey a particular tone or effect are important critical literacy skills that young readers can learn with the support of their teachers. In addition, students who are critically aware of the contexts of both the original picture books and the new versions can be helped to appreciate and profit from the ironic twists and imbedded cultural satire in the parodies themselves.

The Playful Nature of Parody

Older elementary and middle school children may be familiar with parody from reading such postmodern works as Jon Scieszka and Lane Smith's (1992) *The Stinky Cheese Man and Other Stupid Tales*, Lauren Child's (2003) *Who's Afraid of the Big, Bad Book*, or David Wiesner's (2001) *The Three Pigs*. Much recent literary criticism has recognized parody as one of the many self-referencing elements of postmodernism, which plays with literary and cultural codes and conventions in both verbal and visual texts to undermine expectations and to focus on the "the fictional nature of fiction" (Pantaleo, 2009, p. 45). Pantaleo points out that, along with multiple viewpoints, indeterminacy, breaking of genre boundaries, and the abandonment of linear chronology, many contemporary authors and illustrators employ parody to highlight the constructed nature of their postmodern works. Readers, who may have been accustomed to losing themselves relatively passively in a storybook world, are now forced by the parody to critically examine a book's multiple purposes and the sometimes unsettling effects that are woven

throughout the narrative or are evident in the visual elements. While Rosenblatt (1938) recognized the responsive role of readers as they transact any text, Goldstone (2001) noted that “a greater power [is] given to the reader/viewer encouraging cocreation with the author or artist” (p. 363) with postmodern texts. Parody not only engages readers’ previous exposure to a text through intertextuality, it also asks readers to critically evaluate the crafted new version and their own reactions. In the process, consideration of both the old favorite and the parody can give new insights and freshness to the aesthetic reading experience by presenting fiction as a playful “game” (Pantaleo, 2009, p. 59).

The playful purpose of parody has been recognized by Abrams (1999), who situated this mode under the larger genre of burlesque. Burlesque uses imitation of the tone or style of a serious literary work of poetry or prose or its subject matter, but then it sets up a disparity that is ridiculously incongruous. According to Abrams, although burlesque may be written for “sheer fun” (p. 26), it more often is a form of satire that deflates the original in some way. Lukens (2007) also acknowledged that as parody revisits the familiar, it “gives fresh pleasure by duplicating form that contrasts to new and humorous meaning” (p. 219).

Ridicule, however, is not always the intent of parody, as Hutcheon (1985) noted in her book *A Theory of Parody*. Defining parody as a basic “form of imitation,” (p. 6), Hutcheon recognized that parody’s ironic inversion is “not always at the expense of the parodied text” (p. 6). She carefully separated parody from satire, seeing parody’s “target” text as always “being another work of art or, more generally, another form of coded discourse” (p. 16). Hutcheon contended that satire is “both moral and social in its focus and ameliorative in intention” (p. 16), so that social customs or cultural practices to be remedied are scrutinized.

While the three recent picture revisions parody the favorites as literary forms, the larger genre distinctions and thematic concerns are the subjects of the new books’ satire. For example, Brown’s enumeration of simple objects in a young child’s room in *Goodnight Moon* is parodied in *Goodnight iPad*, but modern society’s enchantment with technology and its deleterious effects on individuals and family life

are satirized.

Because parodic writers and illustrators create texts and images that are intertextual in nature, the readers’ interpretation and understanding of a particular work is dependent on their own familiarity or knowledge of the original (Pantaleo, 2009). Some people may question whether parody and satire are appropriate literary devices in books for elementary-aged children, whose reading exposure and life experiences may be limited. However, as McGillis (1996) noted, parodies actually show respect for young people and give them a sense of empowerment by confronting them with questions of change, meaning, and significance. Readers must consider how a parody differs from the parodied text, as well as how “the present cultural moment differs from the

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previous cultural moment” (p. 124). Since readers must be actively alert to both the literary texts and to their own responses in reading parody, McGillis concluded that, in reading parodies of familiar books, “children receive one of their first lessons in literary criticism and critical detachment” (p. 124), even as they are intrigued by parody’s playfulness.

Revisiting three picture book favorites to consider the encoding strategies employed by their writers and illustrators and analyzing their parodies can spotlight accepted literary or cultural ideologies that may need new examination. In addition, while many illustrative and narrative reversals of the classics are apparent and intentional, the overall effect of the parodies may actually affirm some of the messages of the parodied texts. That these picture books by Margaret Brown, Maurice Sendak, and Shel Silverstein were also considered innovative for their times is important to remember. They were created as reactions to previous forms of books for children or to society’s understanding of the nature of children themselves.

Quiet and Peace Become Modern Cacophony

Goodnight Moon, written by Margaret Wise Brown (1947) and illustrated by Clement Hurd,

is often cited (and marketed) as an excellent early childhood text for reading aloud because of the book's themes of security and closeness and because its reading and rereading often become a family bedtime ritual similar to the experience of the book's young speaker. The read aloud itself forms an intimate, relational bond that is tied to children's later emotional well-being, so essential in preparing them for friendships with other children and for giving them the confidence to explore and learn from the world. Brown's target audience for her books was the very young, and Marcus (1992) opined, "no author before or since has managed so well to shape books that complete what Margaret herself once called the 'natural impulse to amuse and to delight and comfort' small children" (p. 2).

In *Goodnight Moon*, a tribute to the end of day, Brown replicates a small child's good night ritual. The book's first words enumerate everyday items in "the great green room" (n.p.), generating emotional security from their companionable presence and comfort from their rhymes: a telephone, a red balloon, kittens, mittens, toy house, young mouse,

wash. Observant children may discover a copy of *Goodnight Moon* itself on the bedside table as well as evidence of another collaboration of Brown (1942) and Hurd in a copy of *The Runaway Bunny* on the bookshelf and a scene from that book pictured in a nearby frame. These textual and illustrative elements of *Goodnight Moon* were recognized by critics as being innovative and fresh, but it was the book's overall relaxed tone that was most valued. As the *Christian Science Monitor* declared in its review, "In these days of hurry and strain a book for little children which creates an atmosphere of peace and calm is something for which to be thankful" (quoted in Marcus, 1992, p. 216).

The peace and calm fostered by *Goodnight Moon*, however, are jarringly disrupted in Anne Droyd's (2011) *Goodnight iPad*, a modern parody that reveals the effects of technology on individuals and group dynamics. At the end of the day, the room that is the scene of this story is still "bright and buzzing" (n.p.) as a rabbit family connects with the latest technological gizmos and gadgets. Brown's classic story has only two characters, a child and an old woman who

whispers hush, who are represented as rabbits. *Goodnight iPad* also uses rabbits, but their hutch home is multi-generational, populated with a father, a mother,

various-aged children, and an elderly woman, similar to the configuration of many families today.

Using the same narrative structure of short lines, rhythm, and rhyme of Brown's classic, the parody's exposition first itemizes the various technological devices and applications that intrigue modern society: iPads, the computer game *Doom*, a huge LCD Wi-Fi-HDTV, Nook books, Bose speakers, remotes, "a BlackBerry ringing/With Eminem singing/And a new Facebook friend/and texts with no end" (n.p.). The opening illustrations show that all family members are affected since even the baby responds to a simulated rattle. Technology's accompanying noises are replicated by increasingly prominent and numerous onomatopoeic bleeps, buzzes, rattles, and taps. Though pleasure is evident by the family members' grinning faces, their here-and-now reality is being mediated by artificial barriers set up by technology. The first mention of nature, for example, rather than being the moon itself, is a screensaver

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brush, and even common mush. Remembering the imaginative appeal of fantasy in her own youth, Brown also mentions two sets of nursery figures, which Clement Hurd pictures in frames, one of the cow jumping over the moon and the other of the three bears. As Marcus (1992) noted, this compromise blends "nursery rhyme reality and here-and-now reality seamlessly" (p. 187). Then the voice of the young child addresses the items all over again bidding each a good night. Hurd uses the light cast from the child's table lamp to spotlight particular objects in his illustrations, but he cleverly softens the contrasts as the night deepens and as the rabbit child recognizes the world outside the room, which includes the rising moon, stars and air, and "noises everywhere" (Brown, 1947, n.p.).

A young listener to the story is emotionally engaged and calmed also by Hurd's full-page, borderless views of the great green room that alternate with spot drawings in black and white

picture; the fire is a computer image, which gives light but no aroma or warmth; and the mouse is a remote-controlled mechanical toy. Even nursery fantasy has been replaced by *Angry Birds* and three little Nooks. However, the most deleterious effect is that social interaction and community are being undermined by the isolation of the various family members. The entire family is in the same room, but they are so involved with their electronic devices that they ignore one another; watching 3-D television is their only shared experience. The book's satire comically exposes our modern culture's obsession with technology and its dominance over our living space, relationships, and time, but thankfully, the parody also reveals a solution for "getting unplugged" (n.p.).

The story's climactic turn occurs when a weary old woman, who has tolerantly observed her frenetic family from a distance, ultimately acts in exasperation. She may emblemize the frustration, unwillingness, and ineptitude with technology that plague many of the older generation, but her desire for quiet is reasonable since the night is far advanced and the hour late. Rather than a child's voice claiming ownership of objects through repetition, as appeared in the original, in the last half of this book the old woman recounts and says goodnight to each of the technological gadgets she wrestles from reluctant family members and tosses out a window. After she lovingly tucks the family into bed, darkened illustrations reveal that her strategy for powering down has also been adopted by other families since similar piles of discarded electronics are outside neighboring homes. The book's final illustration is a memorable one: a young child is reading *Goodnight Moon* by flashlight, an homage to the satisfying power of literature, books, and Brown's classic itself. This parody reminds readers that, while technology has its place, it cannot replace the personal impact of quiet reflection that reading a good book affords.

When Wild Things Turn Mild

Maurice Sendak has been recognized for uncanny ability to read children and to convey their psychological struggles accurately in his illustrations and words. As Kushner (2003) noted,

He's unparalleled in developing the picture book's unique possibilities of narrating—to the joy of constant new picture-book illustrators. Furthermore, he is one of the most courageous researchers of the most secret recesses of childhood—to the delight of constant new readers. (p. 6)

Where the Wild Things Are explores the cathartic release of a young child's rage through his journey to

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a fantasy world inhabited by wild monsters conjured by his imagination and his safe return home. By identifying with Max in his wolf suit and his wild mischief, children psychologically experience the hero's emotions, particularly his anger at his mother's controlling discipline, and they, too, may find a similar emotional outlet through their own fantasies. Sendak traced the origin of this book to personal feelings, saying,

Just as dreams come to us at night, feelings come to me, and I rush to put them down. But these fantasies have to be given a physical form, so I build a kind of house around them—the story—and the painting of the house is the picture-making. Essentially, however, it's a dream or fantasy. (quoted in Lanes, 1980, p. 85)

Where the Wild Things Are was the first full-color picture book that Sendak both wrote and illustrated. His boldly printed spare text moves the narrative along, but only with enough words on each page to connect the ideas expressed with the facing illustrations.

Lanes (1980) pointed out that some passages such as "And he sailed off through night and day/ and in and out of weeks/and almost over a year/to where the wild things are" (p. 87) resemble open form poetic verse. The repetition in the monsters' terrible roars, terrible teeth, terrible eyes, and terrible claws taps into a timeworn and chilling storytelling convention children love. The last words of the story particularly resonate with young readers, whose deep psychological needs include relational resolution and peace. When Max is safely home again in his own room, he finds "his supper

waiting for him/ and it was still hot” (Sendak, 1963, n.p.).

In the book’s illustrations, Sendak transitions from reality to Max’s fantasy world through carefully executed artistic strategies. As Max’s emotions become less and less controlled, the frames of white space bordering the pictures recede and his room morphs into a fantasy jungle. The four bedposts become tree trunks and undergrowth sprouts from the rug. When the picture bleeds off the page and the bedroom’s conversion into an unrestrained world is complete, Max freely expresses his wolfish nature, claws raised and facing away from the reader and toward the moon. Even when he arrives at the home of the wild things, the size of the double-page illustrations and the figures themselves continue to increase to add pictorial interest to the book’s drama and almost physically envelop the reader in the new world.

The three expansive wild rumpus double pages show Max and the wild things howling at the moon, hanging from trees, and dancing in procession, acknowledging Max’s lordship of the otherworld and of himself (Maguire, 2009, p. 137). To highlight the wildness of the beasts, Sendak creates realistic texture in their fur, feathers, and scales through crosshatching and varying line widths. However, though the strange, composite monsters do have sharp claws, teeth, and horns, features which concerned many adults when the book was first published, their round stature, upturned mouths, and cartoonish eyes cause them more to resemble teddy bears and somehow seem less scary to children. In one scene, after Max’s emotional tempest has passed and he now remembers his loved ones with longing, Sendak also engages in parody himself by posturing Max as Rodin’s famous sculpture *The Thinker* (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2001, p. 235). After Max returns home to his restored room, smiling but emotionally spent, “his wolf hood slipping off his head (a subtle reminder that he has been purged of his wildness)” (Lanes, 1980, p. 93). The presence of a slice of cake pictured with his dinner shows that his mother also feels that their relationship has been restored.

The empowering psychological freedom of Sendak’s classic is not only ridiculed but may at first seem mitigated in Maurice Sendak’s (2009) *Where the Mild Things Are*. Many aspects of the original

are inverted. Adult figures are substituted for the monsters to satirize assumptions of adult maturity and self-control and the notion that only children need to release their emotional and psychological tensions. In a reversal of the classic, this story

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begins in the fantasy world of monsters, described with echoes from Sendak, and a sarcastic jab at overinvesting literary critics and scholars, as having “appalling horns and appalling claws and appalling fur and drawn with far too many lines, which made them very special” (n.p.).

Mog, the little monster protagonist, is dressed in a tame bunny suit and reading boring books in his exotic jungle room. Like Max, Mog’s behavior is motivated by his emotions, but rather than experiencing wolfish rage after he is sent to bed without dinner because he petted his kitten instead of eating it, he is merely “very unhappy” (Sendak, 2009, n.p.). This deflated response resembles the measured words of upset adults who would have children suppress their true emotions in favor of socially accepted behaviors. In an illustrative imitation of the classic, Mog’s bed does transform into “a very monstrous car” (n.p.) but it ends up ironically being only a conventional 1974 AMC Gremlin, and the jungle plants morph into everyday telephone poles. The picture borders recede as in the original story while Mog also seeks adventure, but rather than finding a place that allows him to vent his emotional tension, a double-page map shows him slowly driving across America and visiting only the least exciting sites.

When Mog arrives at Dullsville, he discovers it is peopled by “some very mild creatures” (Sendak, 2009, n.p.): Sendakian-like large-headed, smiling caricatures of Martha Stewart, Jay Leno, Bill Gates, and Al Gore. These celebrity figures are only identified by humorous but cryptic descriptions: a Homemaker with an exceptionally clean house, a not-so-funny Comedian, “a very rich Nerd” (n.p.), and a Vice President who “had almost become President but not quite” (n.p.). They are never actually named, so probably only middle school or young adult readers will see the humor in their selection and make connections to the adult spheres of home improvement, entertainment, business, and politics.

After they choose him as their President, Mog and the mild creatures do have “adventures,” which are illustrated on three expansive double pages. The first shows them all involved with filing taxes, in the second they eagerly answer binary code math questions in a classroom, and in the third they hang socks on the clothesline and fold them neatly, all aspects of the very real world of adults that children so often reasonably consider dull.

Mog’s moment of personal enlightenment about his own true monstrous nature ironically occurs when the mild creatures attempt to be ecologically sound, but it goes awry and they are literally left in the dark. When all the slow-burning safety candles go out, Mog has had enough and erupts into monstrous fury. His childlike boredom turns into outer anger and motivates him homeward, where he kicks his parents and eyes the unhappy kitten with a hungry monster grin. The parody’s reversal of mild for wild elements mimics the dull didacticism that squeezes liberating imagination out of some children’s books and replaces it with heavy-handed moralizing. However, since the dual root meanings of “para” in parody not only denote contrast but also accord or intimacy (Hutcheon, 1985, p. 32), this playful revision actually reaffirms the psychological message of the classic: Adults and children alike all have some monster in their nature that needs to be acknowledged and released occasionally for psychological health. Sendak’s classic recognizes the truth that human beings *are* wild things and the desire for control and power is inherent in us all (McGillis 1996). The recent parody reminds readers to control and channel that wildness through their imaginations and literary adventures.

Giving Turns to Taking

Shel Silverstein is another children’s author who possessed “a special gift for conveying both the frustrations of childhood and the[ir] fantasy power trips” (Rogak, 2007, p. x). Rogak identified Silverstein as a Renaissance man in the output and variety of his work as poet, cartoonist, author, playwright, and lyricist who never set out to write or draw for children because he disliked the condescension he felt was present in older children’s literature classics as well as books more recently published (pp. 65-66).

However, according to Rogak, Ursula Nordstrom, the legendary editor for Harper & Row, had a goal to publish “good books for bad children” and took Silverstein under her wing. *The Giving Tree* (1964), Silverstein’s second and most successful book for children, was ironically first refused by another publisher because he thought, “It’s not a kid’s book, too sad, and it isn’t for adults, too simple” (Rogak, 2007, pp. 67-68). Many of the book’s features have continued to be both appreciated and considered challenging.

Fable-like in its apparent simplicity, the book tells the story of a boy’s relationship with an apple tree. When young, the boy plays with the tree’s

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leaves, eats her apples, and sleeps in her shade. “And the tree was happy” (Silverstein, 1964, n.p.). As he grows older, however, the boy spends more time away, occasionally returning to demand the tree meet one of his various needs. She gives him her apples to sell for money, her branches to build a house, and her trunk to construct a boat to sail away from his troubles. At the tale’s end, the boy, now a tired, old man who cannot enjoy any of the tree’s earlier pleasures, sits dejectedly on her stump. As Amster (2002) noted, “She has nothing left to give him, but she is happy” (p. 414). The story’s text is accompanied by pen-and-ink cartoon drawings on spacious white pages, often showing the single tree leaning toward the boy, who is sometimes pictured partially hidden by the tree’s branches or trunk. Though most of Silverstein’s book covers are black and white, *The Giving Tree’s* green and scarlet cover can remind readers of Christmas, and conveniently the book is often marketed as an ideal gift for the holidays. The title also focuses the reader’s attention on the generous tree, rather than on the demanding boy (MacDonald, 1997).

Because the book’s ending and overall allegoric message are ambiguous and its intended audience listed as being “all ages,” reception for *The Giving Tree* since its publication in 1964 has been mixed. Many parents, teachers, and pastors have embraced the book as a charming lesson on self-sacrifice and putting the other person first. Children, who identify

more closely with the young boy playing with the tree, may see the book as merely about giving and taking, loving and being loved. Some older readers, however, interpret it as “a cynical comment on charity and human relations” (MacDonald, 1997,

“Are you out of your mind?” (n.p.). Taking matters under her own control, she calls the cops, the kid is arrested and hauled away “for a very, very, very long time,” (n.p.) making the tree “really, really happy” (n.p.). And when the old man kid returns with a chainsaw to cut her down, the taking tree exacts her ultimate revenge by falling on him. Her stump doubles as his tombstone with the inscription “Here lies a real jerk” (n.p.).

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p. 8). Amster (2002) called it a “dressed up version of the ‘happy slave’ myth” and a tale of “man’s selfish plundering of the environment” (p. 414). In response to these challenges, Silverstein claimed to not have a particular message to prove during its creation, cryptically asserting that it describes “just a relationship between two people; one gives and the other takes” (Rogak, 2007, p. 73).

No such neutral position is evident in the recently published *The Taking Tree: A Selfish Parody* (Travesty, 2010). As the dust jacket text warns: “We all know the story of the selfless tree that gives and gives and gives just to make sure one little boy is happy. This is a different tree. A different boy. And a very different book.” The parody’s bold red cover contrasts with the original’s green, but it also acts as a red light caution of the feisty changes in the tree’s attitude and the story’s overall ironic tone.

This boy is derogatively labeled “the kid,” and even though he claims the tree is his best friend, he insensitively tears off the tree’s leaves, uses her twigs and acorns to bully people, and carves political slogans into her bark. Rather than being supportive and generous, the tree is unsympathetic, calling him “a loser” and “a real jerk.” Actually, “the tree just hated the kid” (Travesty, 2010, n.p.). The kid’s delinquent behavior continues as he grows; he builds fires that destroy the school, which gets him arrested and pleases the tree. Then he demands the maple tree produce apples so he can have money for college, but after she complies with great difficulty, he takes off with a scholarship. He breaks her branches, builds himself a house, burns it down, and collects money in a fire insurance scam. However, when the kid demands the tree’s trunk for an escape canoe, she has finally taken enough abuse and responds,

Using many of Silverstein’s illustrative strategies, the parody’s cartoon drawings support its own cynical message about the dangers of pushing people too far. All the book’s pages are open with much white space surrounding the pen-and-ink figures drawn with few details. However, perhaps in a nod to contemporary readers who expect color in their picture books, watercolor washes highlight the boy’s red shirt and blue jeans and the tree’s brown trunk and green leaves. The artistic portrayal of the two characters is far different from the innocence and grace of the original picture book. Even when the kid is young, his eyes are drawn as narrow slits and his buck teeth appear almost sinister. This tree also does not lean lovingly toward the kid, but stands rigidly erect, even bending a branch and placing it on her hip to show her unsympathetic attitude toward this miscreant.

Readers who were frustrated with the ambiguity of Silverstein’s *The Giving Tree* may experience cathartic joy when this kid, who is very clearly self-

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centered, exploitive, and violently destructive to others and to nature, receives his just deserts in the end. In a nod to those who held ecological concerns about the destruction of the tree in the original version, *The Taking Tree* closes with the disclaimer that the tree trunk was recycled into the paper upon which the book itself was printed. This parody satirizes the unquestioning tolerance of cruelty, but it also reminds young people that personal

accountability is to be valued in relationships with others and our world.

Additional Playfulness of Peritext

Another way in which parodies reconnect with their originals and extend humor is in the *peritext* of the books. This term, first used by Gerard Genette in 1987, describes all the physical aspects of a book aside from the author's text: front and back covers, dust jacket, endpapers, half-title and title pages, and the dedication page (Sipe & McGuire, 2009, p. 62). Critical consideration of these supplementary elements can uncover additional satire because picture book publishers and designers choose them with great care to give aesthetic coherence to an entire book. For example, *Goodnight iPad*, in keeping with the technology theme, encloses the publishing and copyright information inside a computer screen and presents it in the form of a license agreement, complete with response buttons the reader will probably ignore. The dedication page contains a revealing message from author Ann Droyd that this book is "for everyone who is as hopelessly plugged in as I am." The cover of *Where the Mild Things Are* displays a gold medallion, a tribute to Sendak's Caldecott medal, but this one pictures Caldecott's formerly madly dashing horse, rider, and animals as passively sitting or standing. The surrounding words state, "Winner of the Cheap Gold Sticker." The satire here cautions readers about overinvesting in medal winners as a measure of worth for book selection.

The back cover of *The Giving Tree* shows a black-and-white photo of Silverstein glowering at the reader with broken teeth and full beard. What are readers to make of this disturbing image of the creator of a book supposedly about loving selflessness? To emphasize this incongruity, *The Taking Tree's* back cover contains no picture at all because "Mr. Travesty's photo has been withheld here by popular request." Even the authors' names and their biographies parody the notoriety and output that publishers often use to promote book sales. Maurice Send-up's seven hundred unpublished books have been "acclaimed by the *New York Review of Stuff* as 'absurd and without merit.'" And Shrill Travesty's "memoir, *The Man Who Couldn't Fail*," will be published "by no one." Readers absorb meanings of these cleverly designed physical aspects, in addition to the text and

illustrations, as part of the parodic humor and ironic commentary.

Conclusions

In their playful inventiveness, then, these parodies of three picture book favorites offer older elementary and middle school readers opportunities to revisit and rethink previously held notions about a literary genre or literary text while incorporating the old into the new. Their satirical messages give fresh insights into contemporary cultural trends, social customs or attitudes, or reaffirm the value of the past as informing the present. Teachers and adults can ensure young people maximize the impact of their experience with parody by exposing or reminding them of elements in the classical favorites and noting how these have been encoded in insightful, new ways. The new synthesis flowing out of the topsy-turvy nature of parody not only transforms a book and its message, but it can also develop critical expertise and deepen cultural and literary awareness in those who are fortunate enough to play the parody game.

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