

# **Toys and Radical Politics: The Marxist Import of *Toy Story That Time Forgot***

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THE CLERIC (to REX). Obey!

(REX obeys)

WOODY & BUZZ. Rex!

REX. I can't help it! (*Toy Story That Time Forgot*)

## **The Ouroboros of Capitalism**

Capitalism persists, and despite widespread prognoses of its death throes being upon us, seems poised to persist *ad nauseum*. Commentators seem confident in their proclamations that the era of late capitalism is upon us, but late capitalism prevails yet later and later. In this context the ouroboros figure seems very pertinent, since capitalism is consumed in an interminable attempt to halt its looming extinction, devouring itself perpetually in the absence of any better sustenance. "Consume," it orders "always consume!". Indeed, whereas Marx and Althusser hypothesized that their discourses would inspire the radical transformation and improvement of human society, such change has not substantively occurred to date. Instead, recent decades have witnessed the birth of Neoliberalism, accompanied by an inexorable increase in support for right-wing political regimes on an almost global scale. In spite of the volatile nature of the modern political climate then, this paper seeks to contribute to the international and tangible counterculture of dissent against established political systems that Marxist philosophies are nevertheless able to actualise.

The study will apply key aspects of theory from the prominent radical discourses of Marx, Althusser, and, to a lesser extent, Derrida, to the close analysis of the short film *Toy Story That Time Forgot*, a contemporary cinematic text which is itself unequivocally a cultural product of capitalist production. It is important then to begin by considering the text in precisely this light. Produced by a studio that holds a near-monopoly within the motion picture industry, the short was given a direct-to-video release following its premiere on American domestic television networks at the beginning of December 2014. It would be hard *not* to spot the underlying agenda here; the short's release having given Disney the opportunity to re-engage the franchise's

merchandising operation, and fill the cash flow void left by the near-prehistoric release of *Toy Story 3* two years previously. The film's release was accompanied by various tie-in toy lines, and was no doubt deliberately screened just closely enough in advance of Christmas to prompt bountiful sales of the associated (and now highly collectable) action figures.

Although this seems to merely confirm that the *Toy Story* franchise is premised upon a relatively orthodox business model, scrutiny of the text's consumerist base helps make conspicuous the dominant mechanisms of modern cultural production which determine its artistic superstructure. In his economic model of society, Marx states that the "mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life" ("Preface" 92), engendering a base/superstructure dynamic. Hence, in capitalist societies there exists an economic base comprised of the "relations of production", which exists in a mutually informative relationship with "a legal and political superstructure" which collectively underpin cultural production (Marx "Preface" 92). As the franchise's name implies, the text's base is involved with the mass marketing of commodities, and thus it is especially fitting that in its superstructure the toys are portrayed as literal products. By aesthetically depicting the toys as being predisposed to their extratextual role as saleable merchandise, the text's superstructure thereby perversely attempts to satirise the commodification of culture that its own franchise's base is engaged in. The underlying construction of the film consequently reflects upon the material conditions of its production, disclosing the extent to which the cultural production of modern art is largely indivisible from, and implicated within, the contemporary material conditions of capitalism.

Hence, as the text can be construed as a cultural product of corporate power structures, its depiction of a totalitarian society consequently bears reflection on those same contemporary power structures. This essay will thus examine the text, moving from superstructure to base in its attempt to explore the subversive value that can be gained via the interventional application of Marxist discourse to the analysis of its prevailing capitalistic narrative.

### **A Politics of Dissent**

In an essay which remains as relevant as ever, despite having been penned a quarter of a century ago, Derrida acknowledges that much prevailing political discourse proclaims that the utility of Marxist philosophy has, in modernity, been entirely expended:

There is today in the world a dominant discourse ... on the subject of Marx's work and thought, ... it proclaims: Marx is dead, communism is dead, very dead, and along with it its hopes, its discourse, its theories, and its practices. It says: long live capitalism, long live the market, here's to the survival of economic and political liberalism! (64)

Whilst passionately denying that liberal democracy in any way constitutes the social *telos* — or end goal — of our species, Derrida conversely emphasises that Marxism as a concept (or, concepts, more accurately) has a thoroughly spectral and enduring character. Marxism in fact, has actually never been more necessary, since "violence, inequality, exclusion, famine, and thus economic oppression [have never] affected as many human beings in the history of the earth and humanity" as they do in the modern day (Derrida 106). Although Neoliberalism may have changed the political landscape significantly, Marxist discourses remain inherently capable of re-evaluating and thus remodelling their countercultural energies in an equivalent direction, and by doing so are able to continue to ground their politics of dissent upon contemporary material conditions. In this spirit, the continued relevance of Marxist philosophy can be empirically verified by demonstrating its abiding capacity to facilitate potent analyses of contemporary texts, and in particular, of those texts that are themselves explicitly products of the capitalist cultures that Marxism censures.

As is true more widely across the *Toy Story* franchise, the Toys in *Toy Story That Time Forgot* are a metaphor for humanity, and thus their societies are also metaphors for human society. As cartoon characters, and since they somewhat uncannily represent the inanimate made animate, the toys are defamiliarised to the extent that they appear undeniably inhuman, yet nevertheless they remain familiar enough to invite cognisant reflection upon our own social structures when close analysis of the text they inhabit is undertaken. Furthermore, the franchise's aforementioned entanglement within capitalist modes of production confirms that such an allegorical reading is not only plausible, but crucial.

Therefore, let us now consider the text's narrative superstructure in greater detail. When The Cleric — the despotic ruler of Battleopolis — comments that he finds Trixie and Rex's "lack of armour disturbing", the one line actually reveals a disproportionately large amount of information about the nature of power in the society he presides over (*Toy Story That Time Forgot*). Tangentially, the line intertextually references Darth Vader telling Admiral Motti — a subordinate officer — that he finds

his "lack of faith disturbing" as he force chokes him for questioning the potency of Vader's power (*Star Wars Episode IV: A New Hope*). This parallel emphasises a crucial disparity between the dominant methods of maintaining hegemonic control by the figures of power in each text. Whilst Vader exerts his rule with acts of violence, the means that The Cleric utilises to maintain control are comparatively far more subtle, and yet subsequently, more effective, as he is shown to be able to rule Battleopolis simply by ensuring the continuation of a dominant ideology sympathetic to his own unquestioned supremacy.

Although Marx held that "consciousness" is the foremost distinguishing quality between humans and other animals, he further stipulated that nevertheless "The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas", insinuating that the attainment of consciousness does by no means correspond to the attainment of unadulterated thought processes ("German Ideology" 653, 656). Rather, the bourgeoisie, ruling class, or ruler, are ever the "ruling *intellectual* force" (Marx "German Ideology" 656; emphasis original) of the society they command, in addition to merely being the ruling political force, and they thereby hold sway over the collective consciousness of their citizens. In a development which is emblematic of the tendency of Marxist discourse to tend towards its philosophy's ongoing enhancement, Althusser later expanded upon Marx's rhetoric on the ways in which political power is maintained through the intellectual control of subjects. Whilst agreeing with Marx *vis-à-vis* the domination of societal consciousness by the ruling classes, he instead suggests that the "reproduction of the skills of labour power" that keeps the subjugated classes subservient "is achieved more and more outside production" itself in developing societies (Althusser 88). Instead Althusser suggests, in the modern day the ruling class is supported mainly "by the capitalist education system, and by other instances and institutions", institutions which he referred to as Ideological State Apparatuses (88).

Defining ideologies as collective normative "system[s] of the ideas and representations which dominate the mind of a man or a social group" (107), Althusser consequently fundamentally disagrees with Marx that "The nature of individuals ... depends on the material conditions determining their production" (Marx "German Ideology" 653). Instead, he holds that it is "not the system of the real relations which govern the existence of individuals, but the imaginary relation of those individuals to the real relations in which they live" (111). Ideology (in the Althusserian sense that I use the term throughout this essay) is therefore precisely the foundation of any

dissimilitude between the subject's real and imagined conditions of existence, operating in such a way as to obfuscate the oppressive reality of class relations. Ideologies principally work to naturalise the individual, or group of individuals, to their imagined conditions of existence, and consequently create the delusion that happiness is always best attained by maintaining the status quo. Hence, subjects come to be governed by the seemingly natural — and so, ordinarily unquestioned — ideologies that surround their social lives, and therefore ultimately by those in power who can subvert or otherwise influence these ideologies. The insidious character of ideology thus emphasises precisely why radical societal change must be brought about, in the toys' and our own societies.

### **The Inescapability of Ideology**

At the outset of *Toy Story That Time Forgot*, Bonnie holds the position of undisputed ruler of the eponymous Toys, having succeeded their previous master Andy as their owner (in both physical and psychical terms). Though she seems inept in her governance, with the Toys being frequently assigned inappropriate roles when she plays with them, they are largely happy to obey her rule, as it nonetheless equates to her showing them favour. Bonnie's interpellation of Angel Kitty — a Hello Kitty-esque Christmas decoration — into "The terrifying Kittysaurus" perfectly exemplifies this disparity between her intentions for her subjects and their real social capabilities. Given Bonnie's characterisation of this toy, it is ironic that the ensuing line delivered by the alleged "Kittysaurus" is the utterly ill-fitting "Greet the world with an open heart", and that harmonious orchestral music plays in the film's diegetic soundtrack at this point (as well as at every subsequent time the character delivers a line of speech). Evidently then, there is an irreparable discord between the imaginative relations which Bonnie imposes on the character and its innate personality, as is regularly true in regard to the Toys' characterisation by her more widely. Interpellated into play in such a fashion, the Toys' autonomy is sacrificed, and they consequently become inanimate whilst performing their roles. This directorial decision — recurrent throughout the franchise whenever the Toys are in the presence of their human owners — makes it clear that ideologies are not merely abstractions with no real basis, and rather that any ideology is phenomenologically made "material" through its practice in the social Imaginary of its subjects (Althusser 112).

As ideology is thereby materialised in itself by the physical processes that produce it, what Bonnie achieves by engaging her subjects in such play is to immerse them in the rigidity — depicted in literal terms — of ideology. As this loss of individuality in the Toys also occurred during their former playtimes with Andy, it appears neither Bonnie nor Andy ever correctly exerts power over their subjects. That her Toys are conscious of the imperfect material conditions that impede their autonomy, yet are generally resigned to them, is itself a product of Bonnie exerting the doctrines of the dominant ideology. Like any totalitarian ruler then, Bonnie prefers to maintain the dominant material conditions which support her own perpetual and indisputable right to rule, these hegemonic conditions being "the relationships which make [her] the ruling one, therefore, the ideas of [her] dominance" (Marx "German Ideology" 656). However, as is shown briefly but importantly when her mother orders her to "be polite, [...say] Please and thank-you" while at Mason's house, Bonnie is nevertheless subject to the inescapable nature of ideology herself, it being a conditioning phenomenon which even the rulers who exploit it are subjects within. We can therefore tentatively infer that in Marx's own terms, Bonnie must metaphorically occupy the role of the petit bourgeoisie within the text, her mother would figure as the haute bourgeoisie, and finally the Toys fulfil the narrative role of the proletariat, being ideologically subservient to both.

In a marked contrast to these class parallels, the society of Battlesaurs that Bonnie's Toys encounter at Mason's house are advertised as being "The Ultimate Dinosaurs", implying that their Battleopolis constitutes a utopian, and presumably classless, society. Indeed, Buzz deeming their "motion-activated room sentry" to be "impressive" highlights the fact that they seem to be greatly technologically advanced despite the contrastingly tribal nature of their social fabric. Correspondingly, the technique of shot reverse shot is consistently used to represent Trixie at a high angle, and Reptillus at a low angle during their first meeting, demonstrating the presumed disparity between the respective societies of the two characters. Throughout their exchange, shots from Trixie's point-of-view are dominated by Reptillus filling the frame, and shots from Reptillus' point-of-view are foregrounded by his upper torso, which encircles Trixie in the middleground of the frame. In all cases, the forced perspectives of the shots function to make Trixie's gaze deferential to Reptillus', and thus to further construct the expectation that the society the Toys are entering is, in civilizational terms, dominant to their own. However, although Trixie initially believes

that the Battlesaurs "seem to have everything", it soon becomes clear that many of the underlying societal aspects of Battleopolis are actually deeply problematic.

In truth, the fact that the Battlesaurs are "so committed to their roles" means that unlike the somewhat politically conscious Toys Bonnie owns, they are subjugated to the extent that they do not even *realise* the true nature of their conditions of intellectual suppression. The Battlesaurs are politically unconscious, but believe they are self-aware. As Althusser states, in corrupt and/or capitalist power systems "the individual *is interpellated as a (free) subject in order that ... [t]he[y] shall (freely) accept [their] subjection*" (123; emphasis original), only persuaded they are free to make their own choices in order that they accept their subjection to power willingly, and without even considering the possibility of making a complaint against their situation. This is appositely shown in the text when The Cleric declares that his "Battlesaurs have no use for play. They have everything they need, content in their ignorance", followed by one of his subjects wondering aloud "What's ignorance?", and receiving merely a disinterested grunt of existential puzzlement from another by means of reply.

The principle of freedom is itself a key fundament of the ideology that the Battlesaurs are subject to then. They are relationally defined by their *lack* of an overtly inscribed "mark of obedience" (namely, having their owner's name written on them), this ideology encouraging them to construe their habitual material condition of not being played with by Mason as being directly correlative to their freedom, as the outcome of a *teleological* state that has already been achieved. In their delusional conviction that they will never be required to surrender and "give [themselves] over to a kid" in playtime, the Battlesaurs prove that "Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life" (Marx 'German Ideology' 656); they are undeniably sentient, yet they have no awareness of the true conditions of their lives. Such collective ignorance is built into their very configuration. As the inherent plasticity of the Battlesaurs (and Toys) reinforces, they are defined by their inexorable composition as products of the society their existence has been conditioned by. Perfectly engineered by ideology to acquiesce to the extant hegemonic system of power relations, they emulate and are constituted of the very social fabric — plastic — of their society. The Battlesaurs are, at a glance, one immutable variety of toy, and therefore form one inalienable society, a fact which allows their ideology to naturalise the systematic violence they direct at the manifestly visually dissimilar, often fabric-based, foreign toys they mutilate in their gladiatorial "Arena of Woe".

## **Ideological State Apparatuses**

The ruling apparatus of Battleopolis precipitates numerous Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs), which collectively contribute to the Battlesaurs' further subjection to ideology. Furthermore, the production of these ISAs is often perceptible. For example, by affirmative identification as a Battlesaur, repeatedly conditioned via spontaneous renditions of their National Anthem-esque theme song, each individual is separately subjected to the ideology of Battlesaur society. Inescapably Battlesaurs through-and-through in resemblance, they are inevitably unable to think critically about how their social situation could be reorganised and thereby improved. Along with this inextricable ideological identification comes a perceived naturalness to their leader's authority to rule. That is, as The Cleric's plastic is of a more regal design than that of the other Battlesaurs, he becomes their ideologically apparent leader in Mason's absence. He has not therefore been chosen for his ability to rule justly, but arbitrarily, because his clothing confers a degree of superiority. Under his rule, the Battlesaurs are denied all but the most superficial semblances of autonomy, their inherent uniformity demonstrated by their being regularly depicted standing rigidly to attention in single file lines. It is thus certainly clear why the power structures of their society must be progressively reformed, even if it is not clear precisely how such a change might come about.

These oppressive conditions have all been exploited and perpetuated by the "ruling ideology" (Althusser 89) of The Cleric, whose introductory shot makes clear his role as an antagonist, as he enters followed by a train of trailing sycophants, their miniaturised appearance and clothing a mimicry of his own. Additionally, their ruler also manifests his power by controlling and exploiting the "Triassic Tower of the Dream Elders", having led the Battlesaurs to believe that "distant beings convey cosmic wisdom from another dimension" into their own through it. This has the effect of ensuring the laws and proceedings of their society seem to be commanded by an unseen and omnipotent deity, referred to as the "great Dream Elder", when in fact they are merely products of The Cleric's own authoritarian machinations.

The Cleric exemplifies the archetypal ruling class who, through the power they hold, rule "as thinkers, as producers of ideas", and who consequently "regulate the production and distribution of the ideas of their age" purely to secure their own ends (Marx "German Ideology", 656). While the appellative "Cleric" designates a position of

religious authority, the only religiosity The Cleric embodies in practice is that which furthers his autocratic political agenda. Unlike in the Toys' own society where only the human master ever has absolute power over the toys, The Cleric has gained control of the Battlesaur society in the perennial absence of Mason by virtue of this tower, the hollow reverse of which typifies the fact that its alleged spiritual properties are merely a facade, and have no genuine religious properties. Just as "*no class can hold State power over a long period without at the same time exercising its hegemony over and in the State Ideological Apparatuses*" (Althusser 98; emphasis original), The Cleric exerts total control over this religious Ideological State Apparatus of Battlesaur society, the raised head of which he can rotate to maintain a panoptical surveillance of the society he governs. Accordingly, when Trixie reveals to Reptillus that "at [the Toys'] house, Bonnie just yells across the room in a funny voice" to give commands to her subjects, The Cleric snarls in disgust. He cannot afford for his subjects to gain political consciousness, as once they attain it they will be able to see his strategies of maintaining tyrannical hegemony for what they are: a sham. While his subjects remain in a state where "They don't even know they're toys", a social environment is preserved where "the practical *denegation* of the ideological character of ideology by ideology" (Althusser 118; emphasis original) is rampant. Thus the Battlesaurs' ignorance of their true nature raises echoes of Buzz's own initial lack of consciousness of being a toy earlier in the textual franchise.

Moreover, the baseless nature of The Cleric's rule is further emphasised by the disparity between his frail physical stature, and the immense political power he wields. Indeed, his emaciated right arm seems like it would barely be able to support the execution of even simple day-to-day tasks, and it is presumably for this reason that his left is a prosthesis. His physical infirmities demonstrate an important yet frequently ideologically concealed cognisant truth; like The Cleric, our own ruling classes and political leaders are no class of superior beings, but merely flawed humans like ourselves. Crucially, these ruling classes rely on the sustained subservience and unquestioning loyalty of an interrelated mass of exploited proletarian citizens, our continued obedience being the only circumstance which allows them to maintain their inevitably exploitative rule.

The second key ISA of Battlesaur society is one that operates in concord with their shambolic nationalised religion. An augmentation of their religion itself, the Battlesaurs are summoned to the Arena of Woe by The Cleric's manipulation of the

Triassic Tower. Their utter incomprehension of the implication of the Arena's name demonstrates the level of the Battlesaurs' unconsciousness, they see a visit to the arena as both a religious observance and an exciting method of entertainment; faith into battle, as it were. Marx held that religion actualised "the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world and the soul of soulless conditions", and was a phenomenon born of a "*condition that requires illusions*" ("Introduction" 171; emphasis original). From his perspective, religion was philosophically undesirable, given its tendency to promote a proletarian willingness to accept material circumstances rather than promoting attempts to fight against them. Conversely, Althusser held religion to be one among a number of Ideological State Apparatuses, and thereby a method of state control of proletarian consciousness. The Arena of Woe in *Toy Story That Time Forgot* is closer in nature to the latter, a facet of the Religious ISA, implying that the Battlesaurs' sports-based fanaticism is ideologically conditioned, and thoroughly religious in character.

If "philosophy cannot realize itself without the transcendence ... of the proletariat, and the proletariat cannot transcend itself without the realization ... of philosophy" (Marx, "Introduction" 182), then both religion and state encouraged fanaticism about sport become factors intended to distract the working classes from the self-awareness that is born of philosophy. As the practice for battles in the Arena of Woe appears to take up the Battlesaurs' leisure time almost entirely, there can be no time for philosophising, or the consequent intellectual ascendance it engenders. Sport then, is seen to become at least a marginal Ideological State Apparatus in itself, stimulating the same level of misemployed passion the Religious ISA does, and ensuring that a political unconscious is upheld. This widespread Battlesaur unconsciousness is certainly observable in Reptillus, who even after being informed that he is a toy, still remains under the influence of The Cleric, attacking Woody and Buzz savagely, as commanded. Learning the truth of his existence does not have any effect whatsoever on Reptillus' actions since, as Althusser puts it, "to recognise that we are subjects ... only gives us the "consciousness" of our incessant (eternal) practice of ideological recognition ... in no sense does it give us the (scientific) *knowledge* of the mechanism of this recognition" (117; emphasis original). Merely recognising the existence of ideology does not give subjects the means, or teach them how, to break free of their social conditioning. In the absence of being supplemented by effective forms of resistance, any realisation of the ideological character of our social environments is impotent to alter their underlying social apparatuses.

## Ideology and "Autonomy"

The cathartic moment when Reptillus later sees himself represented on the box he came out of however, gives him a far better grasp of the truth of his subjectivity at last.

Indeed, the box acts as a metaphor for ideology itself at this point:

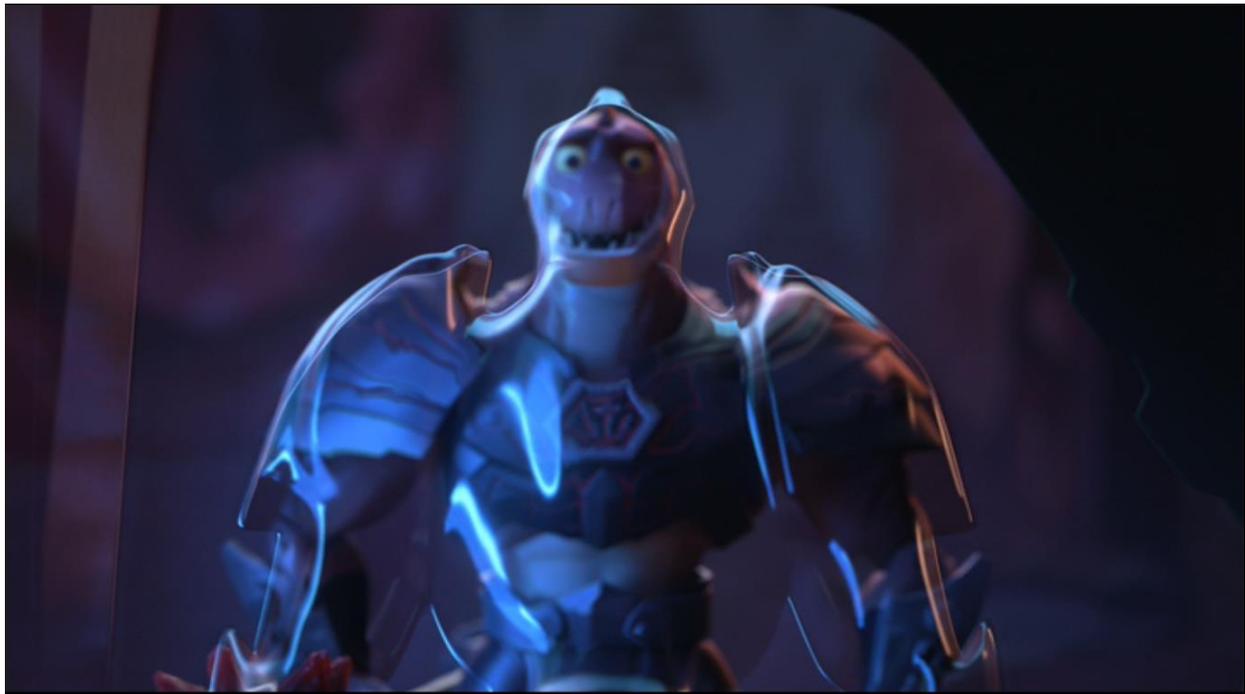


Fig. 1. *Toy Story That Time Forgot*, Pixar Animation Studios, 2014.

He stares in stunned silence at the mould he has been removed from; the ideology or "educational apparatus" (Althusser 104) that so closely mirrors his own figure, and identity, to an uncanny extent. It is clear that he would fit flawlessly back inside the box, and though he currently stands outside of it, his entire existence is dictated by having emerged from it in the first place; he is inescapably a product of it. Just as "The existence of ideology and the hailing or interpellation of individuals as subjects are one and the same thing" (Althusser 118), he *is* the box himself to a large extent, and similarly, subjects *are* their ideologies to a large extent too. Equally, the translucence shown by the shot penetrating the plastic packaging to show his body on the other side demonstrates the characteristic obviousness that makes ideology so deceptively easy to overlook in day-to-day life.

In this moment, Reptillus realises the true material conditions of his existence, that he and his fellow Battlesaurs have emerged from this box and from boxes like it, and that this certainty has been hidden from him until now, behind a deceitful conception of freedom produced by Battlesaur ideology. Until this moment, he did not even conceive of the existence of the box. By suddenly understanding himself to be a subject of ideology, he necessarily realises that he has no power himself, and is justifiably frustrated at this revelation. This creates a potent moment of peripeteia in the text, where Reptillus must either resubmit to the hegemonic power of The Cleric or attempt to engineer Mason's ascendance to hegemonic power. His summary choice of the latter option radically changes the structure of his whole society, yet only by means of one totalitarian ruler of Battleopolis supplanting another.

The conclusion of the text is therefore greatly problematic; it is profoundly unclear whether the Battlesaurs have succeeded in revolutionising the power relations of their society in any genuine manner by submitting to Mason, an incompetent ruler rather than simply a barbarous one. In the credits — which act as a *de facto* coda — Reptillus' movement across the frame is greatly improved and accentuated, demonstrating that citizens have far more autonomy in the reformed society that his actions have ensured. Contrastingly, although The Cleric is seemingly entirely pacified in this transformed society, this sudden absolute reversal of his character only serves to remind the viewer that his earlier portrayal actually made him seem far too obvious a villain in many ways.

Supplemented by copious amounts of malevolent laughter, his lines, which include "Grrr!", "Blast!", and "Curse!", seem so hyperbolic a demonstration of evil that they positively undermine his veracity as a creditable antagonist. Therefore, by his having been characterised in an intentionally contrived manner, it is inferable that The Cleric was only ever solely a scapegoat of a ruler. Although he ostensibly occupies the role of divine leader of the toys, it would be erroneous to construe The Cleric as the toys' true master, as is made especially apparent in the scene where he unsteadily ascends to his throne presiding over the Arena of Woe. Although this throne is flawlessly adapted fit to The Cleric's frame, as the click made as his body fastens into it demonstrates, the throne was most likely uninhabited whilst in the blister pack packaging of its playset. It is more than possible that the throne and The Cleric were even packaged separately. Since the throne is thereby vacant by default, there will always be another who could occupy it, and The Cleric's revered title, in his place. The

triviality of the matter of which exact figure occupies this governing apparatus therefore foregrounds the throne's innate delusiveness, and reiterates why radical political processes must appeal against the underlying ideological systems that contravene the liberty of populations, rather than their entirely transmutable figureheads. This route of analysis necessarily restates that the true social antagonists within the text must be Bonnie and Mason, and that the toys' failure to realise this shows their continued susceptibility to ideological power, and to unjust social structures of power.

It is therefore noteworthy that the final image visible as the film's credits fade is the light of the Battlesaurs' panoptical Triassic Tower still flashing, along with a final thrum of its characteristic call. This ominous closing portent reiterates for one final time that both societies of toys are still subjects under the power of a ruler, and just as ideology is inescapable, so are subjugated classes to remain subjugated until the wider coalescence of dissenting voices within their society is achieved. As the successive stage(s) of social progression post-capitalism have not been experienced by humanity yet, the text is able to depict power being abused multifariously, but unable to show it being effectively and justly employed. The sudden disappearance of the endlessly philosophising Angel Kitty at the close of the text can be seen to foreshadow something important then. At the point at which superficial Battlesaur liberty has been gained, revolutionary political doctrine alone, *sans* the politicalization and mass dissident activity of citizens, can never be enough to overthrow the entrenched systems of rule that still overshadow the lives of the toys.

### **The Enduring Relevance of Marxism**

This study has analysed the cinematic text *Toy Story That Time Forgot* through the locus of its intersection with Marxist theory, in order to prove the radical potential of such a reading. The insights that have consequently been produced suggest that the widespread disillusionment with Marxism as a politics of dissent in recent decades underestimates the enduring capacity of the radical philosophy to question the oppressive political institutions of capitalism. Marxist theory, just as capitalism does, endures, and as Derrida states, "There is no inheritance without a call to responsibility" (67). Only widespread social upheaval, as the result of organised dissident movements and activity, can truly hope to facilitate the movement of humanity towards that entirely rudimentary, and yet tantalisingly difficult to realise goal; the creation of an enduring system of power under which all are equal. Marxist philosophy may not yet offer the

*how*, but when made subject to a renewed recognition of its ability to proselytise a collective unity against the entrenched political systems of contemporaneity, it still vehemently foregrounds the imperative *why*.

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### Biographical Note

Jonathan Hay is studying for an MRes by English at the University of Chester, and is currently researching Posthumanism and Science Fiction. They have presented papers at the 2017 Talking Bodies conference and the 2018 University of Chester Postgraduate

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**Abstract**

Through the analysis of a capitalist text, and by reflecting on the discourse of Marx and Althusser, this paper attempts to demonstrate why Marxism remains a potent politics of dissent. It suggests that Marxist philosophies can come to function in an ultimately reparative manner through their promotion of countercultural ideologies.