



Walt Disney's *Toy Story* as Postmodern *Don Quixote*

BRUCE R. BURNINGHAM



ince its publication nearly four centuries ago, Miguel de Cervantes's *Don Quixote* has given rise to numerous imitators ranging from the unauthorized 1614 Avellaneda sequel to the 1965 Broadway musical *Man of La Mancha*, while his famous knight-errant has become a well-recognized archetype within the Western tradition. Indeed, the title character's effluence is so complete that he shares with only a limited number of literary protagonists—among them Oedipus and Faust—the high honor of engendering an English adjective; that we can speak of a “quixotic” endeavor demonstrates how thoroughly Don Quixote has become an indispensable sign within our cultural lexicon.

Among the more recent works to make use of this Cervantine vocabulary, of course, are the highly successful and technically innovative Walt Disney Pixar films, *Toy Story* (1995) and *Toy Story 2* (1999), where the literary genre providing the context for the central character's delusions is not that of the medieval romances of chivalry, but rather the movies, television shows, and video games of twentieth-century juvenile science fiction. While these films have absorbed much of the discourse of *Don Quixote* (particularly, as we will see, through *Man of La Mancha*), they should not be mistaken for mere flattering imitations. As “emulations” that approach an almost Bloomian “misprision” (Bloom, *Anxiety* 14), rather than “renditions”

that simply attempt to recapitulate a precursor, *Toy Story* and its sequel have their own thematic agendas and their own distinct narrative structures. Nevertheless, whether deliberately or through some kind of latent cultural intuition, they engage the Spanish masterpiece in an intertextual dialogue, thus supplying contemporary viewers with a compelling postmodern reading of the Golden Age text.

Before delineating this reading, however, we should establish a working definition of the adjective “postmodern,” since this has proven to be an extremely mercurial, and often contentious, term, meaning “different things to different people at different conceptual levels” (Bertens 10). Although at least one critic has claimed that postmodernism tends to “resist fixed categorization through a perpetual dissolution of boundaries” (Homer 112), this has not dissuaded many from trying to pin it down nonetheless. For some, it represents a much-needed “comprehensive critique of modern thought” (Kilian 177) which demonstrates that European rationality “cannot ground itself” (Bertens 241). Yet, this very philosophical stance of “all-out skeptical indifference” (Norris 44) has led some conservative critics to negatively characterize postmodernism as nothing less than a total “assault on Western civilization” (Cheney 91). Lending credence, of course, to this highly disparaging view, still others see it (in clearly positive terms) as a redemptive social movement whose “suspicion of master narratives” has spawned the welcomed rise of feminists, racial separatists, Third World militants, gay and lesbian rights activists, etc., all of whom criticize a Western culture that is said to be “cobbled together and managed by repression, omission, exploitation, and violence” (Leitch ix-x).

While each of these characterizations of postmodernism may be valid in its own way, I will defer throughout this present study to a definition proffered by Terry Eagleton. Eagleton sees it as a contingent, decentered, and indeterminate “cultural style,” whose playful, derivative, and self-reflexive discourse—having arisen from the technological and consumerist propensities of this century’s omnipresent “culture industry”—serves to blur the boundaries between high and low culture (vii). As will become apparent in the following paragraphs, it is this rather playful notion of postmodernism that not only sustains my own reading of the *Toy Story* films, but has also engendered my rather eclectic comparison of them with such a canonical work as *Don Quixote*.

The most obvious way in which the first of the two films integrates the discourse of the novel is through character transference. Don Quixote has “morphed” (to use the terminology of children’s

television programs like the *Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers*) into Buzz Lightyear, a high-tech action figure toy who refuses to accept his status as such, and insists—all evidence to the contrary—that he is a genuine “space ranger.” As in *Don Quixote*, Buzz constantly (perhaps deliberately) misreads reality in an attempt to play this self-assigned role. Sancho Panza has become the rustic (although admittedly very thin) Woody, a low-tech cowboy doll who serves as a foil for Buzz, and who, throughout the film, suffers hardship and physical abuse due to his acquaintance with this deluded newcomer. Less prominently, Rocinante, Don Quixote’s hack, has become Buzz’s wounded spaceship which, like Cervantes’ dual-natured “baciuelmo” (458; I, 44), also doubles as the torn carton in which he was packaged; Clavileño, the “flying” hobbyhorse, has become a radio-controlled race car which carries Buzz and Woody on a very real flight toward the end of the story; and the evil enchanter, Frestón, who incessantly pursues Don Quixote and Sancho, has become the mean-spirited next-door neighbor, Sid, a seemingly omnipotent figure whose greatest thrill is to torment any toys he can get his hands on. Finally, in place of *Don Quixote*’s supporting cast of characters who spend much of the novel trying to cure the self-appointed knight-errant of his mania, *Toy Story* provides us with a menagerie of toys who spend much of the film trying to rescue Buzz.

This thematic metamorphosis of character is complemented by a similar “morphing” of plot. Like *Don Quixote*, whose genealogy is deliberately ambiguous, Buzz has no real history before the narrative of the film begins; he wakes up *ex nihilo* from his shelf-life “hypersleep” just as suddenly as Alonso Quijano apparently “awakens” to his new identity as *caballero andante* in the opening chapter. Thus, when Buzz arrives on the scene—the star gift at Andy’s birthday party—he introduces himself to the other toys by citing the text from the side of his spaceship/carton. In this way, the advertising copy functions for Buzz much the same way *Amadís de Gaula* functions for Don Quixote: it becomes a written document on which to found his identity in the absence of any genuine personal history. Quotes our postmodern knight-errant: “As a member of the elite Universe Protection Unit of the SPACE RANGER corps, I protect the galaxy from the threat of invasion from the Evil Emperor Zurg*, sworn enemy of the Galactic Alliance.” The other toys, who have a firm grasp on the economic realities of their own late-capitalistic existence, do not know quite what to make of this declaration. Mister Potato Head replies: “Oh really? I’m from Playskool,” while a green dinosaur adds: “And I’m from Mattel. Well, I’m not really from Mattel; I’m

actually from a much smaller company that was purchased during a leveraged buyout." Thus, Buzz's new companions—like the numerous level-headed people who surround Don Quixote and who often berate his rather loose interpretation of reality—remain skeptical of his far-fetched claims; nevertheless, like Don Quixote's, Buzz's vision of self remains completely impervious to this exterior skepticism.

Meanwhile, Woody suspiciously plays along with Buzz during a substantial portion of the film, believing that he has merely assumed this persona as a way of gaining an unfair advantage over the other toys. When it later becomes obvious, however, that Buzz is indeed seriously deluded, his suspicion turns to sheer exasperation. After a brief skirmish at a local gas station, when the two suddenly find themselves as "lost toys" (after Andy's mother has driven away and left them stranded in the parking lot), Buzz's greatest concern (unlike Woody) is not for himself, but for his supposed role as defender of the galaxy. "Because of you," he says, "the security of this entire Universe is in jeopardy!" Woody cannot take much more of this space-speak and furiously shouts: "You are a toy! [. . .] You aren't the real Buzz Lightyear; you're an action figure! [. . .] You are a child's plaything!" To which Buzz merely replies: "You are a sad, strange little man, and you have my pity. Farewell." From this point onward, the film adopts the narrative structure of the Cervantes novel as Buzz attempts to find a "spaceship" that will take him back to his "home planet," while Woody (like Sancho, who quickly learns to manipulate his master's fantasies) attempts to find a way to transport Buzz back to Andy's bedroom, using Buzz's delusions to his own utilitarian ends.

This thematic intertextuality is not the only nexus between the Cervantes and Disney Pixar texts, however. *Toy Story* also incorporates much of the novel's baroque milieu into its computer-generated aesthetics, borrowing heavily from *Don Quixote* in a number of subtle and not so subtle ways. On the subtle end of this borrowing, the film alludes to the book's pastoral elements by providing Woody with a girlfriend in the form of Little Bo Peep. Like most of the pastoral figures in *Don Quixote*, however, this character in no way resembles a working shepherdess, for she glides through her environment wearing petticoats, a pink hoop skirt, and a frilly bonnet, and escorted by an entourage of happy little sheep. More obvious is the incorporation of the picaresque into the suburban world of this Disney film. As we mentioned, Sid is, in some ways, a figure of the novel's omnipresent enchanter, but he also doubles as a kind

of Ginés de Pasamonte, a sociopath whose violence toward society remains completely unexplained, if not unexplainable. Hence, we can find some significance in the name "Sid," which functions (perhaps unintentionally) as one of the many puns in the film. He is a particularly "vicious" little boy whose uncannily familiar name, spiked haircut, ubiquitous sneer, and black T-shirt (adorned only with a rather frightening icon of a human skull) inevitably suggest his association with Sid Vicious—the most violent member of the punk rock band the Sex Pistols—and thus with one of the most infamous figures of postmodernism's own picaresque genre.

Sid's bedroom, which contrasts starkly with the clean, warm and friendly atmosphere of Andy's, is an extremely dark and sordid place, and resembles many of the interior spaces depicted in Fernando de Rojas's *Celestina* or Francisco de Quevedo's *Buscón*. More importantly, this bedroom is cluttered with the remnants of dozens of mutilated toys. Roberto González Echevarría reminds us of the importance of the grotesque in baroque art by underlining the prominence of deformed "monsters" in Calderón de la Barca's theatre and of hunchbacks and dwarfs in Diego Velázquez's paintings (81–113). Tellingly, the mutilated toys confined in Sid's upstairs bedroom (itself, perhaps, a figure of Segismundo's own prison tower) have been reassembled into a number of monstrous, hybrid reconstructions: a convertible car with arms and legs instead of wheels; a frog with wheels instead of hind legs; a fishing rod equipped with a pair of Barbie Doll legs attached to its reel, thus making it look something like a decapitated ostrich; and finally a figure that defies typological classification, for its bottom half consists of the legless torso of a weight-lifter doll whose hefty arms provide locomotion, while the upper half is, in fact, the torso of a smaller male doll, and whose head is that of a giant insect. Moreover, these pathetic monsters, like Luis de Góngora's seventeenth-century Polyphemus, represent misunderstood figures, and are not the "cannibals" Buzz and Woody initially make them out to be. In fact, when Buzz is severely wounded toward the end of the film, these all-too-baroque monsters put him back together, and then prove instrumental in helping the two heroes escape from Sid's house.

In our initial discussion of the Disneyesque metamorphosis of the Cervantine characters, the idealized damsel, Dulcinea del Toboso, seemed conspicuously absent. This is undoubtedly due to the fact that, while the code of chivalry, informed as it is by the tradition of courtly love, insists that each knight have a lady to whom he can commend himself, the code of science fiction does not include

such provisos for space rangers. In fact, protagonists of science fiction tend to conform to two very different schools of thought on amorous behavior. On the one hand, we find the swashbuckling philanderers, embodied by such figures as Captain James T. Kirk (much more Don Juan than Don Quixote) from the original *Star Trek* television series; on the other, we encounter the very aloof, very disinterested professional astronauts, embodied by such figures as Captain Jean-Luc Picard of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. Buzz is decidedly an example of this latter type, for at no time during the film is there any hint that an amorous thought, courtly or otherwise, ever crosses his mind.

Nevertheless, the spectre of Dulcinea figures prominently in *Toy Story*. Like the Aldonza of *Man of La Mancha*, who first appears as one of Cervantes's co-prisoners in the Spanish dungeon, she has become the queen of the mutant toys imprisoned in Sid's bedroom. Early in the original novel, when Don Quixote encounters the merchants on the highway and demands that they acknowledge Dulcinea as the most beautiful maiden in the whole world, one of them, while asking to see some tangible proof of her beauty, makes the following assertion: "[Y] aun creo que estamos ya tan de su parte que, aunque su retrato nos muestre que es tuerta de un ojo y que del otro le mana bermellón y piedra azufre, con todo eso, por complacer a vuestra merced, diremos en su favor todo lo que quisiere" (60; I, 4). This grotesque picture of Dulcinea is echoed in a later chapter when Don Quixote once again imagines a beautiful damsel in the rather disfigured person of Maritornes, who is described as follows: "ancha de cara, llana de cogote, de nariz roma, del un ojo tuerta y del otro no muy sana. Verdad es que la gallardía del cuerpo suplía las demás faltas: no tenía siete palmos de los pies a la cabeza, y las espaldas, que algún tanto le cargaban, la hacían mirar al suelo más de lo que ella quisiera" (143; I, 16).

Toy Story combines these two descriptions and composes for us a very crab-like Dulcinea/ Maritornes whose distorted body consists of eight erector-set legs (the front two equipped with pincers) commanded by an enormous doll's head whose hair has been cropped to stubble. The right eye of this head is completely missing, while the remaining left eye stares glassily forward. At one point, as the "camera" passes by her face, we are allowed a glimpse through the empty eye socket into the hollowness of the head cavity where we can detect several holes at the back of the skull where some of the missing hair plugs were once inserted. It is a wonderfully horrific phantasm this cyberpunk portrayal of "Dulcinea Enchanted" (Cohen 525), and one that Cervantes probably would have greatly appreciated.

These thematic and aesthetic borrowings certainly tie the film to the novel, but the most important way in which *Toy Story* engages *Don Quixote* in an intertextual dialogue is through the development of a particularly postmodern reading of the central figure's identity crisis. In the novel, of course, the psychological climax of this crisis occurs late in the second part when Don Quixote is defeated in battle by his mirror image, the "Caballero de la Blanca Luna," a.k.a. Sansón Carrasco (1012; II, 64). We recall that Don Quixote himself defeated this mirror image in their first encounter when Carrasco was disguised as the more reflectively obvious "Caballero de los Espejos" (1014). Nevertheless, the disillusionment he feels over this quite unexpected defeat shocks him so deeply that he abandons his assumed persona and soon dies, not as the chivalric "Caballero de los Leones" (659; II, 17), but as the saintly "Alonso Quijano el Bueno" (1065; II, 74). In the film, Buzz's disillusionment also occurs through a confrontation with his own reflection, although here the mirror has appropriately become a television screen, while the image reflected is that of the mechanically reproduced plastic commodity of late twentieth-century childhood. Having been trapped, as we have already said, in Sid's picaresque bedroom, Buzz inadvertently wanders into another room in which a television happens to be featuring a commercial for the Buzz Lightyear action figure. He stares in utter disbelief at the frightening spectacle of a little boy playing enthusiastically with a doll identical to him in every way. And as the voice of the announcer describes the toy's lasers, sound effects, and other gadgets, Buzz takes a self-inventory and finds that he too shares each of these features. He even notices for the first time the words "Made in Taiwan" stamped indelibly in his left arm, thus confirming his own consumerist genesis, a genesis no less mundane than that of his plastic comrades-in-arms. The commercial ends with the "camera" pulling back from a tight focus on a single Buzz Lightyear doll to reveal an entire store filled with thousands of Buzz Lightyears, each one absolutely identical to the others.

If Don Quixote's dementia stems, in part, from his inability to bear the weight of his own ordinariness in an all too unjust world, then Buzz's imbalance here is multiplied a million times over, since he is virtually indistinguishable from every other Buzz Lightyear doll ever fabricated in this hostile universe. In a way, Don Quixote's anxiety towards the false Avellaneda "Don Quixote" prefigures Buzz's dilemma here, except that Buzz must contend not with just one imposter but with an entire legion. More crucial yet, he has been completely "decentered" by the experience, for among these rivals

he cannot be certain—as can Don Quixote in Cervantes’s second part—that he is any more “authorized” than another, being a product of the same overseas factory that produced the thousands of Buzz Lightyears featured on the screen. Where Don Quixote spends much of the second part contending to all who will listen that his “other” remains nothing less than the libelous fabrication of a plagiarist too cowardly to use his real name, Buzz stands speechless in the face of an ever-multiplying army of clones.

The most damning aspect of this television confrontation with his mass-marketed (over-the-)counterparts, then, is that during the commercial the screen prominently flashes the disclaimer “Not a flying toy,” thus calling into question what has been the single most important defining element for Buzz’s sense of self-worth. In Buzz’s first meeting with the other toys, he insists that among his other marvelous capabilities he can fly, and he deploys an impressive set of wings to prove it. When Woody refuses to accept this aeronautical claim, and initiates a childish “can-can’t-can-can’t” debate, Buzz dives from the top of the bedpost, bounces off a rubber ball, surfs down a Hotwheels track (doing a loop-de-loop in the process), is then catapulted toward the ceiling where he hitches a ride on a mechanical airplane, and then lands back on the bed with a definitive “Can!” To which Woody replies: “That wasn’t flying; that was falling with style.” After seeing the TV commercial, then, and in a moment of supreme existential angst, Buzz leaves the room determined to prove the advertisement wrong—just as earlier he proved Woody wrong—by flying out of the house to safety.

This scene greatly serves to multiply the discursive intertextualities existing between several later Cervantine imitations, for Randy Newman’s soundtrack here boldly misreads Mitch Leigh and Joe Darion’s famous song “Impossible Dream” from *Man of La Mancha*. Where the Broadway musical exhorts its knight-errant “To reach the unreachable star/ Though you know it’s impossibly high,/ To live with your heart striving upward/ To a far, unattainable sky!” (82), the Disney film, voicing Buzz’s fears that his desire to sail “out among the stars” is perhaps a “dream that ended too soon,” urges its Space Ranger on to his own quixotic heights by proclaiming “If I believe I can fly, why I’m flying!” Even so, as Buzz leaps from the top of a stairwell toward an open window—his own version of tilting at windmills—we see on his face the ultimate realization of what could be called his “non-flying toyness,” and he falls some thirty feet, smashing onto a hardwood floor and losing an arm in the process. Battered and disillusioned, he gives up on life, as the song under-

scores the moment for us by lamenting, “clearly, I will go sailing no more.”

Being a Walt Disney production, *Toy Story* cannot allow Buzz to die the same poignant death as Don Quixote. First, without a happy ending the movie could never have been marketed to its intended audience. Second, unlike Cervantes at the end of the second part of *Don Quixote*, the producers of *Toy Story*—who can count on twentieth-century international copyright laws far stricter than those of seventeenth-century Spain—undoubtedly wanted to leave open the very real possibility of a sequel. Thus, while Sancho is unable to convince Don Quixote to live long enough to pursue other sallies, Woody does in fact succeed in shaking Buzz out of his existential quandary by convincing him of the rather postmodern notion that his uniqueness lies not in his abilities (or lack thereof), but in his functional relationship to Andy. Buzz is special not because he flies, but because he brings hours of pleasure to a singular little boy much in need of friendship. In other words, the central protagonist of *Toy Story* in no way exists as an autonomous subject, differentiated from all other Buzz Lightyears by some inherent set of material or ethereal qualities. Rather, he exists purely as a sign whose meaning is determined by the specific “reader” who responds to him. Indeed, the only reason this particular Buzz Lightyear matters at all outside the (con)text of Andy’s bedroom is that he happens to be the one articulated for us by this particular Disney film; that is, each and every other Buzz Lightyear posited in the television commercial could just as easily become a different central protagonist within a discrete narrative, providing that there also existed a distinct text/reader relationship to give him meaning.

And in fact, *Toy Story 2* later follows up on this idea by playfully re-inscribing the Cervantine conflict between the two Don Quixotes, here pitting the “real” Buzz Lightyear against a “false” doppelgänger who has managed to escape from his factory-sealed box and has “contaminated” the cinematic text by conflating his own narrative line with that of the sequel. While the “real” Buzz (no longer deluded about his identity as a toy) focuses his energies on the plot at hand, the “false” Buzz ignorantly and blithely wanders in and out of the various narrative sequences—often being mistaken for the “genuine” article—until at long last he disappears into the margins of the text to pursue his own individual “toy story,” a narrative that exists as a self-conscious parody of George Lucas’s *Star Wars* combined with any one of several 1950s “family” sitcoms such as *Father Knows Best*.

The culmination of this clash of Buzz Lightyears in *Toy Story 2* occurs when both figures—after engaging in a physical altercation which readers of the second part of *Don Quixote* can only wish Cervantes had been sufficiently brash enough to fictionalize—stand together facing a bewildered cast of toys who cannot seem to differentiate between them. It is at this moment that the “real” Buzz proves his identity to the others by demonstrating his functional relationship to Andy. For what ultimately separates this Buzz from that one is the presence of Andy’s name inscribed in indelible ink on the bottom of his foot. It is this “sign” that marks him as the only Buzz Lightyear that currently matters; it is this possessive “writing” that authenticates his centrality within the film.

Returning to the first film, *Toy Story* suggests a number of ways in which Buzz might deal with his sudden self-awareness as a plastic toy. On the one hand, like Nora, from Henrik Ibsen’s 1879 play, *A Doll’s House*, where the central character decides to leave her husband rather than continue to suffer the indignity of being his “doll-wife” in the “playroom” that has constituted their home (98), Buzz could simply refuse to participate any further in a relationship that denies him his individuality. After all, he has been separated from Andy for some time, and must exert an enormous effort to reunite himself with his adolescent owner. Although he may not exist as the genuine “space ranger” he thought himself to be, he could nonetheless go off in search of a fulfilling existence as an “action figure” independent of someone else’s overdetermining will. Like Don Quixote, he could leave behind the banal world of bedrooms and birthday parties and could sally forth with the deliberate purpose of coming to the aid of wronged toys like those tormented by Sid. The fact that he is not a genuine “space ranger” does not prevent him from moving forward as a champion for justice in the Universe. Such a course of action, in which “Buzz-the-child’s-plaything” simply declined to cooperate with “Andy-the-child,” would provide a kind of social critique of Don Quixote’s function as a “toy” for the Duke and Duchess, suggesting that Cervantes’s knight-errant perhaps should not have allowed himself to be manipulated by the oligarchy for its mere amusement.

On the other hand, like Augusto Pérez from Miguel de Unamuno’s 1914 novel *Niebla*, in which the central protagonist confronts the author in his study and tries to assert his own free will within the context of the narrative (147–54), Buzz could break the hard and fast rule of toydom and simply show himself to Andy as the truly animate being he is, demanding his autonomy in the

process. *Toy Story* suggests just this possibility by having the menagerie of toys confront Sid in the same manner in order to frighten him out of his malicious behavior towards them. Of course, this would represent a rather perilous tactic for Buzz, since Andy could respond to him in much the same way the metafictional Unamuno responds to Augusto Pérez: by destroying the action figure rather than allowing it to lead an existence independent of his overarching narrative desires. Such an ending, in which his own annihilation forced Buzz to finally accept his status as a toy, would provide a philosophical figure of Don Quixote's own final reconciliation with God, where Don Quixote—despite his valiant attempt throughout the novel to construct an identity separate from the one bestowed on him by the Divine "authorial" will—dies accepting his rightful place as Alonso Quijano within the great chain of being.

Nevertheless, as we have said, the filmmakers at the Walt Disney Company would not for a moment have followed either of these philosophically unsettling narrative paths. Instead, *Toy Story* prefers to return to one of the central themes of Cervantes's novel: that true nobility lies not in the success of an endeavor, but in the mere daring to do. This much more appealing approach (at least as far as Disney's target audience is concerned) has become prominent in the twentieth century, of course, due again in no small part to Unamuno, whose *Vida de Don Quijote y Sancho* distills this "quijotismo" into the following dictum: "en el intento está el valor" (*Vida* 106). And in pursuing this theme to the end, *Toy Story* shows itself to be a genuine follower of *Man of La Mancha*, whose own author, Dale Wasserman, cites Unamuno in the prologue to the published edition of the play: "If there was a guiding precept for the whole endeavor it lay in a quotation I found long ago [. . .]: 'Only he who attempts the absurd is capable of achieving the impossible'" (ix). And what could be more absurd (or seemingly impossible) than for two toys to orchestrate a mass escape from a well-guarded house in an attempt to catch up with a speeding moving van that is transporting their owner's belongings from one side of town to the other? Yet, this is precisely the course of action Buzz and Woody undertake, and it is their valor in the face of this quixotic enterprise that cements their friendship, just as surely as Don Quixote and Sancho's relationship is forged on the plains of La Mancha.

Toy Story's narrative climax, then, occurs during this final confrontation with the impossible. After Buzz and Woody have finally escaped from Sid's house, they find that their only available mode of transportation is a radio-controlled race car. This little car

valiantly attempts to keep up with the moving van, but just when it appears that they will succeed—when the two are within arm's reach of the other toys' out-stretched hands—the car's tiny batteries die, and the van disappears over the horizon, leaving all three stranded in the middle of an unknown street. Once again Buzz and Woody face an uncertain future as "lost toys" and once again they seem to lose the meager faith they have rekindled. Remembering, however, the rocket that Sid had taped to Buzz's back with the intention of blowing him to pieces, Woody manages to ignite the fuse, and all three shoot high into the air on a flight that Don Quixote, Sancho, and Clavileño could only just imagine. During the course of this flight, Buzz locates the van and launches the race car into its open bay door just as Woody points out that their newfound source of propulsion will shortly explode, thus destroying them both. At this point Buzz regains some of his lost "quijotismo," but not all, as we shall see. Insisting, that whatever else may happen, he will not agree to such a mundane defeat, Buzz deploys his wings—miraculously jettisoning the rocket in the process—and begins a final descent into the back seat of Andy's car, which is traveling just ahead of the moving van. When Woody, who by this time has been infected by some of Buzz's quixotic contagion, exclaims: "Buzz, you're flying!" Buzz exhibits symptoms of his own "sanchification" by repeating Woody's earlier statement: "This isn't flying; it's falling with style."

The film appears to come full circle with this recapitulation, and yet this cyclical structure quickly spins out of control. Harold Bloom has pointed out in *The Western Canon* that before Alonso Quijano the Good can die literally, Don Quixote must die metaphorically (139–40). So too, the Buzz Lightyear who returns to Andy's bedroom is not the same Buzz Lightyear who left it early in the story. Like Cervantes's knight-errant, he has been tempered by his journey, and his return is far less triumphant than his initial arrival. He no longer dreams impossible dreams; he no longer sails out among the stars. Unlike Don Quixote, however, Buzz must suffer this metaphoric demise without ever acquiring the benefits a very literal death bestows on Alonso Quijano. And in this way, *Toy Story* again shows itself to be informed by a postmodern discourse that steadfastly resists transcendence. In place of Cervantes's own closing authorial comments, which attempt to delimit the significance of both the novel and its central character, *Toy Story* leaves its viewers with an open-ended epilogue: the reunited toys sheepishly discover that Andy has received a new puppy for Christmas. This indeterminate

ending does little more than defer the film's meaning into a series of sequels yet to be made. Thus, *Toy Story* "decenters" Buzz one final time, because just as he has displaced Woody as Andy's "favorite toy" in this particular rendition (and we must assume that Woody has earlier displaced someone or something else), so too the new puppy will displace Buzz in the posited version that must surely follow. And this puppy, in turn, will almost certainly be displaced by some future gift. And so on, and so on, and so on. *Toy Story*, in stark contrast to *Don Quixote*, virtually erases its hero from the text, for somewhere out there in the unending chain of implied sequels, Buzz will simply fade away entirely like so many other mislaid childhood relics: unremembered, unremarked, and unaccounted for. In short there will be no Sansón Carrasco to declare for posterity "que la muerte no triunfó/ de su vida con su muerte" (1067; II, 74), no lingering specular other to write his epitaph.

Nevertheless, the final shot of these two toys standing precariously, as it were, on the edge of a *mise-en-abîme* provides the very point of departure for the actual sequel that follows. *Toy Story 2* is, in essence, a study of the ontological problem posited by this indeterminate epilogue. But instead of centering on the new puppy—as the first film suggests it might—the sequel reconfigures the Cervantine mirror by refocusing our attention on Woody, who now discovers his own "literary" identity as the star of a 1950s television puppet show called *Woody's Roundup* (clearly modeled on *Howdy Doody*). And like Don Quixote in Cervantes's second part, who becomes self-aware of his importance as a literary figure precisely through contact with several new characters who have previously read his "story," Woody suddenly finds himself surrounded by a new group of toys who restore for him a "history" he did not even know existed.

Significantly, Woody's voyage of self-discovery in *Toy Story 2* serves as a kind of allegory; that is, his itinerary functions as shrewd reading of the second most important conflict in Cervantes's own sequel. We will recall that the original enchanter who robs Don Quixote of his triumphs in Part I is exchanged (by and large) in Part II for an pseudonymous literary pirate guilty of much more than just stealing his glory. The malevolent cipher that haunts the second half of *Don Quixote* is not Frestón, but Avellaneda who, with his own preemptive sequel, has surreptitiously "purloined" Cervantes's famous protagonist. Likewise, the villain of *Toy Story 2* is not the mean-spirited Sid, but rather the unscrupulous owner of Al's Toy Barn, a thief who steals Woody from Andy's front yard in order to sell him

to a Japanese toy museum as part of a complete *Woody's Roundup* set (which also includes a horse named Bullseye, a cowgirl named Jesse, and a prospector named Stinky Pete).

As is often noted, the verb "to plagiarize" has its etymological roots in notions of "kidnaping." This is certainly true, of course, but our modern conception of the verb "to kidnap"—whereby we assume that the "victim" has been taken against his or her (own) will—masks the original semantic value of the metaphor. The *Oxford English Dictionary* specifically notes that the term "plagiary" initially referred to "one who abducts the child or slave of another" (my emphasis). In other words, the original "victim" of the crime was not the captive, but the person from whose possession the captive had been unfairly wrested. Thus, it is truly significant that both sequels involve the "abduction" (in one form or another) of the hero himself who expressly belongs to someone else. And in this way, Andy (although he is never actually aware of Woody's disappearance) becomes a figure for Cervantes who must contend with an unknown nemesis over "ownership" of the main protagonist. Likewise, Woody (by thwarting Al's plans) becomes a figure for Don Quixote, who, in defending his own honor, also champions the proprietary rights of his "owner."

Unlike Don Quixote, however, who personally stands to gain nothing from Avellaneda's literary affront, Woody's abduction in *Toy Story 2* actually offers him a tempting alternative to the unhappy fate suggested by the previous film's epilogue. Here, he finds that he must choose between attaining "immortality" in the museum—where he is promised a never-ending stream of eager admirers—and returning to Andy's bedroom—where, although he may enjoy a few years of happy companionship, he will surely be displaced and forgotten as the young boy matures into adulthood. The dangers of this existential dilemma are made plainly manifest by the presence of Jesse, who woefully recounts the circumstance of her own final displacement. As her young owner, Emily, inevitably outgrew her, Jesse was gradually moved outward from the core of the bedroom to the periphery, until at long last she was simply put in a box and given away as a charitable donation. (As a matter of fact, Woody's own abduction actually occurs when he attempts to rescue an older toy that had been consigned to a yard sale by Andy's mother.) Having literally been "decentered" and tossed out (later to be acquired by Al), Jesse has spent the rest of her existence locked in a dark box—in a kind of toy limbo—awaiting the day when Al could obtain the elusive "Woody" figure who would complete the set, and thus make possible their collective passage into toy heaven.

Yet as Woody soon realizes, this tantalizing offer of “immortality” comes at a heavy price. Although life as part of the museum’s permanent collection holds out the possibility that he will never have to suffer the humiliation of being forgotten or displaced, it augers at the same time a very lonely existence within the confines of an ascetic glass case in which he will forever be denied all physical contact. And in this, *Toy Story 2* posits a very Heideggerian ontology, for what Woody comes to understand is that “being” necessarily means “being-in-the-world” (*The Concept of Time* 7E). In short, to accept the seductive transcendence offered him by the toy museum means precisely that he must give up the very thing that defines him: *the act of being played-with*. Once he enters that space, he will no longer be able to say, “I am a toy [therefore I am].”

Thus, in order to bestow on Woody the transcendence necessary for him to pass into the timeless realm of the museum, the dishonest toy dealer must first sever all contingent links that tie him to a material reality; that is, Al must obliterate all traces of Woody’s “being-in-the-world.” Woody must become as “unblemished” as Stinky Pete, who supposedly remains in mint condition within his factory-sealed box. For this reason, it is supremely important that Woody pass through a restoration process in which he is “redeemed” of the “original sin” of having been played with. This redemptive refurbishment is effectuated through a kind of priestly specialist who meticulously mends the tears in Woody’s cloth body, removes years of grime from his surfaces, and finally gives him a fresh coat of paint. It is a cathartic purification which culminates—significantly—in the removal of Andy’s name from the bottom of Woody’s foot, an act of “erasure” that deliberately forecloses his ability to authenticate his unique centrality within any specific “toy story.”

For this very same reason, Woody’s ultimate decision to forgo “immortality” is underscored by his literal re-inscription of Andy’s mark of ownership. In essence, what Woody does by restoring this definitive “sign” of possessive interdependence is to reconfirm Cervantes’s own closing comments in *Don Quixote*: “Para mí sola nació don Quijote, y yo para él; él supo obrar y yo escribir; solos los dos somos para en uno (1068; II, 74). Yet, as we are all too well aware, Cervantes’s statements in this regard are part of his deliberate attempt to bury his protagonist once and for all: “que deje reposar en la sepultura los cansados y ya podridos huesos de don Quijote” (1068; II, 74). Thus, Woody’s recognition that his authentic existence as a toy necessarily means “being-in-Andy’s-bedroom” is also a self-acknowledgment that his potential disappearance from that space is

an inescapable eventuality. In short, Woody's rejection of life in the museum epitomizes Heidegger's ontological statement of "*sum moribundus* ['I am in dying']" (*History* 317). Woody's deliberate self-reinscription of Andy's name on his foot is an affirmative declaration that "Only in dying can I to some extent say absolutely, 'I am.'" (Heidegger, *History* 318). Or as Ginés de Pasamonte would say, "¿Cómo puede estar acabado [mi libro] si aún no está acabada mi vida?" (209; I, 22). Nevertheless, *Toy Story 2*, like its predecessor, ultimately denies its heroes this "absolute" declaration by steadfastly refusing to cast them in anything approaching a scene of sublime moribundity. For where Cervantes resolutely deposits Don Quixote firmly in the tomb, *Toy Story 2* simply abandons Buzz and Woody to their uncertain fate within Andy's bedroom, an (ironically) atemporal space where—like Beckett's Estragon and Vladimir—they sit endlessly awaiting a sequel that will never be made, forever anticipating an epitaph that will never be written.

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