“Paging Dr. Freud!” Theorizing John Boorman’s *Zardoz*.

David Wall [1]
Utah State University, USA

Abstract

This paper examines Boorman’s much-maligned sci-fi extravaganza, Zardoz, from a psychoanalytical perspective, drawing largely on Freud, Lacan, and Christian Metz. As well as engaging with the film as an exercise in the psychoanalytic approach to film, the paper situates that reading of Zardoz within broader film studies discourses and considers why the discipline of Film Theory so rarely engages with so-called ‘bad cinema’. This, in turn, presents the argument that all filmic texts, irrespective of their apparent qualitative properties, are usefully amenable to theoretical approaches and understanding and can potentially offer insights beyond anything to which the films themselves apparently make claim.

Keywords: Theory, Badfilm, Boorman, Psychoanalysis.

As the medium of cinema evolved from its lowly origins as a vaudeville curiosity into something that could be legitimately referred to as Art, early qualitative taxonomies of film coalesced around both aesthetic and moral arguments. These arguments, in turn, helped shape the construction of a set of theoretical discourses that, in establishing distinct categories of value and taste in cinema, would underpin film’s claim to be something other than the most transient and ephemeral of phenomena. As they made their arguments and expounded upon their notions of what cinema meant, early critics and theorists established modes of thinking around film that still have a profound effect on the way we read movies. Hugo Münsterberg’s *The Photoplay: A Psychological Study* (1916), for instance, was typical of the very early works of what we would come to understand as film theory. Though no great fan of the movies, Münsterberg was nevertheless determined to take film seriously and to lay out a valid theoretical and critical framework to argue for the uniqueness of the “photoplay” thereby assuring its status as a legitimate artistic medium. As part of this drive for legitimacy, he focused on the processes of engagement between viewer and film. Befitting his training as a psychologist his focus was very much on the experience of the spectator, concluding that the response to cinema as a form was rooted in how the viewer encountered the relationship between what he termed cinema’s “Outer developments” (its technological history) and “Inner developments” (its social history). Indeed, though he states that it is the material and technological qualities of the medium of film (ie. close-ups, flashbacks, rapid movement in time and space, etc.) that demonstrate film’s uniqueness, he argues quite explicitly that “the photoplay” regardless of its technological qualities is “completely shaped by the inner movements of the mind.”[2] American poet Vachel Lindsay, another pioneer critic-theorist, was similarly concerned with how film worked upon the spectator but in a much broader cultural (and, indeed, prescriptive) sense. He quite consciously intended for his book *The Art of the Moving Picture* (1915) to play its part in convincing “the great art museums of America . . . the art school students . . . the departments of English . . . the critical and literary world generally” that movies were “a great high art.”[3] More than this, Lindsay firmly believed that film embodied the very essence of the American democratic spirit, asserting that “photoplays” would “ spread the gospel of Beauty, generate national artistic standards, and thus help to unify our very heterogeneous nation.”[4] Neither Münsterberg nor Lindsay were doing anything unusual in their efforts to codify cinema in these ways and, as film matured over the subsequent decades as both an aesthetic and popular medium, these ideas continued to inform the concomitant development of theoretical and philosophical thinking around film. In short, then, the need to assert the cultural legitimacy of cinema as an art form has been woven into the very foundations of how we “think” film from its very earliest days and, for the most part, we still rely on the kinds of qualitative distinctions written into existence by the likes of Münsterberg and Lindsay. Far from being merely a disinterested effort of categorization, then, film theory is a body of thought that has constructed (and continues to construct) film in its own image.

Since those early days film theory has grown into a vast body of work. Unsurprisingly, however, this vast body of work always seems to focus on ‘good’ films. Though there is the relatively recent emergence of efforts to theorize “bad film” itself (with which this paper is in conversation), film theorists rarely seem to turn to bad movies. If theory was a completely neutral exercise, we should expect to see an engagement with a broad representative sample of cinema, not just the good stuff. Surely any film should potentially be open to theoretical analysis, whether a famously bad film such as *Trolls 2* or a famously great film like *Rashomon*? And yet the overwhelming majority of film theory returns repeatedly to the greats of the cinema such as Fellini and Bergman and Godard. It might be argued that there is good reason for this, that the good stuff is by definition going to be more interesting, more insightful, have more layers, and more nuances to examine and unpack. Perhaps. But we also can’t ignore the fact that canon formation works to naturalize what are entirely contingent categories of value, so that they become essentially self-supporting and tautological. To put it another way, is a film included in the canon because its good or is it good because it’s included in the canon? That film theory as a field of knowledge might have a vested interest in this should also come as no surprise, as it is now itself part of the intellectual canon of film

studies as an academic discipline with its own distinct history as an academic discipline.

Like much theoretical writing, film theory can sometimes be dourly off-putting, implying, as it frequently does, that it will offer us an avenue to some heavy fundamental truth of things. In an effort to sidestep this, I think that it is best to approach film theory simply as a set of practical tools that can be selected in order to read a film from a particular perspective. It is really just an attempt to contextually understand the politics and poetics of film, offering us a variety of lenses through which we can understand film as living in our world. It allows us to pick away at both the form and content of a film and, in doing so, implicitly (if not explicitly) asks us to consider our own political and ideological positions. This then highlights the fact that we are all 'theoretically' engaged with film all the time anyway, just in ways of which we are perhaps unaware. In that sense it is doing something both positive and productive in asking that we reflect on our own positions as we reflect upon a film.[5]

The focus in this essay is on one of the more generally familiar theoretical approaches to film, that of psychoanalysis. This familiarity is bred, at least in part, by the ubiquitous presence within the popular cultural lexicon of psychoanalytical ideas and terminology, most especially those originating with Freud. While most of us don't necessarily use them in their precise clinical sense, terms such as neurosis, the repressed, the Oedipus complex, the unconscious and subconscious, and the id/ego/superego, are part and parcel of everyday language. Beyond this, cinema and psychoanalysis have a unique relationship inasmuch as no other theoretical framework is so profoundly woven into the warp and weft of a particular medium. Indeed, as complementary symptoms of modernity, cinema and psychoanalysis have a shared history, arriving as they did in the world more or less simultaneously. As Robert Stam puts it, the "encounter between psychoanalysis and the cinema . . . was in one sense the culmination of a long flirtation, since both were born around the same time (Freud first used the term "psychoanalysis" in 1896, just one year after the first screenings of the Lumiere films in the Grand Café.)"[6] They are also deeply similar in that their use of metaphor and the symbolic realm mirror each other, and both work as perfect analogs and descriptors for each other. For Vicky Lebeau, then, "cinema becomes a way of talking about, of picturing, the mind for psychoanalysis – just as the mind becomes one way to consider the mechanism, and fascination, of cinema."[7]

A crucially important figure in this development was the French theorist Christian Metz, whose early work in structural linguistics led him to approach film as a field of signification, possessed of its own distinct grammar and language. Interested as much in *how* a film means as *what* a film means, Metz drew on the work of both Freud and French psychoanalyst, Jacques Lacan, by way of linking the symbolic realms of the cinema and the psyche, asserting: "the cinema has a number of roots in the unconscious and in the great movements illuminated by psychoanalysis."[8] Not least of these for Metz is Jacques Lacan's concept of the "mirror stage," which purports to describe the process of ego formation. In short, when an infant–Lacan suggests somewhere between the ages of 6 and 18 months– encounters itself in a mirror and first recognizes itself as a separate being, it begins to understand itself as both a subject (which perceives the world) and object (to be perceived by the world). In so doing, the infant begins to understand itself always in relation to the Other and always with the idea of presence/absence as a constitutive structural element of consciousness.

In applying this idea to film, Metz posits the cinema screen as "the other mirror" seeing "the spectator-screen relationship as a mirror identification"[9] as a critical formulation for thinking through the way the subject engages with film. However, as Metz explains, the cinema screen does not function in precisely the same way as Lacan's mirror stage for "there is one thing and one thing only that is never reflected in it: the spectator's own body."[10] This notwithstanding, having "already known the experience of the mirror" "the spectator knows that objects exist, that he himself exists as a subject, that he becomes an object for others . . . it is no longer necessary that this similarity be *literally* depicted for him on the screen, as it was in the mirror of his childhood."[11] The cinema, then, functions for Metz as a central experience of, and metaphor for, the emergence and functioning of the conscious self. Drawing this out further, Metz considers the question of identification; if the spectator is not identifying literally with the character on the screen – and is acutely aware of his own presence *and* absence – where is the identification taking place? For Metz it is with the camera itself: "as he identifies himself with look, the spectator can do no other than identify with the camera, too, which has looked before him at what he is now looking at"[12] for "without this identification with the camera certain facts could not be understood, though they are constant ones: the fact, for example, that the spectator is not amazed when the image 'rotates' . . . and yet he knows he has not turned his head."[13]

In his application of Freudian thought to cinema, Metz draws upon the key notion of voyeurism, which speaks to the fundamental elements of both absence and desire at the heart of the cinematic experience. "The practice of the cinema is only possible through the perceptual passions: the desire to see," in other words "scopophilia, voyeurism."[14] Metz argues that this "scopic drive"[15] is unusual in terms of it being a desiring impulse that it is predicated on continued absence, and the necessity to always maintain the object of desire at a distance (unlike the tactile and physical desires associated with taste, smell, and touch, all of which ultimately necessitate proximity and closeness): "as opposed to other sexual drives, the 'perceiving drive' . . . concretely represents the absence of its object in the distance at which it maintains it and which is part of its very definition."[16] Voyeuristic desire, then, "is the only desire whose principle of distance symbolically and spatially evokes this fundamental rent."[17] Though Freud never explicitly wrote about film or cinema, he did speak of "screen memories" constituted by repressed

desires; and desire, again as Metz explains, is at the heart of our engagement with cinema, our experience being an essentially voyeuristic one. Indeed, according to Robert Stam, the entire purpose of the post-WW2 development of psychoanalytic theory as applied to film was to "highlight the meta-psychological dimension of the cinema, its ways of both activating and regulating spectatorial desire."[18] Psychoanalysis situates film, then, as a kind of pleasure machine and, in the context of Hollywood, very much the vaunted dream factory. Vicky Lebeau even goes so far as to suggest that "cinema is a form of dreaming in public."[19] We can think of dreams as in fantasy longings offered up by Hollywood's star system and its parade of beautiful people and material objects, but also dreams as in the playing out of unconscious repressed desires: "From this point of view, cinema is something like the royal road to the cultural unconscious; it takes up the place occupied by the dream in Freud's classic account of psychoanalytic interpretation."[20]

ZARDOZ

Described by critics variously as "a mass of inoperative whimsies and conceits,"[21] "an exercise in self-indulgence,"[22] "more confusing than exciting,"[23] "naïve futuristic hokum,"[24] and "malarkey"[25] even director John Boorman himself called *Zardoz* "an extraordinary farrago."[26] British critic Mark Kermode has gone so far as to assert that it is "the worst science fiction movie ever made."[27] While we should take Kermode's claim with a very large pinch of salt – in what is a very crowded field, *Zardoz* doesn't come anywhere close to the worse sci-fi movie ever made (*Battlefield Earth*, anyone?) – the other criticisms seem to offer a fair entry point into the film. But it should also be acknowledged that there is much positive to be said about it as well. It is ambitious in scope, has some compelling images, and is at least an effort to "say something" about the state of western culture and society in the twentieth century. Nevertheless, as Brian Hoyle says, when it was first released "the majority of critics and audiences found it difficult, baffling, or just plain ludicrous,"[28] and it seems that this attitude still largely prevails. Even those who regard it as a noble effort would surely concede that it is messy, confused, ill-thought out, bizarre, overblown, pondering in its critiques, and, well, just a bit silly. Its notoriety as a comically bad movie is also surely not unconnected to the extraordinary image of Sean Connery as Zed, who spends the entirety of the film wearing nothing but a red jockstrap, thigh-high boots, and a luxuriously abundant Zapata moustache. [Fig. 1] But does all this taken together make it a bad film? I'm not sure of that, (though I am sure that it is not a good film.) But I do think that it is its very bizarreness that partly makes it so interesting.[29]

Fig. 1.

Zardoz is set at the end of the 24th century, in a post-apocalyptic world populated by the ultra-civilized Eternals, who lead lives of indolent luxury within the invisible walls of "the Vortex," and the lumpen Brutals, scrabbling an existence of savage barbarity in "the Outlands" beyond. In this sharply stratified world, with its jarring combination of futuristic technology and pre-industrial feudalism, there are other social sub-sets. Within the Vortex we find the Apathetics, those Eternals who have been rendered immobile through melancholic ennui ("a disease that is slowly creeping through all the Vortexes"), and the Renegades, transgressors condemned to an immortality of infirmity and senility. Rampaging through the Outlands are the Exterminators, ultra-violent Barbarians commanded to slaughter the more primitive Brutals by their god, the eponymous Zardoz. Traveling through the sky in a gargantuan flying stone head, vomiting out guns and commands upon the waiting Exterminators below, Zardoz is, in actual fact, the creation of Arthur Frayn, a 300-year-old Eternal who, it appears, simply has bureaucratic responsibility for this particular region. [Fig. 2] But it is from those Exterminators, whom Zardoz describes as "the chosen ones," that the renegade Zed emerges, gatecrashing his way into the Vortex in order to discover the truth of his own creation.

Fig. 2. Zardoz/Frayn

Zardoz was Boorman's follow-up to *Deliverance* (1972), which told the story of four white, suburban Atlanta businessmen heading out on a jaunty hunting trip into the wilderness of the Cahulawassee River valley in northern Georgia.[30] Confronted by a hostile landscape and the even more hostile members of an isolated mountain community, their journey results in terror and tragedy, when they become the victims of a shocking and violent assault. This encounter serves as the catalyst for the subsequent narrative as the hunters become the hunted in an atavistic struggle for survival. An early-70s revenge-thriller and a sci-fi fantasy set 300 years in the future might not appear to have a lot in common. However, at root they share a critique of contemporary western society in their invocation of the tension between civilization and savagery and suggestion that "modern man" has become detrimentally detached from his primal, supposedly more natural, self.

The idea of returning to a state of nature to get to the primitive within has been around for a long time. But it takes on a particularly dynamic charge within the context of modernity (and from the late-19th century onwards especially) with the notion that modern man could actually rediscover and revivify an "authentic" self by returning to a "natural" state. But there is a deep ambivalence here. While the primitive represents a life lived "in tune with nature, part of its harmonies" it simultaneously represents "our untamed selves, our id forces – libidinous, irrational, violent, dangerous."[31] How those competing impulses of civilization and savagery might be reconciled fascinated Freud.[32] In *Civilization and Its Discontents* [33] he laid out what he saw as the critical tension between human civilization's need for order (the reliable structures of a stable society) and what he identified as humanity's primal instincts (especially those innate drives towards sex and violence.) As part of this great contribution to the constitution of modern consciousness he gave us a simple framework to understand this tension. Freud's model can be found in the relationship between what he terms the id (primal drives and desires), the ego (the conscious self), and the superego (internalized external authority.) The superego (those supposedly "civilizing" discourses such as family, law, religion etc.) exercises its authority by demanding that we in turn exercise control over the unfettered drives and desires of our id. Thus, the ego is a point of tension between the two, the consequence of a constant wrestling between our instinctive drives and the civilized self. Freud saw this in both individual and social terms, inasmuch as just as well-ordered societies need to maintain a regulated population to work successfully, so individuals within those societies must repress their own primal drives in order to function as acceptable members of that society.

Reading *Deliverance* from a Freudian perspective, then, we might suggest that Boorman represents the mountain people as the modern subject's id, living outside of the literal and metaphorical boundaries of civilized society. And in *Zardoz* too we see the pattern repeated, with the Brutals forced beyond the walls of the Vortex cities, to function as the Eternals' id, pushed to the literal and figurative hinterlands of the unconscious, denied and unaddressed. Within the Vortex, science has not only managed to completely control and repress those instinctive drives, but it has also managed to do away with aging, death, and disease, leaving the Eternals to concern themselves only with gentle lives of almost entirely abstract thought alone. ("We took all that was good and made an oasis here. We few – the rich, the powerful, the clever – cut ourselves off to guard the knowledge and treasures of civilization, as the world plunged into a dark age.") But, of course, this apparent utopia is also deeply and simultaneously dystopian. The repression of the id is a repression of desire. Indeed, a consequence of the disappearance of the need to procreate, as Consuela explains, is that "Eternals soon discovered that erection was impossible to achieve." What the deep repression of the id forces has resulted in, then, is an entirely emasculated and feminized society. It is a society in which the male population has been essentially reduced to a coterie of effeminate and impotent milksops and, in what would appear to be the deepest of Boorman's own anxieties, two women, May (Sarah Kestleman) and Consuela (Charlotte Rampling), appear to be in charge. But the primitive within cannot be denied unendingly for, as Freud teaches us, the repressed will inevitably return and frequently in the most damaging forms of phobia and neurosis.

That brings us to Zed who is pretty much all id and, as such, serves as the return of the repressed in human form, the neurotic anxieties of the Vortex come to life in the throbbing, pulsating body of a man. That man is Sean Connery, one of the 1970s' most throbbing and pulsating of manly men. Connery's cinematic persona of aggressive masculinity (as expressed most famously in his role as James Bond) is critical to the portrayal of Zed and our reading of him and an interesting example of the way "spectator theory" works. Zed's masculine dominance is not separable from the masculine dominance of Sean Connery outside of the cinematic frame and within the broader celebrity/star culture. It is unavoidable that we bring Connery/Bond with us to Zed.[34] Connery/Zed is essentially the return of the erection, the phallus that will restore the natural order of things. Indeed, in one of this odd film's odder moments, Consuela parades Zed in front of a group of Eternals as she lectures on the phallus and the "link between stimulus and response." Using Zed as her control, and with the crowd in gaping anticipation, she shows him a series of erotic film-clips in an effort to induce an erection in him. Though the films have no effect on Zed, it is to Consuela's great consternation, and the other Eternals' amusement, that it becomes apparent, in the most direct way, that the only thing that stimulates Zed, is her. [Fig. 3] Though she is initially seemingly horrified by this revelation and subsequently leads a hunting party in the effort to track down the escaped Zed in order to murder him, ultimately, she is unable to resist (of course!) and, at the conclusion of the film, gives herself over to him entirely.

Fig. 3.

But it is not only Consuela who is subject to the power of the phallus. All the women of the Vortex are fascinated by, and attracted to, Zed's primitive sexuality. It is his very brutishness that turns them on. Their sexual desire hasn't died, it has merely been repressed, lying dormant along with all the other primitive, instinctive drives, awaiting its reawakening. Even the zombie-like Apathetics are magically revivified, with only a droplet of Zed's testosterone-laden sweat being necessary to rouse a previously catatonic woman into full consciousness. "We take life from you!" she intones rapturously. Zed has a power that the Eternals have lost, the symbolic and literal masculine power of the phallus and the erection, that embodies an aggression and violence and primitivism that are supposedly fundamental to human nature. The erection – that most primitive of autonomic responses and what Consuela decries as a "violent compulsive act which so debased women and betrayed men" – brings with it life and procreation, but also death and, ultimately, the destruction of the Vortex. The film ends with the Eternals joyfully playing their part in an orgy of violence as the Exterminators from the world beyond – the id now entirely unleashed – rampage through the Vortex killing them in their hundreds. Zed and Consuela escape the melee together, running away hand-in-hand to find sanctuary deep in a cave, beyond all the attendant fripperies of modern civilization, their existence reverting to the *natural* life of the primitive, a return to the world at the dawn of history. Humanity begins again. Zed. The last letter, the last man and the first man. Zed becomes Adam. Z becomes A.

The final sequence of the film is a time-lapse of their life together as they procreate, watch their child grow and leave them, reach old age together, and finally die, with the very last shot of the film showing the cave wall with a rusted and useless pistol embedded within it, but more interestingly two hand-print paintings, a key evocation of the primitive. [Fig. 4] The balance between civilization and savagery has been reset. Human civilization in the form of the heteronormative family is restored, rescued from the enervated emasculation into which it had descended, with innate masculine power reestablished as the prime motivator of human culture. The cock as restorative justice.

Fig. 4.

But *Zardoz* is not only a film about that dynamic Freudian tension between civilization and savagery. It is also about a journey to self-awareness and the discovery of one's origins and consciousness and one with deeply Oedipal undertones. As the voice of their god, Arthur Frayn has charged the Exterminators to "live to kill" intoning the mantra that "the gun is good, the penis is evil" essentially unhitching the phallic from the procreative process. In this sense, we can read Frayn as the superego which Zed must kill in order to re-suture the image to its referent thus reasserting the centrality of eros *and* thanos. It is in fact only by killing Zardoz/Frayn – the Eternal father (in both senses) with complete control over life and death within the Outlands – that Zed is then able to gain entry to the Vortex and similarly begin his own journey to fully individuated self-consciousness.[35] Once he breaks through into the Vortex, Zed finds his way to a small farmstead, which serves as an anachronistic mash-up of horse-drawn wagons and ancient stone houses with hydroponic plastic bubbles and highly complex metal machinery. Upon entering a building, Zed comes across a hidden attic room, filled with an assortment of things – pictures, charts, books, toys – what amounts to a broad collection of the disparate items and objects as evidence of literate human culture. All are entirely unknown to Zed. However, in the midst of the jumble, and as an interesting metaphorical foreshadowing of what is to come, he discovers a jack-in-the-box toy which startles him when it suddenly pops into life. Pushing the metaphor further, he finds a box of unfolding mirrors in which, as he opens them up, he appears to encounter himself for the very first time–like Lacan's infant–as a both a subject of perception and object to be perceived. [Fig. 5]

Fig. 5.

From this moment on, in a nicely Metzian turn, mirrors, screens, and projections surround Zed. This encounter with the mirrored box presages two critical and connected sequences of the kind of mirror recognition and camera identification that Metz outlines as critical to our experience of the cinema, and which also perfectly illustrate Zed's engagement with the screen in the process of ego formation. The first is when May and Consuela force Zed to reveal his memories of life as an Exterminator in the Outlands. Unknowingly initiating the process by which Zed will come to full self-consciousness, they stand before an enormous screen upon which is projected a sequence of images, culled from his mind, of a violent and murderous attack upon a group of Brutals, culminating in Zed's violent sexual assault upon a woman running along a beach. [Fig. 6] That the memory they choose to focus on is one of sexual violence is no coincidence, it is, after all, the id with which they are fascinated and that works as their gateway into Zed's consciousness.

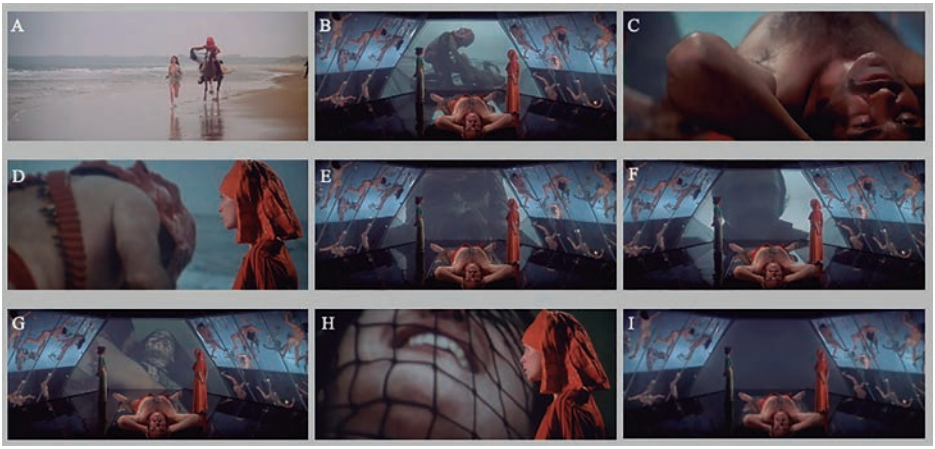

Fig. 6.

We, of course, are watching these screened memories just as we are watching Consuela and May watching them, as the memory-sequence itself plays 'like a movie' with a series of cuts, pans, close-ups, long-shots etc. Even though we are watching Zed's subjective memories, the screen rarely shows his first-person perspective, positioning him almost entirely as an object of perception. This means that Zed is also perceiving himself as an object of perception just as we are. Interestingly, a series of cuts between May and Consuella as spectators of the memory is joined to a close-up of Zed's face staring into the face of the woman he assaults, thus we as spectators of the movie *Zardoz*, are collapsed into the subject position of the victim, as May and Consuela are collapsed into one spectator-position within the frame itself. This draws us back to the paradox of Metz's application of Lacan whereby we, as the spectators of film are not present in the screen though we recognize the traces of the mirror stage in its instantiation of ourselves as both subject and object. As Metz says, our identification as spectators is always with the camera and its positioning of us as "all-perceiving." But for Zed, Metz's claim that "there is one thing and one thing only that is never reflected in it: the spectator's own body," here loses a certain currency, for Zed really is in fact watching himself and literally projecting himself from his own memory bank upon the screens that surround him. In that sense, Zed *is* present in the screen, as he undergoes the process of self-realization. However, Zed simultaneously experiences the identification of the spectator-self with the camera in exactly the way that Metz describes, because the camera and Zed are in fact one and the same. As Metz puts it: "the film is what I receive . . . [r]eleasing it, I am the projector, receiving it, I am the screen; in both these figures together, I am the camera, which points and yet records."[36] For Zed it is literally true that "the spectator himself is part of the apparatus."[37] Thus falling somewhere between the infant mirror stage and the fully adult engagement with the cinema screen as mirror, Zed is both "able to constitute a world of objects without having first to recognize himself within it"[38] as well as exist like the child, "both in it, and in front of it."[39] Our application of the mirror stage as the catalyst for Zed's emergence into ego and consciousness is further emphasized by the second critically important scene, when Zed descends into the mirrored pyramid where May pushes the connection between the screen and selfhood even further and more explicitly. It begins with them both standing outside of the pyramid, Zed contemplating himself in the mirror. After his descent into the interior Zed is surrounded by multiple reflecting screens that reveal both exteriority and interiority as the ground of ego formation. The screen/mirror surrounds Zed as May commands him: "Look at it. It's you." [Fig. 7]

Fig. 7.

Returning to the film's ending, Zed as the object/subject is now staring directly at the spectator, returning our gaze. The screen/mirror has individuated Zed and his looking directly at us reemphasizes our own relationship to the screen, reminding us – in a Metzian sense – that as creatures of the screen, our own subjectivities are made up of a roiling mass of consciousness, memory, and desire. This hitching together of screen, desire, and dream in turn again reemphasizes the structural importance of the subconscious and the relationship between dreams and movies, between cinema and the unconscious.

John Boorman did not necessarily or consciously make a 'psychoanalytical' film with *Zardoz*. At least, not in the way that Alfred Hitchcock famously invoked Freud in the classic *Spellbound* (1945) with its setting in a psychiatric hospital and foregrounding of neurotic guilt and Oedipal longing. (Interestingly however, *Spellbound* too is a story about a man's search for his 'real' identity.) Though Boorman was interested in psychoanalysis, he tended to be much more interested in Jungian notions of the 'collective unconscious' than the ideas of either Freud or Lacan,[40] stating quite explicitly that "The essence of *Zardoz* came to me in a dream; and since I believe, as Jung claimed, that these myths exist inside us, I was waiting for them to be released, to emerge into the light."[41] The mythic quest undertaken by the hero is a constant, albeit largely implicit, presence in much of Boorman's work and it comes to full and explicit realization in both *Excalibur* (1981) and *The Emerald Forest* (1985). But none of this is to undermine our broadly Metzian reading of *Zardoz*. Indeed, that it deploys an area of psychoanalysis with which Boorman has no deliberate or conscious engagement, is illustrative of the ways that not only psychoanalysis, but all theoretical perspectives, can be utilized in limitless ways, regardless of what a particular filmmaker might think of their own film. In that sense, theory often allows us to examine what is not being said, what lives in the silences and gaps of a film, perhaps what is being spoken in unconscious ways. And in that way, hopefully, *Zardoz* is an example of the rich seam that a "wonderfully terrible"[42] film offers the interested theoretician.

End Notes

[1] Dr. David Wall

[2] From *The Photoplay* (quoted in Braudy and Cohen, 401.) It is important to keep in mind that Münsterberg's interest in the "psychology" of film is distinct from a psychoanalytic approach to film.

[3] Vachel Lindsay, *The Art of the Motion Picture*, New York: Liverlight Publishing Company, 1970 (orig. 1915). 45.

[4] Quoted in Ana Lopez, "From Photoplays to Texts: Film Theory, Film Studies, and the Future," *Cinema Journal*, Vol. 24, No. 2 (Winter 1985) pp. 56 – 61. 56.

[5] There are a number of excellent introductions to the subject of film theory. Of particular value for the beginner are the following: Robert Stam, *Film Theory: An Introduction* (Malden, MA and Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000); Felicity Coleman, *Film Theory: Creating a Cinematic Grammar* (London and New York: Wallflower Press, 2014); Kevin MacDonald, *Film Theory: The Basics* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016); and Ruth Doughty and Christine Etherington-Wright, *Understanding Film Theory* (London: Palgrave, 2018). For those looking for an initial engagement with some primary texts, both Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen, eds., *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press 2016, 8th Edition) and Timothy Corrigan, Patricia White, and Meta Mazaj, eds., *Critical Visions in Film Theory: Classic and Contemporary Readings* (London: Bedford/St. Martin's 2010) are indispensable collections.

[6] Stam, *Film Theory*, 58.

[7] Vicky Lebeau, *Psychoanalysis and Cinema*, London and New York: Wallflower Press, 2001. 2.

[8] Christian Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema*, London and Basingstoke: MacMillan Press, Ltd., 1982. 69. It is also important to mention in relation to Metz, the work of Jean-Louis Baudry, whose "apparatus theory" outlined in "Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus" (1970) and "The Apparatus: Metapsychological Approaches to the Impression of Reality in Cinema" (1975) were also key texts in psychoanalytical film theory.

[9] Ibid., 6.

[10] Ibid., 45.

[11] Ibid., 46.

[12] Ibid., 49.

[13] Ibid., 50.

[14] Ibid., 58.

[15] Ibid., 58.

[16] Ibid., 59.

[17] Ibid., 60.

[18] Stam, 161.

[19] Lebeau, 4.

[20] Ibid., 6.

[21] Pauline Kael, "The Current Cinema," *The New Yorker*, Feb 18, 1974, pp. 98-103. 99.

[22] Roger Ebert, review on Roger Ebert website. [Get original citation from *Chicago Sun-Times*]

[23] Nora Sayre, *New York Times*, Feb 7, 1974. 46.

[24] Kilmeny Fane-Saunders, ed., *Radio Times Guide to Films*, London: BBC Worldwide Limited, 2002. 1596.

[25] Howard Hampton, *Film Comment*, 52.3. May/June 2016. Pp.52-57. 56

[26] DVD commentary

[27] Mark Kermode, *Hatchet Job: Love Movies, Hate Critics*, London: Picador 2014. 183.

[28] Brian Hoyle, *The Cinema of John Boorman*, London: Scarecrow Press, 2012. 92.

[29] Boorman's follow-up to *Zardoz* was the critically excoriated *Exorcist II: The Heretic* (1977) which is another a long-standing entrant on the lists of worst films ever made.

[30] *Deliverance* was both a critical and commercial hit. [Brief list of notable nominations/awards.] However, not everyone was an enthusiast of the film. Roger Ebert described it as: "a fantasy about violence, not a realistic consideration of it," asserting that "it's possible to consider civilized men in a confrontation with the wilderness without throwing in rapes, cowboy-and-Indian stunts and pure exploitative sensationalism." [Roger Ebert, review on Roger Ebert website. [Need original citation from *Chicago Sun-Times*]]

[31] Marianna Torgovnik, *Gone Primitive: Savage Intellects/ Modern Lives*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990. 8.

[32] Freud's own office was crammed with images, totems, and fetishes of so-called primitive cultures. See Torgovnik, *Gone Primitive*, "Entering Freud's Study," 194-209.

[33] Published in Germany in 1930 as *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur* («The Uneasiness in Civilization») it was translated into English and published by the Hogarth Press in the same year, under the title *Civilization and Its Discontents*.

[34] Connery was determined to rid himself of Bond.

[35] It might be worth recalling here the earlier comments from the likes of Brian Hoyle about how viewers frequently find *Zardoz* "baffling" and "ludicrous."

[36] *The Imaginary Signifier*, 51.

[37] Ibid., 50.

[38] Ibid., 46.

[39] Ibid., 49.

[40] Michael Ciment sees Jung as "a crucial influence on the filmmaker." 14.

[41] Ciment, 140.

[42] Howard Hampton, *Film Comment*, 49.5 (Sept/Oct 2013), pp. 48-53. 53.