

Letter from the Editor

 Dear Reader:

Happy New Year from all of us at *MSJ*, where we continue to explore cinematic artistry supported by you and our contributors.

Since your 2024 reading list is likely starting to grow, may I recommend a few additions from Issue 8.2, the “First Blood” edition? Leading the issue is Dr. Nilakshi Goswami’s article, “Cinematic Narrative of Disability in Post-Independent India: A Case Study of *Mother India*,” a must-read for those whose research interests include representations of disability and ableism in a socialist society. Even if you are familiar with Mehboob Khan’s classic *Mother India* (1957) along with its extensive critical coverage, Dr. Goswami’s article promises an unexpected entry point for discussion. As she notes about the nuances of colour,

The film begins with the use of red hues: the *sindoor* (vermilion mark) along the parting line of Radha’s hair, the *bindi* on her forehead and the bridal *chunari* (scarf) draped around her shoulder and head. [. . .] Meanwhile, once the canal is opened, the water that flows red, a metaphor for the bloody legacy of Indian independence. Thus, the scene involving Shamu wiping off Radha’s *bindi* could also be interpreted as India’s dismal failure in improving the life of its citizens, and more specifically, its subaltern disabled population. (Goswami 6)

The subtleties of red symbolism extend to Jordan Redekop-Jones’s “The Empty Vessel Chronicles of the ‘Unfed’ Womb — Examining Symbolic Female Bodies and the Absence of Bodily Autonomy in *Alien 3*,” in which blood flows in two notable instances: down the drain during Newt’s autopsy and from Ripley’s nostril as she witnesses Newt’s and Corporal Hicks’s incineration. Jordan’s undergraduate scholarship featurette captures the nuances of motherhood, womanhood, and death through a fascinating *mise-en-scène* analysis of the autopsy and nosebleed scenes. It is another must-read.

I have one final recommended reading for you to bookmark: Scott Szeljack’s featurette, “The Pressure of Objects: Clutter and Class in Rian Johnson’s *Knives Out*,” an investigation of the maximalist set design of Johnson’s 2019 feature film. This maximalism stands in stark contrast to Marta’s pristine white Superga sneakers—the grounding force of her minimalist uniform—that are disrupted by that singular blood spot.

The blood-red of Radha’s *bindi*, Ripley’s noseblood, and Marta’s incriminating sneakers unifies this issue. Please enjoy your *MSJ* reading.


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Editor-in-Chief