

Christopher Dier

Dier

Film as Lit

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### The Color of Mars: Color Coding in Ridley Scott's *The Martian*

Like other of Ridley Scott films, *Bladerunner* (1982) and *Alien* (1979) specifically, color serves as the essential textural element in the fabric of the onscreen world of the harrowing Sci/Fi adventure *The Martian* (2015). Through his manipulation of color gradience, Ridley Scott is able to create an unknown world that emotes the danger, desertion, and defeat confronted by the alien astronaut, Mark Watney, surviving alone on Mars. Early establishing shots feature a beautifully hostile Martian landscape in course rust colors, reds, ambers, golds, and browns; in contrast to the known and comforting green and blue atmospheric earth. Scott allows for minimal respite from the subconscious threat of the “Red” planet by introducing the green of plant life and growth as Watney contrives a hopeful potato garden from the desolate landscape enveloping him. The rest of Watney’s experience, every failed attempt to sustain life, is oppressed by a sense of growing isolation and sensory deprivation overwhelmed by the raw and gritty red sands. Scott maintains this tinted tension in order to evoke subtextual empathy for a man desperately trying to survive a dangerous and treacherous world. Audiences are dramatically relieved when Watney’s rescue succeeds and he is returned to Earth’s green solace because Scott so effectively amplified the threat of Mars’ landscape.

