Creating an aura of mystery in multimodal film setting:
A cognitive analysis of Denis Villeneuve's *Arrival* and *Blade Runner 2049*

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This paper aims at analysing selected examples of visual, audio-visual and verbal representations of meaning presented in two science-fiction films directed by Denis Villeneuve – *Arrival* (2016) and *Blade Runner 2049* (2017). The focus of this paper is on how cognitive linguistics tools (such as embodiment, image schemas, metaphor, metonymy and blending) can explain the ways in which certain aspects of meaning emerge in multimodal film setting, where image is the dominant mode of presentation, supported by other modalities, including the verbal (dialogues or written language) and auditory inputs (sound and music composed for the film), whereby the last two modalities may be used either as prominent or liminally ostensive stimuli in the film.

In particular, the paper examines how these three modalities (visual, auditory, verbal) interact to create a cognitively coherent atmosphere of mystery which is present in the analysed science-fiction dramas. The two source materials selected for examination share the film genre and the director, but are vastly different with regard to their plot and discussed themes; also, other teams were responsible for cinematography and music. The methodology applied in this study combines the elements of cognitive film analysis (cf. Bordwell 1989; Coëgnarts & Kravanja 2012; Coëgnarts 2017) with cognitive linguistics, focusing in particular on multimodal metaphor (Forceville 2016) and conceptual blending (Fauconnier & Turner 2002; Brandt 2013).

As a result of this study, a number of specific patterns of visual and multimodal conceptual integration have been identified, which can give rise to or strengthen the atmosphere of mystery permeating the examined films, as intended by the film director. These involve, among others:
- the camera shift from long to close-up shots for metonymic construals of concepts that are crucial for the film plot, but presented only implicitly;
- the use of scenes where image and dialogue are presented asynchronously or even non-simultaneously;
- quick alternation of different types of shots to introduce emotional tension accompanied by non-diegetic sounds with oscillating pitch and change in lighting (e.g. hard high-key lighting vs. soft backlighting);
- the use of generally subdued colours and simplistic soundscapes for better focus, while salient objects/concepts/events are highlighted by the use of saturated colours and change in sound volume, frequency and timbre;
- repetition or slight alteration of visual imagery and accompanying musical themes for better plot continuity and coherence.

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