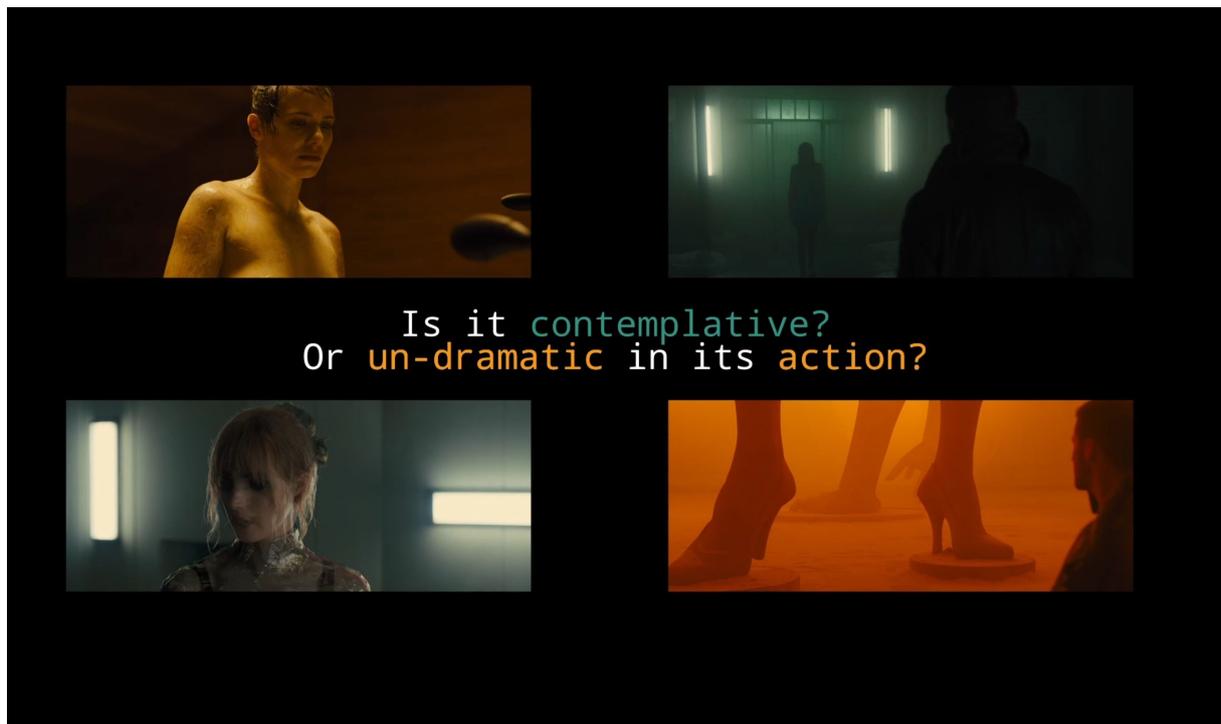


Blade Runner 2049 as Slow Science Fiction

Alissa Lienhard



Alissa Lienhard's video essay views Blade Runner 2049 as a work of 'slow science fiction' and investigates the interplay of contemplation, dramatic tension, and slow action sequences in the film. Watch the video essay here: <https://flowcasts.uni-hannover.de/nodes/GmPao>

Creator's Statement

My work on *Blade Runner 2049* (Denis Villeneuve, 2017) developed out of an assignment in which we had to pair a sequence from the movie with a text that was not directly related to the movie. The objective was to create a videographic epigraph. I struggled to settle on a topic or a text until I remembered reading Vivian Sobchack's "Science Fiction Film: An Overview." The quote from her text that I chose for my videographic epigraph defines science fiction films in a few sentences, focusing on their differences with regard to science fiction literature. Pairing Sobchack's definition of the science fiction film with a clip from *Blade Runner 2049* seemed intriguing, specifically because it creates contradictions. Sobchack argues that the science fiction film is "less contemplative and analytic and more spectacular and kinetic than its literary counterparts" (261). She also categorizes the genre as full of "dramatic action," another feature that does not necessarily apply to the film. For this first project, the videographic epigraph, I mainly played with the opposition created

between the film and the aforementioned quote while stressing the most contradictory parts of Sobchack's text through the use of color.

What started as an ironic juxtaposition then expanded into a more serious and larger project. While I kept parts of the original epigraph and quote for the introduction of my video essay, "*Blade Runner 2049* as Slow Science Fiction" makes a larger argument about the film's pacing and unusual storytelling. I argue that the film is slow, contemplative, and un-dramatic in its action. The video essay is separated into three parts that build upon each other. I firstly elaborate on definitions of science fiction film as a fast-paced genre and how this definition clashes with *Blade Runner 2049*. The second part then showcases how the action in the movie is un-dramatic, while the 'drama' mostly plays out on the level of dialogue. Lastly, a third section of the video essay explores the contemplative nature of the film with an exemplary close reading of one scene.

My argument on slowness is expanded beyond the essay's contents in its videographic form. Similar to *Blade Runner 2049* itself, this video essay takes things slow and moves calmly through its arguments. This results in a roughly ten-minute-long video that incorporates many of the film's visually stunning and slow shots. I also opted to use text-on screen instead of voiceover, both because the additional reading time adds to my thesis and because the film's slow music and dialogue enrich the essay more effectively than my voice would.

Author Biography

Alissa Lienhard (she/her) is a former student assistant and current master student in the division of American Studies at Leibniz University Hannover (Germany). She holds a bachelor's degree in the Interdisciplinary Bachelor with English as first subject and Biology as second subject. Her bachelor thesis, "Don't Let the Bastards Grind You Down': Language(s) of Repression and Resistance in *The Handmaid's Tale*" develops an argument about the power of language in the context of feminist speculative literature. In her studies in the North American Studies master program, she focuses particularly on film, television, comics, science fiction, feminism, neurodiversity, and gender/queer studies. Alissa Lienhard is a founding member of *In Progress's* editorial board.

Works Cited

Blade Runner 2049. Directed by Denis Villeneuve, Warner Brothers, 2017.
Sobchack, Vivian. "American Science Fiction Film: An Overview." *A Companion to Science Fiction*, edited by David Seed, Blackwell, 2008, pp. 261-74.