Modeling Meta-Immersion for Cinematic New Narrative

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Abstract

This paper will model data into Meta-Tonic Design by a method which examines and locates meta-immersion. The data will be drawn from the films *Blade Runner 2049* (dir:Villeneuve, 2017), *Hard to be a God* (dir:German, 2013), *The Turin Horse* (dir:Tarr, 2011) and the *The Deserted* (dir:Ming-liang, 2017) by considering the state of each artefact and how these elements behave in the presence of a formula prescribed through calculations made from specific indicators and additives.

Keywords: meta-immersion, contemporary cinema, meta-tonic design

INTRODUCTION

This paper is the second of two articles that will draw attention to the idea of meta-immersion by modelling the established analysis of the films *Blade Runner 2049, Hard to be a God, The Turin Horse,* and *The Deserted* located in the first paper *Designing Meta-Immersion for Cinematic Narrative* (Wilson, 2017) to provide an informed outcome using the proposed Meta-Tonic Design behaviour model. The intent of this research is to first, conceptually interrogate each film by drawing out and examining specific elements which are identified as potential sequences containing meta-immersion to then second, determine if meta-immersion can be present in these examples by way of belonging to a key set of attributes and third, to calculate this data through analysis as a mechanism for developing new knowledge from the study of cinematic films.

One of the key attributes to this process will be seeking to understand the nature and implications of Meta-Tonic Design in relation to *how* it can be useful in understanding cinematic films beyond existing psychoanalytical and formative film theory assessments. As Meta-Tonic Design is a new and untested approach, there needs to be a fundamental design process put in place so as to establish clear boundaries as to what this new design process can achieve, what are the capabilities of this process, and in doing so, how can the modeling attest new knowledge so as to best serve an outcome for coming to terms with meta-immersion as well as the films themselves by which the design method will establish through analysis.

There are many established ways to understand a cinematic film by an analysis performed through film theory and or film philosophy. Structuralist film theory, for example, provides a narrowed version of how to read a film just as Marxist film theory and Screen theory evoke similar progressions. However, these methods are restrictive to, at times, a convoluted absolute and even for the Deleuzian approach, therein lies a problem for meta-immersion because it simply cannot be measured to its full effect in cinematic film if any one of these aforementioned methodologies are used to locate and define its condition. Moreover, there is no evidence of a design theory with the sole purpose of film analysis that is capable of recognising, especially in a VR and 360 context, and measuring meta-immersion. Given this lack of evidence in the field, this paper will provide insight into a more significant approach that will create a new way of looking at cinema analysis, that enables the user of this method to enact the capabilities of design as a way to come to terms with more deeper levels of conceptual interrogation without referencing more established, centralist methods in film theory which are, in the case of meta-immersion, limited in scope and propensity.

While design may not be the traditional pathway for filmmakers to include in their practice and critique, Meta-Tonic Design allows for an oscillation of several opposing factors to function together, and opposed, in unison even if these factors are vastly different in their nature and agency. Likewise, as the principles of Metamodernism become a driver in the overall schema of Meta-Tonic Design, the paradoxical overlays of cinema are permissible in function to, say, an opposing element such as irony because both factors have vastly different ways of recognising and dealing with meta-immersion, especially if the indicators are formulating a conclusion from active formula when paradoxical and ironic overlays are at play with and through the combinations of the subject and agent behaviour.

Moreover, if the additives and indicators of Meta-Tonic Design function in a way as to provide a consolidated assessment through an analytical architecture, located in the structural elements of the proposed model, then this paper suggests that the design model itself can be used to supercede and make redundant all other film theory models in assessing meta-immersion and further, be *considered* for adoption by users to solve more complex problems through assessment of cinematic films. For example, McGowan states that 'as Screen theory sees it, the belonging that the apparatus produces is ideological interpellation' (McGowen, p.59) and supports the notion that above all else, the spectacle, and, concurrently, lead by, ideology thus closely related and propelled by Marxist film theory and, one might argue, overlapping into Apparatus theory, is one of the overarching cores of cinematic psychoanalytic studies, as it defines a film with the audience in a pseudo partnership, lead and governed by how ideology makes an audience feel. For meta-immersion, this is a superficial method of obtaining new knowledge because it simply does not open up a wider assessment nor even knows how to assess it, in the first place. When dealing with even more flimsy analytical models such as Formalist film theory in comparison to what Meta-Tonic Design can provide for film analysis, there is no comparative similarities between either to suggest that the aforementioned models can support the same kind of data obtained by

Meta-Tonic Design in an analysis of a film referred to hereafter as a 'research artefact' and audiences referred to hereafter as 'agents'.

MODELING META-IMMERSION

This paper proposes to respond to each research artefact by establishing a series of classes defined as indicators, being elements that individually influence a specific aspect of the proposed condition and the main additives relating to the governing behaviours, which then influence the indicators. Once the additives are applied to the available indicators, the formulaic ranges of each condition then maps the presence of a condition which leads to establishing a meta-immersion.

Effect indicator classes, thus being agency (ag), new knowledge (nk), irony (ir), cinematic frame (cf), cinematic effect (ce), paradoxical overlay (px), and the subject (s) are used to map the singularity elements brought about by the various influences that impact against the agent indicators in the said research artefacts.

Agent indicators are elements of behavioural classes thus being agent response (AR), agent specific (AS), agent intent (AI), and agent condition (AC) which change according to how each effect indicator will impact on the nature of the agent and determinant from the outcomes of where and how each effect indicator is positioned according to the behavioural patterns observed in each said research artefact.

Additive classes are the conceptual locators used to isolate and determine meta-immersion, calculated in process nodes thus being oscillation (O), immersion (I) and meta (M).

Effect Indicators

- Agency (ag)
- New Knowledge (nk)
- Irony (ir)
- Cinematic Frame (cf)
- Cinematic Effect (ce)
- Paradoxical Overlay (px)
- The Subject (s)

Agent Indicators

- Agent Response (AR)
- Agent Specific (AS)
- Agent Intent (AI)
- Agent Condition (AC)

Additives

- Oscillation (O)
- Immersion (I)
- Meta (M)

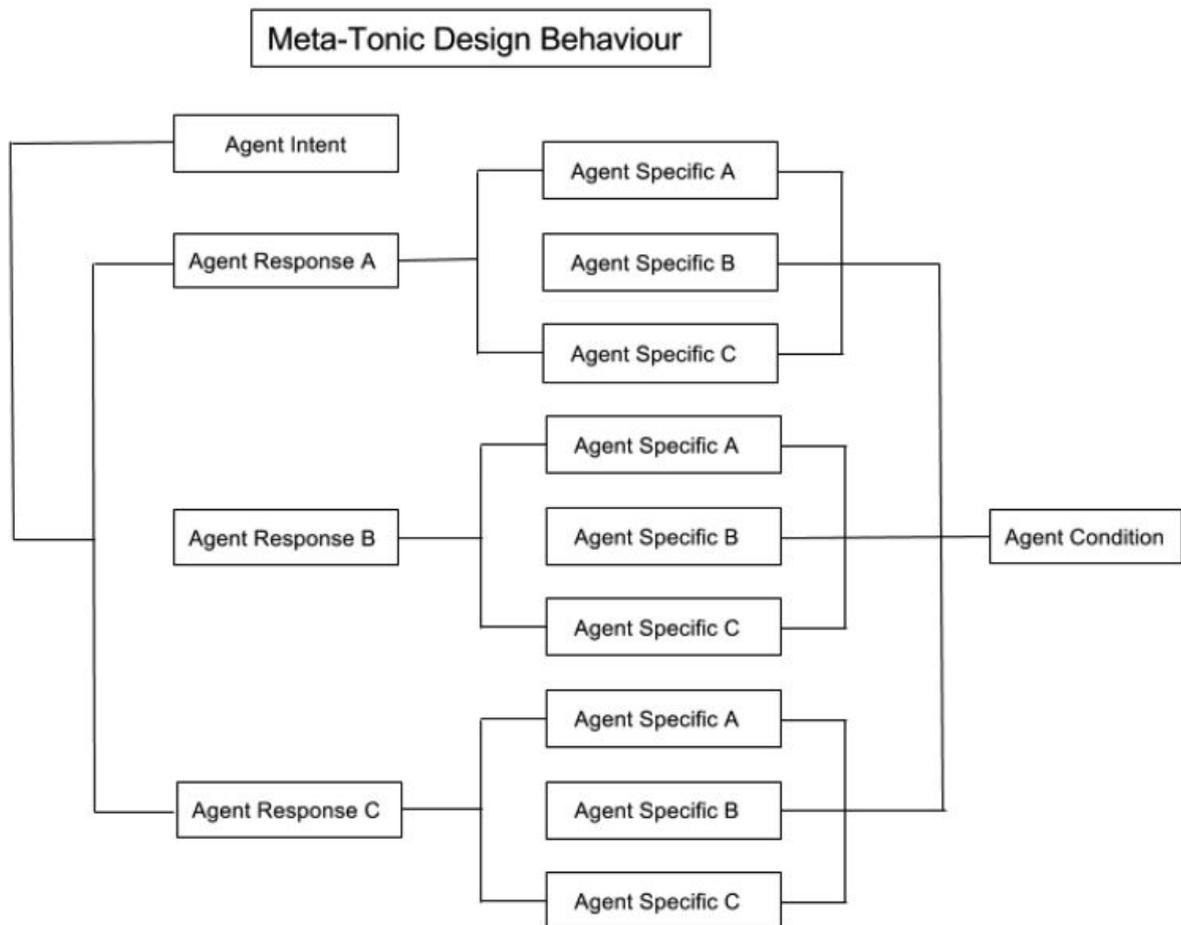Figure 1 represents as a graphical chart of Meta-Tonic Design.

Figure 1. Meta-Tonic Design conceptual model

Figure 1 will be represented hereafter as both a representative and numeric equation:

$$\text{AI} = \frac{AS(A) + AS(B) + AS\ (C)}{AR(A)} \ + \ \frac{AS(A) + AS(B) + AS\ (C)}{AR(B)} \ + \ \frac{AS(A) + AS(B) + AS\ (C)}{AR(C)} = \text{AC}$$

Figure 2. Meta-Tonic Design representative formula

CALCULATION ASSESSMENTS

To use the method, a calculation assessment must be applied in order for the formula to validate a response in determining the value set for an agent condition. The agent intent, in this case, is used to locate and measure meta-immersion. To do this, AI uses the sum of the process nodes, that is to say, the node of fraction of AS, AC, and AR - in calculating the results of AR and AS to determine AC. AR is measured by additives and AS is measured by effect indicators.

Additives and effect indicators all start at the value of 1 and use increments of 1 every time their complexity doubles according to their specific task. For example, in additives, the lowest denominator, oscillation, is 1 and the highest denominator, meta, is 3 as oscillation being a singular process is ranked third, agency derived from the process is ranked second and meta derived at reflective agency is ranked first. Likewise, for effect indicators, the lowest fraction, cinematic frame, is ranked with a value of 1 and the highest fraction, new knowledge, is ranked with a value of 7.

META-TONIC DESIGN CALCULATION ASSESSMENT CHART

Item or integer	Class	Value	Justification
Process		1	Standard value for a thinking process of action
Oscillation (O)	Additive	1	The process of determining opposing factors = 1
Immersion (I)	Additive	2	Double the value of the process of Oscillation, the process being oscillation =1 plus the result of the process =1
Meta (M)	Additive	3	Three times the value of the process of Oscillation, the process being oscillation = 1, the result of the process =1, and the meta reflection of the results = 1
Cinematic Frame (cf)	Effect Indicator	1	The process of determining the cinematic image
Cinematic Effect (ce)	Effect Indicator	2	Twice the value of determining the cinematic image, the process = 1, the effect of the process =1
Subject (s)	Effect Indicator	3	Three times the value of determining the image, the process = 1 ,the effect of the process = 1, the formation of the effect = 1
Agency (ag)	Effect Indicator	4	Four times the value of determining the image, the process = 1, effect of the process = 1, the formation of the effect = 1, the

			awareness of the effect = 1
Paradoxical Overlay (px)	Effect Indicator	5	Five times the value of determining the image, the process = 1, effect of the process = 1, the formation of the effect = 1, the awareness of the effect = 1, the multiplication of the awareness = 1
Irony (ir)	Effect Indicator	6	Six times the value of determining the image, the process = 1, effect of the process = 1, the formation of the effect = 1, the awareness of the effect = 1, the multiplication of the awareness = 1, the paradoxical overlay = 1, the irony created from the paradoxical overlay = 1
New Knowledge (nk)	Effect Indicator	7	Seven times the value of determining the image, the process = 1, effect of the process = 1, the formation of the effect = 1, the awareness of the effect = 1, the multiplication of the awareness = 1, the irony established from the multiplication = 1, the new knowledge created from the multiplication = 1
Agent Response (AR)	Agent Indicator		The Additive representing the denominator of the process node
Agent Specific (AS)	Agent Indicator		The cluster of Effect Indicators used as fractions of the demonator
Agent Intent (AI)	Agent Indicator		The objective of the result that determines AC
Agent Condition (AC)	Agent Indicator		The result of the objective of AI determined by the sum of process nodes divided by 2
Process Nodes			The fraction sums of AR and AS
Para-Tonic (PT)		1-10	The lowest range of condition of meta-immersion
Neo-Tonic (NT)		11-20	The highest range of condition of meta-immersion

Figure 3. Meta-Tonic Design calculations chart

In determining the numeric value of AC, a scale between 1-20 is implemented to measure meta-immersion to allow for the maximum sums of the effect indicators, which are then divisible by 2 to calculate the final numeric result. If this is calculated as a number between 1-10 then the formula designates the result as Para-Tonic, that is, in the lowest range of value quantifying that there is no presence of meta-immersion and if the results are between 11-20 then the formula designates the result as Neo-Tonic, that is, in the highest range of value

signalling the presence of meta-immersion. If, say, the formula reflected little or no high ranking classes of irony, paradoxical overlay, or new knowledge, the calculation would then be determined by lower ranking classes thus not capable of containing a presence of meta-immersion whereas inclusive higher value classes would achieve the opposite.

BLADE RUNNER 2049

The eye context of *Blade Runner 2049* places great importance on 'establishing a hierarchy of simulacra embodiment' (Wilson, p.8) escrued with meta references, placing the role of meta as both looking back to the referential elements of the first *Blade Runner* (dir: Scott, 1982) proving to be a prominent factor for consideration of meta-immersion when placed into the second artefact. As noted from the previous paper, the evidenced examples of meta-immersion are the blinking eye in the opening shot of *Blade Runner 2*, Agent K's baseline tests, and the 'short segment of Nabokov's meta-fiction poem 'Pale Fire'' (Wilson, p.8) recited during the Agent K baseline tests. These are represented in the agent response and agent specific quadrants of the formula measured against the effect and agent indicators. Agent Response A will be represented by the opening eye shot and measured by Agent Specific A (*cf*) representing the close up, Agent Specific B (*ce*) representing the effect of the close up shot, and Agent Specific C (*a*) representing the agency of this shot that sets up the other two proposed meta-immersive sequences. Agent Response B will be represented by the Agent K Baseline tests visuals and subjected to Agent Specific A (*px*) representing the paradoxical nature of the Baseline test we recall from *Blade Runner* now subverted to Agent K, Agent Specific B (*s*) representing the nature of the subject created from the paradox, and Agent Specific C (*ce*) representing the cinematic effect generated from the paradox of how can a replicant be hunting replicants if the LAPD of this timeline are hunting Nexus 5 and 6 replicants in the first place? Agent Response C will be represented by the Pale Fire dialogue of the Agent K Baseline test dialogue and subjected to Agent Specific A (*px*) representing a paradox of the *possibility* of Agent K's agency being that of a replicant, Agent Specific B (*ag*) representing the agency of Agent K propelled from the Baseline tests, and Agent Specific C (*nk*) being the new knowledge which has been established from this agency. In this case, due to the dominating presence of a paradoxical overlay in two out of the three agent response nodes, the agent condition is considered to reveal that the meta-immersion is located as a paradoxical overlay justified by both the immersion of Agent K Baseline tests and the meta of *Pale Fire* traversed in the Baseline test dialogue. This is derived by accepting that *ag* is defined by the oscillation of *cf* and *ce* in the opening eye shot, *px* is defined by the immersion of this shot overlayed from what we remember of the same shot vestured in *Blade Runner* and transposed by *ce* and *s* in the Agent K Baseline test sequences, and *ag* as defined by the meta of *ce* and *s*.

CALCULATION

Blade Runner 2049 representative formula

$$AI = \frac{cf + ce + ag}{Opening\ eye\ shot\ (O)} + \frac{ce + s + px}{Agent\ K\ Baseline\ Tests\ (I)} + \frac{ag + px + nk}{Pale\ Fire\ (M)} = AC$$

Figure 3. *Blade Runner 2049* Meta-Tonic Design representative formula

Blade Runner 2049 numeric formula

$$AI = \frac{1 + 2 + 4}{1} + \frac{2 + 3 + 5}{2} + \frac{3 + 5 + 7}{3} = AC\ (17\ /\ 2 = 8.5)$$

Figure 4: *Blade Runner 2049* Meta-Tonic Design numeric formula

The numeric formula calculated AC with a value in the Neo-Tonic range detected at 8.5. From this calculation it can be concluded that *Blade Runner 2049* demonstrated evidence of meta-immersion.

HARD TO BE A GOD

The breaking of the fourth wall by Don Rebo at the start of the hanging of the intellectuals scene from *Hard to be a God* accentuates the possibility of meta-immersion. As Don Reba 'without hesitation breaks the fourth wall for a brief moment as the camera turns away and leads directly to the platform where we find a dozen corpses hanging from ropes' (Wilson, p.9) there are immediate implications emergent from the effect indicator *cf* induced from both *ir* and *px* in capabilities early on in the scene as the agent's incognito are compromised because as the first paper notes, 'there is no camera in the character's world.' (Brown, xii) Agent Response A will be represented by the the hanging of the intellectuals scene and measured by Agent Specific A (*cf*) representing the framing of Don Reba looking into camera, Agent Specific B (*ce*) representing the effect of the shot Don Reba breaking the fourth wall, and Agent Specific C (*s*) representing how the subject was changed from Don Reba being a participant for the agent's gaze into becoming an active agent. Agent Response B will be represented by Don Reba breaking the fourth wall and subjected to Agent Specific A (*a*) representing the intent of Don Reba's awareness of breaking the fourth wall, Agent Specific B (*ir*) representing the irony brought about from Don Reba breaking character and developing his own awareness of agency, and Agent Specific C (*s*) representing how Don Reba changed the subject from this awareness. Agent Response C will be represented by the awareness of Don Reba in the paradox of both his character and the agent playing a character and subjected to Agent Specific A (*px*) representing the paradoxical overlay of the effect of

Don Reba instating a paradox for the agent's review, Agent Specific B (*ir*) representing the irony of Don Reba actively knowing he has initiated irony through the subject, and Agent Specific C (*nk*) being the new knowledge developed from Don Reba's awareness of the initiated irony through a paradoxical overlay. This is derived by accepting that, like *Blade Runner 2049, ag* is defined by the oscillation of *cf, ce* and *s* in the fourth wall sequence, *s* is again redefined by the immersion of this sequence overlayed from the irony defined by Don Rebo having an agency derived from his awareness of the audience watching the artefact, and transposed by *px* and *ir* in the awareness of Don Rebo as defined by the meta of *nk*

CALCULATION

Hard to be a God representative formula

$$AI = \frac{cf + ce + s}{Hanging\ of\ the\ Intellectuals(O)} + \frac{ag + ir + s}{Breaking\ the\ 4th\ Wall(I)} + \frac{px + ir + nk}{Awareness\ of\ Don\ Reba(M)} = AC$$

Figure 5. *Hard to Be a God* Meta-Tonic Design representative formula

Hard to be a God numeric formula

$$AI = \frac{1 + 2 + 3}{1} + \frac{4 + 6 + 3}{2} + \frac{5 + 6 + 7}{3} = AC\ (19.6/2 = 9.8)$$

Figure 6. *Hard to Be a God* Meta-Tonic Design numeric formula

The numeric formula calculated AC with a value of 9.8 detected in the Neo-Tonic range. From this calculation it can be concluded that *Hard to Be a God* demonstrated evidence of meta-immersion.

THE TURIN HORSE

Tarr's inactivity of editing throughout the initial 7:15 minute continued shot, coupled by the impact of the entire film shot length of 30 takes with an average shot length of 300 seconds, of the protagonist daughter, Erika, dressing, leaving the farmhouse to fetch water then returning back again is propelled by its immersive qualities driven by the uninterrupted, bleak ontology both in terms of the pending storm that accelerates in propensity throughout the artefact and also in the bleakness of the character's demise into utter and unsalvageable hopelessness. For this scene's analysis, Agent Response A will be represented by the fetching of water scene and measured by Agent Specific A (*cf*) representing the steadicam gliding of the camera's long shots, Agent Specific B (*ce*) representing the effect of the long durational qualities of the shot, and Agent Specific C (*i*) representing the immersion derived from the

durational period. Agent Response B will be represented by the hopelessness of Erika and her crippling sense of duty to her father subjected by Agent Specific A (*ag*) representing the agency of Erika living as if captive in the farmhouse, Agent Specific B (*s*) representing the nature of the subject from Erika's stoicness transpiring throughout the scene, and Agent Specific C (*ce*) representing cinematic effect where uninterrupted editing permits an agent's engagement with the research artefact. Agent Response C will be represented by the meta references of the repeated scenes of sequence's recycled at slightly different points of view to Agent Specific A (*s*) representing the subject's loop through multiplicity, Agent Specific B (*px*) representing the paradoxical nature of the scene's multiplicity, and Agent Specific C (*nk*) being the new knowledge derived from the effects from the paradoxical overlay. In this case, the central character of Erika contributes to the condition of *ir* by accepting that the overarching essence of *ag* is defined by the oscillation of *cf* and *ce* in the long take of Erika's journey to and from the farm well, that the hopelessness of Erika is established by *ag*, *s*, and *ce,* which then again affects the condition of *s* through paradoxical overlays as the artefact progresses when an agent witnesses the same scene repeated and looped to established *nk*.

CALCULATION

The Turin Horse representative formula

$$AI = \frac{cf + ce + ir}{The\ Fetching\ of\ Water\ Scene\ (O)} + \frac{ag + s + ce}{Hopelessness\ of\ Erika\ (I)} + \frac{s + px + nk}{Repeated\ Sequences\ (M)} = AC$$

Figure 7. *The Turin Horse* Meta-Tonic Design representative formula

The Turin Horse numeric formula

$$AI = \frac{1 + 2 + 6}{1} + \frac{4 + 3 + 2}{2} + \frac{3 + 6 + 7}{3} = AC\ (18.8/2 = 9.4)$$

Figure 8. *The Turin Horse* Meta-Tonic Design numeric formula

The numeric formula calculated AC with a value of 9.4 detected in the Neo-Tonic range. From this calculation it can be concluded that *The Turin Horse* demonstrated evidence of meta-immersion.

THE DESERTED

One of the surprising elements of *The Deserted* is that despite its VR format, an agent witnesses the artefact at a set camera point rather than an ability to watch the entire artefact

from any vantage point. The screen and goggle frame, as such, is guided for an agent 'into a VR space without abandoning a cinematic focus point as a trade off for a total artificially articulated reality.' (Wilson, p.11) In essence, *The Deserted* is a VR artefact to be experienced by an agent with visual restriction whereby the guided camera format of a flat cinema experience is represented in the artefact thus disabling the archetypal VR democratisation of the cinematic frame and further, one might argue to suggest, that this fixed camera movement is not unlike a cinematographic absolute as opposed to the more quintessential VR artefact that this paper considers to be, in this context, as a modal of relativism. Given this, the user experience will be considered in the formulaic response below as a primary source of reference. Agent Response A will be represented by the the fixed viewing position and measured by Agent Specific A (*cf*) representing the cinemagraphic absolute of the artefact, Agent Specific B (*ce*) representing the effect of this absolute and Agent Specific C (*s*) representing the absolute's manifestation in the subject. Agent Response B will be represented by the immersive qualities of engaging the character whilst still in fixed point of view, yet imbued with the optical embellishment of a VR experience - an agent is still guided by the camera but are immersed in more spatial information set located in the same kind of shot as represented in flat cinema - and subjected to Agent Specific A (*ce*) representing the affect of the subject, Agent Specific B (*s*) representing how the subject is affected by looking in on itself to create its own state of agency for the viewing agent, and Agent Specific C (*ag*) representing the manifestation of agency from the subject. Agent Response C will be represented by how the emotional immersion of the viewing experience is manifested through character immersion into the wider holistic nature of the subject's agency and subjected to Agent Specific A (*s*) representing the multiplicity of the condition of the subject's transformation from character immersion to emotional immersion. Agent Specific B (*ir*) is representative of the effect of this transformation towards irony, and Agent Specific C (*nk*) being what kind of *nk* can be generated as a result of the subject's irony. In this case, due to the transformation of the subject and its changing state of agency, the agent condition is considered to reveal that the meta-immersion is, located as *ir,* as justified by both the immersion of character and the meta of emotion, and that *nk* is present because of the developing nature of *s* governed by *ag* and *ce.*

The Deserted representative formula

$$AI = \frac{cf + ce + s}{Fixed\ Viewing\ Position\ (O)} + \frac{ce + s + ag}{Character\ Immersion\ (I)} + \frac{s + ir + nk}{Emotional\ Immersion\ (M)} = AC$$

Figure 9. *The Deserted* Meta-Tonic Design representative formula

The Deserted numeric formula

$$AI = \frac{1 + 2 + 3}{1} + \frac{2 + 3 + 4}{2} + \frac{3 + 6 + 7}{3} = AC\ (15.8/2 = 7.9)$$

Figure 10. *The Deserted* Meta-Tonic Design numeric formula

The numeric formula calculated AC with a value of 7.9 detected in the Neo-Tonic range. From this calculation it can be concluded that *The Deserted* has demonstrated evidence of meta-immersion.

CONCLUSION

This paper has demonstrated that Meta-Tonic Design can be used as a theorem to detect and rate the behavioural elements of meta-immersion in cinematic film. It has presented the test case findings from the first paper through formula and arrived at an outcome for all four discussed research artefacts. In doing so, this method has proven three factors. The first is that design can provide a method to understand and interrogate cinematic film. Second, that the concept of meta-immersion can be measured on a scale comprised of either Para-Tonic Immersion ranged at lower numerical values, and therefore understood as not containing elements of meta-immersion, and Neo-Tonic Immersion ranged at higher numerical values and therefore understood as being meta-immersive. Third, that this approach can offer a filmmaker an alternative to established film theories with the added advantage of being designed to accommodate more contemporary attributes of meta, immersion, and oscillation as well as being relevant to the current critical theory movement of Metamodernism. While the new cinematic formats of VR have changed the ways that an agent can witness cinematic experiences, it has also brought with it the understanding that the aforementioned issues are impacting on contemporary artefacts and how this might ought to be considered to attest significance as evidenced through new knowledge, thereby establishing a design process akin to twenty-first century cinematic practice.

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