# Chapter 4: Don’t be Evil: An archaeology of film site fictional worlds

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When the *Jurassic World* (2015) site opens a 30 second promo video loads from *YouTube* announcing the corporation like the studio logo at the start of a film and the film’s fictional world materialises in the guise of a site for *Masrani Global* Corporation, which took over the dinosaur cloning company, *InGen* in 1998. Imitating the layout of a real-world business site, the company home page cycles through a series of corporate buzz words- innovation-success-vision- superimposed over an image of the company’s chief executive officer, Simon Masrani (Irrfan Khan) standing in front of a *Jurassic World* badged helicopter. Moving into the site’s ‘Home’ area, there is a news feature on one of *Jurassic World*’s rising stars, Claire Dearing (Bryce Dallas Howard) who began her career in the franchise as the park’s manager and has been promoted in the fourth Jurassic film to be the senior assets manager. Here the site takes on a much more explicitly promotional tone as she describes ‘preparing to showcase this pinnacle of genetic ingenuity,’ the ‘highly anticipated Indominus Rex’, ‘which is sure to entertain future audiences like nothing before’ selling both the forthcoming film and the *Jurassic* brand.

The gap between *Jurassic Park III* (2001) and the next instalment in the franchise was fourteen years and as anticipation grew for the fourth film, Jurassic fans Jack Ewins and Timothy Glover developed a prototype site which they named *PatelCorp*. It was based on an earlier iteration for *The Lost World: Jurassic Park* - the 1997 United Internal Pictures ‘official site’ (www.lost\_world.com) as an as-if-real the *InGen* Intranet where the company’s vice president welcomes site visitors as new staff recruits and invites them to acquaint themselves with an extensive ‘Employees Handbook’. What you noticed about the Lost World site was that it was covered with copyright notices and prohibition warnings advising viewers to use the site for anything but personal use, illustrative of the industry’s wariness of the new medium of the internet and its attitude to fans. But by 2015 attitudes towards fans had softened. Understanding the value of fan validation, and as a Jurassic fan himself, the Director Colin Trevorrow actively sought out collaboration with fans and Universal commissioned Ewins and Glover to build the site promoting the franchise as collaborative and fan friendly.

One of the key roles of the site is character introduction. Dr Henry Wu (B. D. Wong) has been appointed to be the company’s lead geneticist and take the park into its next stage of development. A 3- minute video, *InGen Technologies, Tomorrow, Today* provides our first encounter with the character, who figured prominently in Michael Crichton’s *Jurassic Par*k novel on which the franchise is based, but only had a marginal role in the original film. In the character introduction he is clearly being set up to figure more prominently in *Jurassic World*. Despite all the smiles and folksy explanations about genetics, when asked how the company does it, Wu assumes a darker tone, replying guardedly ‘wouldn’t our competitors like to know.’ Foraging further into the site reveals a book written by Wu titled *The Next Step: An Evolution of God’s Concepts* (1995) suggesting he has evil scientist-like aspirations and establishing Wu as this film’s villain and a sense of foreboding around him. Then a ’confidential’ memo to Masrani employees is superimposed over the corporate site, indicating that the company is in a dire financial crisis which forms a plot primer for the forthcoming film, indicating to the viewer that all is not as it seems in *Jurassic World*, once again.

The site also provides a back story to the forthcoming film. From its 1986 origins as *InGen* to its acquisition by *Masrani Global* in 1998, the company’s history is embedded into the topography of the site. When *Masrani Global* was completed and the film released, for the Blu-ray launch, Universal invited the fans to expand the site. What became the ‘Terminal’ section provides a portal for more active engagement where fans must ‘hack’ into *Masrani Global’s* computer system to discover what lurks behind the site’s PR gloss through a Unix-style command line interface, nodding back to both the novel and original 1993 film. It is here that further evidence comes to light in an archived log message that Dr Wu is actively ‘manipulating and mutating animal genes’ running a counter narrative to his benign video profile. Vicarious participation is offered in the ‘Careers’ section where job vacancies from veterinarian to park inspector are advertised and application forms can be filled in and submitted online, thereby enabling fans to ‘insert’ themselves into the fictional world.

What is intriguing about a site like this is that it seemed to be undertaking much more than promotion and this fictional world proposes different modes of narrative engagement than that conventionally associated with film. Show and tell story details have to be gleaned by foraging through videos, images, articles, and features to piece together the upcoming film’s narrative. So, in setting out to address this book’s second key question, what different forms do film sites take?, and more specifically, what film website styles, aesthetics and narrative forms have emerged?, *Masraniglobal.com* offers one potential line of enquiry for this investigation, an exploration of fantasy and science fiction genres’ development of fictional worlds online.

**4.1 A Genealogy of Fictional Worlds**

Fictional world building can be traced back through the 20th century along two distinct genealogical lines of descent. One related to literary theory and the other to sociological study of play. Firstly, through theories of play. In *Homo Ludens* the Dutch historian Johan Huizinga outlines a set of principles in which he proposes play operates according to a set of ritualistic rules of engagement within a space he describes as a ‘magic circle’ (1938: 10). For Huizinga, during play, the laws of the real world are suspended and replaced with rules governing the game in a designated space (Ibid). He goes on to explain how in play, fictional worlds can be superimposed on real world places, irrespective of whether the game takes place at a card table, on a stage, or a tennis court, and that once nominated for the purpose, these special rules prevail (ibid). By this definition, fictional worlds are temporary spaces designated for the performance of certain prescribed activities and behaviours, within the ordinary world (ibid.)

Two decades later Huizinga’s ideas are taken up by the French sociologist, Roger Caillois who devises a taxonomy of play in *Les Jeux et Les Hommes* (Man, Play Games) (2001(1958, trans. 1961)). His taxonomy identifies four distinctive kinds of play, he terms *Agôn*, *Alea*, *Ilinx* and *Mimicry* (Caillois, 2001:12). *Agôn* describes games that entail an element of competition in which participants compete in a contest of physical strength, knowledge, or skill (Ibid.). *Alea* focuses on games that have an element of chance determining the outcome, such as the lottery or a game of cards. While *Ilinx* play includes vertiginous games that generate visceral reactions ranging from joy to vertigo, as well as the sense of disorientation experienced on a roller coaster ride. Lastly, *Mimicry* describes games of simulation or make-believe in which players may assume different identities (Ibid). Caillois suggests that make-believe depends upon a recognition of the ‘dissimulation of reality and the substitution of a second reality.’ In effect, a form of world-making which could describe the kind of play invited in the Masrani Global site (Caillois,2001: 22). Caillois qualifies this taxonomy by suggesting that all forms of play exist on a spectrum: at one end characterised by ‘a kind of uncontrolled fantasy’ that he designated *paida* (Caillois, 2001:13), and at the other play is disciplined by rules and conventions requiring patience, skill and ingenuity, a principle he terms *ludus.* These ideas have come to be foundational in the theorization of computer games by Katie Salen and Eric Zimmerman (1999) Mark. J.P. Wolf (2003), Jesper Juul (2005), and others.

The second genealogical line of descent can be traced back to the work of English Romantic poets like William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge in the late 18th century. In *Biographia Literaria* published in 1817, Coleridge articulates his philosophy of poetry and makes a distinction between the primary imagination and the secondary imagination. Coleridge argues that the primary imagination is based on sensory perception through which we unconsciously comprehend the world around us and our place within it (Wolf, 2012:21). By contrast, Coleridge suggests that the secondary imagination is an act of subcreation, in the image of God’s creation of the world. However he recognises that for imaginary worlds to be believable they would have to be grounded and relatable, by having recognisable features, as well as conjured differences from the actual world.(Ibid).

J.R.R. Tolkien, author of *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy (1954-5) and the creator of Middle Earth, adopts and adapts these ideas in the creation of his imaginary world. In a lecture titled ‘On Fairy Stories’ delivered in 1939 at the University of St Andrews, Scotland, Tolkien draws a distinction between the ‘primary world’ in which we live and the fantasy world of his fiction that he calls the ‘secondary world’ (1939: 132). By so doing, Tolkien extends the concept of poetic imagination to fictional world making (Wolf, 2012: 23). Moreover, like Coleridge and Caillois before him, Tolkien recognises that secondary worlds continue to be related to the primary world for two reasons: first the primary world is the source of the material that makes up the secondary world and secondly, this familiarity is critical as it makes the created world relatable. He concludes that consistency, coherence, and completeness are critical to furnishing a world audiences can believe in. This enables Tolkien to reframe Coleridge’s concept of the audience’s willingness to suspend disbelief in an encounter with fiction, and suggests that in fact ‘secondary belief’ is the way audiences engage with imaginary worlds.

Since then the concept of fictional worlds has been taken up by other literary scholars. Umberto Eco adopts the concept to describe the connection made between the author and the reader, conjuring what he refers to as ‘a machine for producing possible worlds’ (1984:246). In this sense Eco points to the fact that story worlds shift the focus from a single linear narrative to a space in which multiple narratives may exist. In *Fictional Worlds*, Thomas Pavel suggests that these worlds are what makes fiction so compelling for its readers because they must submit themselves to its ontological perspective in order to fully engage with a story (1986:73). He goes on to say that the power of the concept resides in the distance between the fictional world which he terms the ‘secondary universe’ and the primary universe which he calls ‘the really real world’ (1986: 57). In *Heterocosmica: Fiction and Possible Worlds*, Lubomir Doležel concurs with this writing that fictional worlds provide the ‘macro structural conditions of story generation’ (1998:31). The evidence of literary scholarship suggests a growing interest in the significance of fictional worlds, and in an anthology of essays titled *Storyworlds across Media*, Marie-Laure Ryan, and Jan-Noel Thin call for a more ‘media conscious narratology’ because today fictional worlds can be found not only in the written world but across diverse media settings from computer games to transmedia worlds (2014:2). It is these ideas from literary studies that form the foundations for Mark J.P. Wolf’s *Building Imaginary Worlds: The Theory and History of Subcreation* (2012) in which he outlines a schema from which fictional worlds may be constructed in different media.

The emergence of digital media prompted a new wave of interest in fictional worlds. Written in the early years of the internet, in *Hamlet on the Holodeck*, Janet Murray predicts that digitalisation will have a significant impact on fictional world making (1999). She hypothesises that, in the future, audiences will not just read about fictional worlds or view them on a screen, but could be bodily transported into a ‘universal fantasy machine’ where fictional worlds are brought to life by computers and the internet (1999:15). To envisage this, she co-opts the notion of the holodeck from the TV series, *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (1987) as a metaphor to imagine the potential of digital media for the creation of fictional worlds (Ibid.). Murray describes:

‘The holodeck consists of an empty black cube covered in white grid lines upon which a computer can project elaborate simulations by combining holography with magnetic ‘force fields’ and energy-to-matter conversions’ (Ibid.).

She goes on to imagine how it may become possible to physically enter the holodeck and experience an ‘illusory world’ (Ibid.). Murray credits such possibilities to computational power and the encyclopaedic capacity of the internet which she predicts will make the web a compelling medium for narrative art (1999:87). She describes:

‘the web-like structures of cyberspace allow for endless expansion possibilities within the fictional world, but in the context of the world wide web of information these intersecting stories can twine around and through the non-fictional documents of real life and make the borders of the fictional universe seem limitless’ (Ibid.).

Murray predicts that web-based fictional environments will be populated with story world artefacts she explains as ‘contextualising devices’ that will enable audiences to navigate their way through stories with ‘colour-coded paths, timelines, family trees, maps, clocks, calendars and so on’ (1999:53-58). In sum, Murray foresees that digital media may become ‘potent properties’ for narrative and be used to support vivid and compelling fictional worlds (1999:284).

While the holodeck remains the terrain of science fiction, today transmedia provides a more realisable route to the development of all-encompassing fictional worlds predicted by Murray. On a purely pragmatic level, Henry Jenkins suggests that world-making is becoming more important because the strategy embodies the commercial logic of convergence (2006: 117). Film and TV franchises have the potential to spawn spin offs, licensed goods, and product lines (Ibid). He points to the commercial logic of moving away from single narratives to fictional worlds with the capacity to host a greater and more complex range of stories, games, and other forms of engagement (2009b). He writes:

‘more and more storytelling has become the art of world building as artists create compelling environments that cannot be fully explored or exhausted within a single work, or even a single medium. The world is bigger than the film, bigger even than the franchise – since fan speculations and elaborations also expand the world in a variety of directions’ (2006:116).

Moreover, although clearly fictional worlds pre-date convergence technologies, Jenkins argues that digital technologies have catalysed the proliferation of transmedia storytelling and greater audience participation in the process of world-making (2006:170).

It is in the work of Mark J.P. Wolf that the most extensive consideration of world building across the media can be found. *Building Imaginary Worlds: The Theory and History of Subcreation* (2012) provides an historical account of imaginary worlds surveying three millennia and referencing more than ‘1400 worlds’ which is a prodigious work of scholarship (Wolf, 2012). But while Wolf’s frame of reference is vast, his argument is simple. He believes that imaginary worlds do not just provide a background to plot but are compelling artefacts in their own right that had been largely neglected by academic research (Wolf, 2012:2).

For Wolf an imaginary world can take the form of a place in the geographical sense of the word, like Tolkien’s Middle Earth, or can be a space in the experiential sense of the word. That is to say, everything a character encounters during the course of a story such as diverse cultures, events, and even philosophical perspectives (2012:25). But what makes imaginary worlds so compelling is the combination of similarities and differences between the primary and secondary worlds which he suggests provides a mechanism for reflection (Wolf in Jenkins, 2013b). In an interview, Wolf states:

‘imaginary worlds can comment on the primary world through their differences, they can embody other ideas and philosophies, and convey meaning in a variety of ways beyond the traditional ways found in stories set in the primary world’ (Ibid.).

This view of imaginary world creation accords with Tolkien’s views that, ‘the point of the story lies, not in thinking frogs’ possible mates, but in the necessity of keeping promises (even those with intolerable consequences)’ (1939:152). Both Wolf and Tolkien regard the facility for reflection afforded by such stories as their principal purpose and what makes them so endlessly fascinating. As well as providing a rationale for the consideration of imaginary world creation, the second reason for using Wolf’s writings in this investigation is that, unlike other scholars writing about fictional worlds, Wolf outlines a theoretical framework of world building which provides a promising strategy for the examination of film site fictional worlds (2012). This framework and developments in world building theory since the publication of Wolf’s book in 2012 warrant closer consideration as they can provide a model against which promotional world sites may be analysed later in the chapter.

To begin with, Wolf proposes that one way of comprehending imaginary worlds is to identify their ‘primary world defaults’ where differences from the primary world are developed across four key realms or domains (2012:35). These realms consist of firstly, the nominal realm in which new names are given to existing things including new languages, possibly even new alphabets, or written forms; secondly, the cultural realm which covers manufactured artefacts, customs, and behaviours, ideas, and institutions. The third realm is the natural realm that covers geographical features as well as species; and the fourth is the ontological realm which determines the specific nature of the world’s existence (Wolf 2012:35-6). In the Masrani Global site, primary world defaults are developed through the nominal realm as well as the cultural realm with extensive narrative detail provided about the fictional island of Isla Nubla in a history dating back to 1525 when the island was discovered by a Spanish navigator, together with natural realm details about the island’s wildlife including the nocturnal *Elaphodus cephalophus nublarus* (Nublar Tufted Deer) and its largest bird the *Pelecanus occidentalis* (Brown Pelican) with a wing span that can reach up to 8 feet.

In science fiction and fantasy genres, the ’natural’ characteristics of a secondary world such as flora, fauna and ecological features are often used as a signal of difference to the primary world (Wolf, 2012:172). However it is the relationship between those similarities and differences that provides access points of meaning for audiences. For example, invented species are often characterised by biological defaults to denote difference. Yet at the same time, these species often share human emotions and motivations, so audiences can empathise with them (Wolf, 2012:174). While invented languages connote difference which puts up a barrier to empathy and translation facilities are often used to overcome this (Wolf, 2012:187). Differences tend to take place in the nominal and cultural realms, but audiences speak the same language and have the same emotions, so they can empathise with secondary world characters despite their differences. Similarities between the primary and secondary worlds are as important as differences for their affect. But it is the way they operate in tension with one another that creates compelling fictional worlds.

Not all imaginary world features depend directly on the primary world for their meaning, of course. Secondary world features in science fiction and fantasy genres, such as the conceit that prehistoric creatures can be brought to life, have endured for so long that it has become a kind of secondary world ‘truth’ in the Jurassic franchise (Wolf, 2012:37). But for fiction set in more familiar worldly settings, the secondary world does need to retain some similarity to the primary world (Ibid). For example, the logic of cause and effect between events, emotional realism in character relations, and moral frameworks of good and evil that audiences can relate to and believe in (Ibid.). Wolf argues that secondary worlds depend upon the maintenance of such features to give what Tolkien describes as ‘the inner consistency of reality’ (1939:138). Indeed, he acknowledges that their credibility depends on the ‘illusion of completeness’to make their world believable. For example, the idea that only a small part of the world can be seen on screen, with the implication is that the world continues beyond the frame (2012:39).

It is from the audience perspective that this feature of world building has been productively complicated by fan scholar, Matt Hills. He termed the illusion of world completeness, ‘hyperdiegesis’ (2002:137-8). However more recently he has suggested world-building need not solely be regarded as a textual phenomenon but rather can be understood as a (fan) reading strategy (Hills, 2017:350). For fans, he argues, discontinuities have often provided the spaces for creative interjections, and the accumulative significance of fan paratexts’ interactions with, and contributions to fictional worlds, should be acknowledged (2017:350-351). Since *Jurassic World* (2015) story details from the Masrani Global site have been incorporated into other parts of the franchise (Ewins and Glover, 2023). For example, the news story about the Siberian excavation which discovered mammoth remains is referenced in the Netflix animation series *Jurassic World: Camp Cretaceous* (2020-22); the IBRIS (Integrated Behavioural Raptor Intelligence Study) logo has been incorporated into a queue video for the Velosocoaster ride at Universal Islands of Adventure in Orlando, Florida (Ibid) ; while the most widely adopted feature compiled by the fans was a timeline devised for the Terminal section that provided the franchise with its first chronological history and has been referenced in *Jurassic World: Dominion* (2022) and assorted *Jurassic World* publications (Ibid). The absorption of these fan created contributions in the *Jurassic World* lore illustrates a shift in relations between the franchise’s producers and its audience since *The Lost World* in 1997 and how fan’s ideas contribute to the evolving fictional world.

Evidently audiences may contribute to the creation of imaginary worlds themselves as can be seen in the fan-made *Masrani Global* site and it is through these processes of audience engagement that fictional worlds are made by their audiences, as well as their authors (Jenkins, 2013a). But for a secondary world to be effective from the wider audiences’ perspective, they must be able to enter it in some way as can be seen in inclusion of *Masraniglobal.com’s* Backdoor area that contributes to the ‘narrative fabric’ of the world and is accepted as part of the world by audiences (Wolf, 2012:57). Hills suggests with world-building, there tends not to be one ‘big bang moment’ when the world is made, but that fictional world, like real worlds tend to evolve over time as a result of the interaction of fan practices with professional production processes (2017:356).

Having established a framework of world-building, next Wolf outlines strategies used to develop secondary world infrastructure (2012:155). Since Thomas More’s *Utopia* (1516), fictional world maps have provided audiences with not only a sense of context, a sense of place and scale, but also a sense of the relation between locations and a grasp of where its boundaries lie (2012:156-7). While temporal dimensions are rendered in timelines, calendars, or genealogies through which ‘the presence of history’ is suggested (Wolf, 2012:166). These temporal devices need not be confined to chronological narratives but may involve techniques such as ‘interlacing’ whereby events overlap, creating a sense of simultaneity (2012:167). In sum then, infrastructural dimensions of time and space are fundamental to achieving the verisimilitude of the imaginary world ( Wolf,2012:171), and while the tendency is to provide encyclopaedic quantities of detail as both Janet Murray and Henry Jenkins have observed, the narrative value of these materials is that they are able to provide audiences with ‘catalysts for speculation’ as we saw in the Masrani Global site set up of the Dr Wu character, as the arch villain of the 2015 film.

One of the most noteworthy features of fictional world making is that it liberates narrative from the strictures of chronology, and other linear time-based conventions (2012:201). World-based stories can assume different forms -including ‘world histories’ ‘or ‘back stories’ or ‘nested stories’- that is to say, stories situated within stories which typically do not so much advance storylines as add ballast to the story world’s verisimilitude (Ibid.). Within the Masrani Global site this is achieved through articles about the company, its personnel, and the history of the island, told in different media that share the same imaginary world. Transmedia narrative forms of promotion entail temporal sequencing in different directions too including the *sequel* (building on the preceding narrative) and the *prequel* (building on a future narrative) (Wolf, 2012:205-7). This is evident in the way the Masrani site sets up a sense of jeopardy by ‘freezing’ of the site with a confidential memo about the company’s impending fiscal crisis. But there are also the *interquels* that take place in the gaps within a single narrative; *intraquels* that fill in the gaps within a single work of intervening events (Ibid.); *transquels* which set stories in wider contexts; and *paraquels* in which story events are regarded from different perspectives (Wolf, 2012:209-210). Whilst each of these prefixes indicate the direction of narrative travel and the relationship between narratives, what they all seek to create is the possibility of viewing events taking place in the world from different perspectives.

For the purposes of this investigation, Wolf’s world-building typology becomes particularly pertinent for its consideration of narrative forms that cross media, and this is where Wolf’s typology shares common ground with Jenkins’ concept of transmedia storytelling. Wolf and Jenkins agree that a transmedial imaginary world is experienced through multiple forms of mediation and each of the different media function as an access point, bringing with them their own specific properties and peculiarities that contribute to the world (Jenkins, 2006:98; Wolf, 2012:248). For Wolf, the very notion of transmedia storytelling lends verisimilitude to a narrative, as it implies that the experience lies beyond any single media source (2012:247). This provides the imaginary world with ‘ontological weight’ as it brings imaginary world experiences into closer alignment with the way we experience the primary world, predominantly mediated through a multitude of screens (Wolf, 2012: 247).

Wolf considers the implications of transmedial world creation, proposing that the use of multiple platforms means that authorship inevitably becomes ‘transauthorial’ (2012:269). World creation may require specialist work in different media, but that some kinds of authorship may be acknowledged, and some may not be and be elided under the originator’s name operating like an umbrella brand name (Ibid.). Creative contributions are made by employees such as subcontracted groups like web designers but other forms of production like licensing, merchandising, and ancillary or even derivative products all constitute forms of transmedial production too (Wolf, 2012:276-8).

The value of outlining Wolf’s theory and typology of imaginary world creation here in some detail is that it is hoped that it can serve as a lens through which to examine film site story worlds later in the chapter. However, while this set of ideas have value for the analysis of such worlds, it fails to question why story worlds take some forms and not others. Wolf makes specific reference to a figure who commonly appears in imaginary worlds – the ‘evil sub creator’ whose appetite for power drives them to create ‘a world [is] not made for its own good, but rather as a tool used to dominate others or use them for its maker’s own ends’ (2012:242). Indeed the profile video of Dr Wu we see in the chapter’s opening case study clearly illustrates this trait. But this discussion of tropes does not explain why the fictional corporation site has become such a recurrent and persistent fictional world trope in online promotion. Wolf recognises that some imaginary worlds become conventions, even clichés, but his work does not give any consideration as to why some imaginary world clichés persist.

So, to answer these kinds of questions, this investigation must turn to other tools such as the topos concept, introduced earlier in chapter 2 to further this investigation. The next section considers how the commercial (and frequently evil) corporation has become a recurrent feature in fiction and film.

**4.2 The (Evil) Corporation Topos**

In recent decades fictional corporations have been the focus of a series of studies examining their place in contemporary culture (Byers in Kuhn, 1990; Ribstein, 2005; Andriopoulis, 2008; Johnson, 2009; Bennett, 2011; Giannini, 2013-4; Clare, 2014; Decker, 2016). And although assorted reasons have been given to explain this interest, one of the most cogent is articulated by Ralph Clare in *Fictions Inc: The Corporation in Fiction, Film and Popular Culture*.Clare suggests that in 20th-century American culture, the reason that the corporation is seen as such a central idea is that it is widely thought that there is nothing outside of capitalism (2014:16). In other words, capitalism is regarded as the way the world is (Ibid.).

Charting the development of the corporation from the British East India Company’s origins in 1600 and the Dutch East India Company’s founding in 1602, corporations grew from being commercial organisations to becoming manifestations of imperial political power (Clare 2014:8). In the light of this history, it is suggested that the corporation provides a potent metaphor for illustrating, and potentially critiquing capitalism in 20th-century culture (2014:3). Through the examination of a selection of novels and films from Frank Norris’s *The Octopus* (1901); and Don DeLillo’s *White Noise* (1985); to *Ghostbusters* (Paul Feig, 1984); and George Clooney’s film *Michael Clayton* (2007), Clare argues that capitalism is regarded as the only economic system available and fictional corporations have become a focal point for the expression of anxieties and criticisms about the state of the capitalism in the post-industrial age.

One of the key features of this metaphor is the way fictional corporations have become embodied in the figure at the head of the corporation (Clare, 2014:13). It is here that the topoic nature of the corporation becomes evident as Clare traces the way the corporation assumes the shape of a character in the 1886 Supreme Court *Santa Clara County versus Southern Pacific Railway* ruling that a corporation is regarded as a ‘person’ under US law with full constitutional rights under the 14th Amendment (2014:9). This idea is reinforced by the 2010 ‘Citizen United’ landmark constitutional decision that grants corporations the right to free speech and allows them to make unlimited donations to political parties (Clare, 2014:10) – a point emphasised during Mitt Romney’s unsuccessful 2012 presidential campaign when, in response to a heckler in the crowd, he asserted that ‘corporations are people too’ (Ibid.). From instances like these Clare concludes that the idea of corporate personhood may be a legal construction, but its personification of capitalism has leached into popular culture (2014:15).

Another interesting feature fictional corporations have in common is the way they represent themselves through the media. In Thomas Pynchon’s *The Crying of Lot 49* (1966) the fictional corporation, *Yoyodyne*, communicates its corporate power through the language of marketing and promotion in logos, advertising slogans and the like – in short, the brand (Clare, 2014:39). Writing about the fictional institutions of the television series *Lost*, including the *Dharma Initiative*, the *Hanso Foundation*, the *Widmore Corporation* and *Mittelos Bioscience* corporations, Derek Johnson describes how this strategy creates an impression of ubiquity embedded in the series’ setting (Johnson in Pearson, 2009:36). Indeed, as Clare observes, our experience of corporations is, for the most part, invariably mediated through commercial representations, promotions, and advertising, and he describes the corporate logo as the ‘Esperanto’ of our time – a visual form of communication that transcends language but is widely understood (2014:121).

Clare’s survey demonstrates that representations of fictional corporation have become increasingly widespread over the course of the 20th century:

‘The economic base becomes the given mise-en-scène of a fictional world, like the way that corporate capitalism has calmly proceeded to dominate the world today. Yet with this dominance of the corporation comes its visibility and thus a kind of temporary refinement and crystallisation of the unseen ‘spirit of capitalism’ (2014:48-9).

Capitalism, then, is widely portrayed as the natural order of things and this idea is pervasive in the cultural imagination (Clare, 2014:33). Moreover, it would appear that this ‘spirit of capitalism’ has now migrated online, in the form of fictional corporate sites.

Along similar lines, Mark Decker considers the representation of what he terms ‘industrial society’ through a deliberation on the influence of one philosopher’s work on some of Hollywood’s most prolific Hollywood film makers (2016:11). The philosopher in question is Herbert Marcuse who was writing during the Cold War when capitalist democracies, which regarded themselves as politically liberal, were consumed by the struggle against the emergence of communism across the world (Luke, 2013). During this period Marcuse had the temerity to argue that modern industrial society was not free either but operated under its own brand of tyrannical ideology in the shape of capitalism, and he described the ways industrial society impacts on the individual most famously in *One-Dimensional Man*: *Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (1964) and to a lesser extent *Eros, and Civilisation* (1962) which Decker argues earned him the status of a ‘public radical’ in America (2016:41).

Marcuse’s critique of industrial society focuses on three principal areas. Firstly, how industrial society and capitalism grooms its citizens to accept the status quo, keeping them compliant by ‘soft repression’ in the form of ‘a world of ease, gadgets, enjoyment and surplus in which increasing numbers of people participate’ distracting them from the stark realities of their economic circumstances ( Decker, 2016:18). Secondly, Marcuse adopts another leading discourse in post-war America, Freudian psychology and redefines Freud’s concepts of Eros (life instincts) and Thanos (death instincts) to articulate human drive and its response to an industrialised society (Decker, 2016:21). He argues that contemporary consumer society limits the ability to be truly creative and engage in life, thereby limiting our instinctual drive (Eros) towards self-fulfilment and altruism, in favour of the subjugation to labour and destruction of human spirit under capitalism (Thanos) (Ibid.). Thirdly Marcuse’s view that the ideologies of all advanced industrial societies, from communism to western capitalism are, in diverse ways, equally oppressive and alienating (Decker, 2016:17).

Marcuse’s critique of industrial society found ‘broad acceptance’ in American culture (2016:17). In point of fact, Decker suggests that Marcuse’s critique is so pervasive in the 1960s and 70s that it diffuses into the wider culture (2016:11). As a result, Decker proposes that Marcuse’s ideas influence three young film makers - George Lucas, Ridley Scott, and James Cameron (Ibid.). Through a reading of their films, Decker illustrates how Marcuse’s ideas about the oppressive nature of industrial society are manifest in the representation of (apparently) evil fictional corporations like Weyland-Yutani in the *Alien* series, Cyberdyne Systems in the *Terminator* series and Resources Development Administration (RDA) in *Avatar* (Decker, 2016:24). Although interestingly, Decker uses the term ‘apparently’ when referring to evil corporations as he notes that in their films, the depiction of the corporate leaders becomes increasingly nuanced and depicts the shift away from regarding the individuals and even the corporation itself as the source of the problem, towards laying the responsibility for corporate evil at the door of the ‘repressive system’ in which individuals and corporations must operate (2016:74). Historically, as Clare’s book demonstrated the evil nature of corporations was often ascribed to a single corrupt or monomaniacal figure. But Decker demonstrates how from Scott’s *Blade Runner* (1982) to *Prometheus* (2012)the representation of the corporation is consistent. While the corporation itself engaged in the noble enterprise for the advancement of science such as space exploration or wealth creation such as mining, its enterprise is corrupted by the repressive system of capitalism that forces corporations to relentlessly pursue profitability (Ibid.).

Decker’s argument is that films like these helped to transform Marcuse’s philosophical critique of capitalism, which would otherwise be limited to the narrow confines of academia, into a trope that entered the wider culture (2016:11). In short, Marcuse’s propositions could be regarded as ‘narratives’ that are incorporated by these film makers into their films. Following on from this, I suggest these ‘narratives’ feed into and underpin what becomes the topoi of the evil corporation (Decker, 2016:169). What is particularly pertinent to this chapter is Decker’s analysis of Ridley Scott’s *Prometheus* (2012) as its depiction of industrial society extends transmedially beyond the diegesis of film into the film’s promotional website (2016:104). Whilst Decker dismisses *Prometheus*’ site as ‘marketing efforts,’ his analysis of it alongside the film itself contradicts this and he treats the site as part of the film, demonstrating that the site fulfils more than just a promotional role in the film experience (2016:103). In fact, the film’s story world is rendered through this (evil) corporation site as we will see later in the chapter.

Mark Decker recognises the methodological challenge of attempting to pin down the influence of Marcuse’s theoretical critique and to make the argument that it is transformed into a thematic narrative device in the work of these film makers. ‘It’s hard,’ he said, ‘to look for specific instances of ubiquity’ in this kind of cultural research and this is a challenge I encountered in my own research (Decker, 2016:171). In the initial stages of my research for this book, I came across several instances of evil corporation promotional sites. But to make the claim that the evil corporation had become a stylistic convention of film promotional sites, I had to find a method of survey that extended beyond my own encounters. In point of fact, one of the biggest challenges of topoi studies is the question of how can we identify a topos in the first place? Or, to put it another way, how do you know a topos when you see one? To find out how pervasive the evil corporation topos had become in online film promotion, I had to prove its *ubiquity*. So, in the next section, this is what I set out to do and I devised a strategy employing a format which has become popular on the web - the list, or to give it its full name, the listicle.

**4.3 A Survey of Listicles**

The rationale for developing this methodology is two-fold. Firstly, at its core, media archaeology is not a discipline with principles set in stone. Indeed, Jussi Parikka argues that he does not think a definitive definition of media archaeology would be productive. Instead he describes how media archaeology is concerned with ‘theoretical and methodological potentials, of paths not taken and potentials for development, of necessary cross-fertilization and being aware of blind spots’ (2018). In other words, I take this to mean that media archaeology invites methodological invention. My second reason for developing this approach harks back to a point noted in the previous chapter, made by web historian Richard Rogers, who advises that the most productive way to undertake historical web research is to attune the approach to the circumstances in which the research takes place. Specifically, he suggests, the deployment of the web’s indigenous resources may be most effective to explore it is past. (2013:68).

Rogers claims that the first form of web archive was the list, and lists seemed to offer a possible way to approach the task of surveying promotional film sites. The list or ‘listicle’ has become widely used in online journalism (Rogers, 2013:61; Poole, 2013). Listicles are descriptions that take the form of a numbered list of items such as ‘10 reasons to visit Stockholm’, ‘50 things to do before you die’ or ‘10 ways to cook a turnip’. But lists are different from collections as they consist of short pieces of information, arranged with a single item on each line to make things easy to read, whereas a collection is a group of objects accumulated in a location for a specific purpose.

Now, the listicle is not a new form. Lists can be traced back to the ten commandments of the Old Testament[[1]](#footnote-1) and lists have featured in such diverse contexts as accounts about the Protestant heretic Martin Luther who nailed his *95 Theses* to the church door in Wittenberg, Germany in 1517, William Empson’s book of literary criticism *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (1930), and as a poetic device in Wallace Steven’s *Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird* (1979). Today, listicles populate the online world and have been described as the ‘lingua franca of new media journalism’ (Edidin, 2014). One reason listicles have been so readily adopted online maybe to do with the fact that they function like a table of contents, or a form of curation that is particularly valuable in enabling people to make sense of the vast array of information available on the web (Ibid.). Indeed, I venture that they may provide the researcher with a mechanism for identifying topoi, by creating a barometer of topoic activity, as well as indicating the currency of topoi in the contemporary imagination.

In effect this listicle approach draws on what is now regarded as ‘crowd-sourced knowledge,’ as distinct from the expertise of academic scholarship. But at a time when the web is so enormous and growing exponentially, a comprehensive knowledge of an emerging cultural phenomena like this is challenging to achieve or verify. So, I propose to use the listicle mechanism to render which campaigns resonate with audiences knowable; and the selection of artefacts for examination will be derived from an edited collation of lists arrived at through a consensus of sorts.

In methodological terms, to research film’s web-based fictional worlds, I had to make choices about what to study because there is the ever-present risk of bias in that any individual researcher will have limited personal experience and may select examples to confirm their hypothesis. So, the aspiration of this approach was to find a way to move beyond subjective selection and a solution to this methodological challenge lay with the listicle. The aim was to harvest information from listicles to identify a corpus of evil corporation sites and crucially, allow the collection of what is to be examined to be made by a broader constituency than just the researcher.

To get a sense of the currency of this topos, using the Google search engine I searched for ‘evil corporations in film.’ In total, 10 pages of search returns were trawled to compile a collection of lists and the search was brought to an end when no more evil corporation lists appeared in the search returns. A total of 41 sites were listed, and of these, 22 lists were dedicated exclusively to fictional film, and a further 19 lists included documentaries and other media such as literature, games, and television. There were also lists of real-world companies that ‘behave’ like evil corporations. There were lists of films and terrorist organisations that were regarded as evil corporations, as well as lists of other kinds of fictitious film corporations, however these have been excluded from the corpus to create a sharper focus on evil corporations in film. Similarly, associated sub-genres such as ‘fictional evil governments’ or ‘evil terrorist organisations’ were set aside and the *Empire* magazine archive link to its list was dysfunctional at the time of the survey, so this list had to be discounted too. But this notwithstanding, the findings indicate the currency of the topoi in the zeitgeist over this period. Lists had been compiled by a diverse range of organisations including IMDB (*Internet Movie Database*), the BFI (*British Film Institute*) and BBC (*British Broadcasting Corporation*). These lists were aggregated into a single reference list of nearly 100 examples which will form a corpus for consideration. In the next section, I will consider what the listicles survey revealed.

Based on IMDB (*Internet Movie Database*) genre categorisations, the fictional corporation sites identified were tabulated with their films, director’s names, release dates and genre. To quantify their currency in the zeitgeist, the fictional corporations were ranked by the frequency with which they occur in the listicles. Three categories became apparent: films featuring an evil corporation within the film’s narrative but predating the internet; films falling within the period that contained an evil corporation within the film’s narrative but have no accompanying website; and films falling within the period that had a corporation website. The first category illustrated that corporation fictional worlds were a feature of filmic mise-en-scène that evidently predated the digital era. However, with the advent of the web, fictional worlds seem to have been developed transmedially in websites as well as featuring in films. Some had become so popular that they had been transformed into lines of merchandise such as *The Terminator*’s Cyberdyne Systems which features on T-shirts[[2]](#footnote-2), iPhone cases[[3]](#footnote-3) and Omni Consumer Products, a real-world trading company that takes its name from the fictional corporation in the *Robocop* series and makes real-life products of items which appear in fictional films (2017)**.** As Derek Johnson observes about transmedial branded merchandise that emerge from ABC Network’s long-running TV series *Lost* around its fictional Hanso Foundation and Dharma Initiative*,* such products ‘perpetuate the illusion of the institution’s reality and maintain its presence in the spaces of everyday life’ (Johnson in Pearson, 2009:45).

The top ten ranked films include works by two of the directors discussed in Decker’s book, Ridley Scott, and James Cameron, which seems to bear out his proposition. With one exception, the first ten films are all generically categorised by IMDB as ‘science fiction’ and it could be surmised that the likely reason for this is that the genre often seeks to establish a fictional secondary world that is distinctive from the primary world (Wolf, 2012:96-111). Of the remaining entries, around half (49/98) are categorised as either ‘action’ or’ adventure’ or ‘action/adventure’ which is suggestive of a narrative mode focused on plot, and points to the way fictional corporation websites increasingly undertake an expository role for these kinds of films. The one exception to this group of franchise film series is the *District 9* (Neill Blomkamp, 2009) site, (http://www.D-9.com) that appears to have benefitted from the kind of marketing budget usually reserved for franchises by Sony Pictures but this may be due to the fact that the film was produced by Peter Jackson, creator of Lord of the Rings who himself was an early advocate of film sites.

The most frequently listed evil corporation is Weyland-Utani from the *Alien* series (1979-2017), followed by the Umbrella Corporation in the *Resident Evil* series (2002-2021),Omni Consumer Productsin the *Robocop series* (1987-2014), Cyberdyne Systems in the *Terminator* films (1984-2019) and lastly, the *Jurassic Park* series (1993-2022) is accompanied with a site for *InGen* (International Genetic Technologies), and then after 2015, *Masrani Global*. *Avatar* was the first film in a series scheduled to continue through to its fifth iteration in 2028 and has a franchise fictional world site for the entire series (IMDB,2023). As was established in Chapter 2, the most obvious reason for these elaborate fictional world corporation sites is that franchise films command commensurately high marketing budgets which bears out Jonathan Hardy’s observation in *Cross-Media Promotion* that:

‘there is a correlation between levels of investment in promotions and popularity, measured by consumer spending, so that the greatest promotional effort is expended on event films and major brand franchises’ (2010:66).

While further down the list, films with more modest marketing budgets like *Okja* (Bong Joon-ho, 2017) have scaled down versions of the fictional corporation worlds in the shape of in-movie corporate advertisements on *YouTube*. Just as sites may be built on existing platforms like *Tumblr*, *Facebook,* or *LinkedIn* to reduce development costs which again illustrates how the scale of the fictional corporations is determined by the film’s promotional budget (Thilk, 2015).

Like any methodology, the listicle approach had its limitations. During the research, I encountered sites that did not appear on any of the lists which illustrates that listicle approach is not comprehensive and inevitably has gaps and so can never be definitive. Evidently there are a range of factors at play in list curation which are challenging to definitively explain and there is an irony in the fact that the survey strategy is not immune to discursive forces either. The listicle survey depends on the logic of the *Google* search engine for its results. *Google* operates according to the PageRank (PR) system that counts the number of links to a website, as well as determining the quality of those links, to ascertain the significance of the website and rate into search rankings returned accordingly. In sum, then, the Google algorithm is making choices about what to include in its search returns based on its own criteria. This has meant that search returns are predominantly English-speaking, often US based and, for the most part, concern mainstream Hollywood fare as opposed to films by independent makers. So, whilst on the one hand the listicle approach proved fruitful in revealing a particular tendency in the design of transmedia promotional sites, on the other hand it exemplifies the very discursivity Foucault critiques, and provokes further questions about the use of internet search engines in research and how we know what we know.

But having acknowledged this, however, pursuing such questions cannot be my main concern here. The original rationale for the listicle approach was to establish what is persistent in the cultural imagination and to explore whether the (evil) corporation was a topos. This survey of listicles does not claim to be either exhaustive or definitive. But what it can do, is produce an indicative corpus of examples which confirms that this is a topos of ideological significance. Besides, what makes these lists worthy of discussion is that they are compiled, debated, and contended on the web, and anything that is contended in this way has both cultural meaning and resonance, and thereby provides a snapshot of popular culture. Moreover, the listicle survey approach proved to be a valid way to minimising researcher bias and identify an active topos from a baseline of cultural agreement.

Some notable sites were conspicuous by their absence and the reason for their absence from the collective imagination of these listicles cannot be established for certain, but some observations can be made. Several of these sites are first generation of fictional world sites. The earliest example located was from 2000, when Darren Aronofsky commissioned High Res! design agency to create the *Tappy Tibbons.com site* for *Requiem for a Dream* (2000) (www.requiemforadream.com) . What is distinctive about this early site is that the site was created after the film’s production and makes little sense unless the viewer has seen the film. The site gives no indication of its promotional role which suggests that the site is perhaps better understood as a creative component of the film. This proposition is substantiated by the agency’s subsequent treatment of the site which features in a large format book publication about the design agency creations titled *Amantes Sunt Amentes* (2007)[[4]](#footnote-4). Moreover, the site subsequently became the focus of a presentation at the Online Flash Film Festival (OFFF) in Valencia (2004) by the site’s creators Florian Schmitt and Alexandra Jugovic titled with the question, ‘Is it Art yet?’. By so doing, they too drew attention to the way in which creativity deployed in commercial contexts continues to be distinguished from art (Pixel Surgeon, 2005).

Other well-regarded examples of in-movie corporation websites do not figure in the listicles either, such as the award-winning campaign for *TRON: Legacy* (2010) that features the *Encom* corporation site. This omission may be attributed to the fact that the fictional corporate site does not exist as a stand-alone site but was incorporated within a large serial campaign that rolled out episodically over a period. Similarly, *Cloverfield* (Matt Reeves, 2008) had a highly successful promotional ‘experience’ which has garnered academic interest (Wessels, 2011, Atkinson, 2014). The campaign included two in-movie corporations - *Slusho*! - a Japanese soft drink company [(http://www.slusho.jp/)](http://www.slusho.jp/), and *Tagruato* – a Japanese deep-sea drilling company [(http://www.tagruato.jp/index2.php)](http://www.tagruato.jp/index2.php), and spawned numerous fan-created sites set up to track the film’s campaign and monitor the activities of these in-movie corporation sites (Atkinson, 2014: 35-36). Yet this campaign has been completely overlooked in the listicles of evil corporations in film too**,** even though it was clearly worthy of inclusion in the sample collection.

However notwithstanding these exceptions, this survey did generate a corpus of 100 film websites. In his consideration of websites as objects of study and website history, Neils Brugger suggests that one of the most effective approaches is comparison of these artefacts over time, as a diachronic examination reveals how site design evolves, so I have adopted this strategy here (2010:14, 18). The three case study sites dating from 2004, 2010 and 2012 respectively were selected for closer examination: *Lacuna Inc.* (http://www.lacunainc.com) for *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (Michel Gondry, 2004); http://www.*D-9.com* for *District 9* (Neill Blomkamp, 2009) and *Weyland Industries* (http://www.weylandindustries.com) for *Prometheus* (Ridley Scott, 2012). Each of the sites had already received some academic attention (Atkinson, 2014a; Jenkins, 2009c; Jess-Cooke, 2009; Miramontes, 2004; Walden,2012). While two of the sites had received industry recognition as examples of excellence with accolades for *District 9*’s *MNU.com* at the American Film Institute’s 2009 *Digifest*, and awards at *The Hollywood Reporter*’s *Key Arts* Awards, the *Webby Awards* and *Movie Viral* Awards; and for *Prometheus*’s *Weyland Industries* site there had been awards from *Cannes Cyber Lions*, *FWA* (Film Website Awards), *CSS* awards and the *Gold Key Art* awards. In the next section I will consider the first of these case studies – Lacuna Inc.-

**4.4 Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind’s Lacunainc.com**

Outlining a strategy for website analysis, Neils Brugger states that a prerequisite for examination is a stable object that will remain unchanging and accessible during the process (2010:4). But as the first selected case study was no longer available online, it had to be accessed through the *Internet Archive*. The *Wayback Machine* calendar record shows that the site was ‘captured’ 219 times between February 2004 and 28th July 2018. But, on closer inspection, this record is not entirely accurate and, in fact, the last time the site was captured was April 12th, 2010. By November that year the *Lacuna Inc*. site had been taken down and advertisements for purchasing the film on home viewing formats were incorporated onto the Universal Studios Entertainment site. By 28th July, the calendar record no longer records captures related to the film and instead links to an Arabic language site <http://www.al3abat>. So, given the unstable condition of the media environment and the precarity of the record, the first complete *Internet Archive* ‘capture’ of the site on 11th February 2004 was identified as the best option.

The fictional world of the Michel Gondry’s film *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (2004) is transmedially presented in the form of an ‘as if real’ commercial website named *Lacuna Inc.com* - the eponymous company featured in the film. The site’s home page contains a combination of textual and visual elements with a white banner advertising strip across the top which reads ‘Click to enable Adobe Flash player’ and requires a performative action by the viewer to initiate. The *Adobe Flash* player was at the height of its popularity at this time in the mid-2000s, having graduated from plug-in status to being made available by the leading Internet browsers, *Netscape Navigator* and *Microsoft Internet Explorer*. Featuring a combination of animation, video and inviting user interactivity, this film site illustrates how *Flash* had brought web sites to life at this time. By clicking this *Flash*-enabled area the site ‘plays’: On the tiled banner, phrases appear one after another ‘A new life awaits you,’ ‘Feel love again,’ Regain your self-confidence’ - directly addressing the viewer like an advertisement. These textual elements are followed by images of a female patient, at first sad and dejected, then jubilant in one tiled section, then the founder of *Lacuna Inc*. Dr Mierzwiak (Tom Wilkinson) appears, together with testimonials about the efficacy of the memory erasing procedure -all serving to animate the site.

The banner presentation is accompanied by a fast-paced soundtrack theme which starts up automatically every time a fresh page is opened announcing the site. This declarative musical theme is only 13 or so seconds in length but repeatedly plays on a loop. Looping is one of the characteristics of early digital players like *QuickTime* and *VLC*, and was originally used to reduce file size and to minimise upload waiting times for the site visitor (Manovich, 2001:315-20). In *The Language of New Media* Lev Manovich points to the parallels between these digital media looping practices and early cinema technologies like the zoetrope and Kinetoscope (Ibid.). But interestingly, even though the memory constraint is no longer an issue for present day digital artefacts, the ‘temporal aesthetic’ of looping persists in software applications like Gifs or Vine and has been claimed as a feature of ‘post-cinematic film’ (Poulaki, 2015:95).

On a textual level representation of the film’s fictional world as a company website provides a framing device that connects the secondary fictional world of the film and its website (Wolf, 2012:83). The site’s landing page bears all the hallmarks of a primary world company site of the time, with a menu of options at the top of the page, with six sub-sections labelled ‘About,’ ‘Promotions,’ ‘The Process,’ ‘Free Evaluation,’ ‘Testimonials’ and ‘Contact Us’ and these sub section titles function as hyperlinks to further content not visible from the landing page. At the bottom of the page, where these hyperlinks appear again, the menu is flanked by the copyright logo, and an ‘all rights reserved’ statement, date and company name that adds to its verisimilitude (Wolf, 2012:33).

This verisimilitude is consolidated by the visitor counter and a choice of viewing formats and operating systems which were standard features in 2004 and by so doing, this site creates the illusion of a consistent and credible secondary world. In what Wolf terms the nominal realm, the company’s name *Lacuna Inc.* makes a playful pun on the primary world meaning of the word as ‘missing’ or ‘unfilled,’ as well as the specific nature of the company’s service erasing memories, illustrating how secondary worlds often have a defining fictional premise, so they can quickly establish a scenario, and what distinguishes it from the primary world (2012:182). So, the word play in this title works as a nominal indicator of the secondary world’s fictiveness (Ibid).

Stories set in secondary worlds often require more extensive back stories than those set in the primary world, as primary world history is already familiar, or at least accessible to an audience, whereas a secondary world has to establish itself in the mind of the viewer (Wolf, 2012:202). Wolf makes a distinction between back stories told in ‘high resolution’ and back stories told in ‘low resolution’ which tend to rely on summary and synopsis (Ibid.). By this definition *Lacuna Inc.*’s back story would be described as ‘low resolution’ (Ibid). In the company site’s ‘About’ area, there is a brief two-paragraph summary of the company’s development from ‘mere idea to full blown medical service.’ But that said, the fictional world of the site does function transmedially, providing an explanation of the memory erasure procedure in a detail that could not be accommodated in the film and so it expands the narrative experience (Wolf, 2012:245).

The playful occupation of the liminal space between the primary world and the secondary world can best be seen in *Lacuna Inc.*’s short commercial (Lacuna Inc., 2018). It cycles through a series of hackneyed selling techniques, like a joke shared with the audience. Having removed his glasses, Dr Mierzwiak (Tom Wilkinson) speaks directly to the camera to convey a tongue-in-cheek sense of heightened ‘sincerity’ in addressing the viewer. In a suitably clinical setting, wearing the requisite white coat and stethoscope, he mimics the authoritative tone of a medical professional giving healthcare advice. The website uses a multitude of media including text, images, moving images and sound to depict the fictional world but, as Brugger’s points out and as Manovich has done before him, one of the ways in which digital artefacts like websites differ from other media is that it is also able to simulate other media too, including here medical CT scan-style images and a TV-style commercial (Brugger, 2010:30: Manovich, 2001:45). Here we see the topoic operation of the film site, not just in terms of thematic recurrence, but ideological intent too. The site operates on two levels simultaneously: first, by announcing its secondary world fictiveness; and secondly, the playful intertextuality of this secondary world mocks the tropes of medical infomercials and health-related websites, making an implicitly ideological critique of the primary world from the secondary world.

Site visitors are invited to engage with the fictional world through the world making device of associated, linked or ‘nested stories’ (Wolf, 2012:204). Nested stories are evident here in the banner animations that appear at the top of the page, with sound-bite quotations from satisfied customers making claims that the ‘painless non-surgical procedure’ is ‘safe’ for the whole family. On Lacuna Inc. nested stories also take the form of ‘testimonials’ and fictional publications such as ‘The New Science Magazine’ and ‘Science International’ to provide the semblance of third-party validation. The cumulative effect of these little nested narratives from fictional satisfied customers and fictional scientific publications is to create a credible make-believe world (Wolf, 2012:205).

Another feature of nested stories is that they provide opportunities for audiences to ‘forage’ for narrative material for themselves in the site which was termed as ‘drillability’ by transmedia scholar, Jason Mittell (in Jenkins, 2009b). Site visitors are also invited to participate in the promotion by sending e-postcards to their own contacts, illustrating what Jenkins referred to earlier as the potential ‘spreadability’ of transmedial extensions, in which audience’s social impulses are commandeered to promote the film (Jenkins, Ford and Green, 2013:12). However, while the *Lacuna Inc.* website functions transmedially in relation to the film by contributing to the fabric of the fictional world, it is confined to a largely expository role, and stops short of advancing the narrative of the film. To look at an example of a site which does this the chapter moves onto the next case study which is the Multinational United site (*MNU.com*) for *District 9* (N. Blomkamp, 2009), designed by the marketing agency, Campfire, who had produced the campaign for E. Sánchez and D. Myrick’s *The Blair Witch Project* (1999) a decade earlier.

**4.5 District 9’s D-9.com**

*District 9* opens in the Department of Alien Affairs in the headquarters building of Multi-National United (MNU) in Johannesburg, South Africa. At first glance the fictional company’s offices appear not dissimilar to their primary world counterparts furnished with fluorescent strip lighting, desk furniture, planters, and vertical window blinds. The film’s website follows this corporate theme and automatically opens with the recording of a welcome address by an MNU employee, direct to camera, against a blue screen background.

The world of the MNU corporation is not immediately visible from the site’s landing page. But the nature of the secondary world is implicit in the design of the site’s entrance. There are two points of entry: one for humans and one for aliens, and through this framing narrative device, the nature of this secondary world is established which distinguishes it from the primary world (Wolf, 2012:182). The alien side of the *MNU* site is presented in an incomprehensible alien language and the human side is presented in English bearing out Wolf’s observation that some fictional worlds use *a posteriori* language based on existing languages, while others fabricate *a priori* languages but that these are often only sketched out to a degree needed to distinguish them from primary world languages (2012:184). However, as English is the lingua franca for all interspecies communication in this fictional world, the alien language is subtitled in the film, and on the website the viewer is encouraged to buy into the film’s underlying conceit by clicking a button on the screen to translate from alien to human language (Brugger,2010: 28).

Within the film’s diegesis, this alien language makes them vulnerable as they cannot make themselves understood and the resulting subjugation of the aliens is performed through the cultural realm on the website. Throughout the site’s mise en scène, signs and notices define the fictional world’s rules and regulations stipulating that aliens must wear identification tags, while public safety advisory advertisements and alien ‘Wanted’ posters create a sense of the story world, evocative of apartheid-era South Africa in which the Director Neill Blomkamp grew up. Through these transmedial encounters with both the film and the website, each platform’s existence validates the other and the audience is incrementally inducted into this fictional world. Wolf explains how: ‘transmediality implies a kind of independence for its object; the more media windows we experience a world through, the less reliant that world is on the peculiarities of any one medium for its existence’ (2012:247). The film’s campaign notoriously spills over into the primary world too as billboard posters and even park benches are marked up with notices playfully transgressing the boundaries between primary and secondary worlds to promote the film (Jenkins,2009a). Although neither Brugger’s website analysis schema, nor a semiological reading of the mise-en-scène as a text can account for this traversal of the narrative into the real world.

One of the ways in which the transmedial relationship between the film and the website is maintained is by badging both up with the same corporate name and acronyms (Wolf, 2012:53). Like *Lacuna Inc*., the MNU website mimics the conventions of corporate websites in the primary world. But where it differs is in the level of detail that has notably increased illustrating the growing ‘encyclopaedic impulse’ predicted by Murray in *Hamlet on the Holodeck* (1999:84), and observed by Jenkins in *Convergence Culture* (2006:118) and Wolf in *Building Imaginary Worlds* (2012:30). On the MNU website, the temporal infrastructure of the secondary world is established by clicking through to a page documenting a history of the corporation from its humble beginnings as a small textiles company, to becoming one of the largest corporations in the world with interests in ‘medicine, healthcare, education, agriculture, mining, chemicals, nanotechnology, city planning, privatised security and law enforcement’ (D-9.com, 2009). This timeline provides a back story for the corporation, but its scope and level of detail exceed the requirements of the film’s narrative and therefore can be regarded as a transmedial narrative expansion (Wolf, 2012: 165).

Like *Lacuna Inc*, the D-9 fictional corporate site provides a framing device that aligns the secondary world with the primary world to orientate the site visitor (Wolf, 2012:83) (See Figure 10). But what is interesting about D-9’s *MNU* Community Watch page is that it re-introduces spatiality into the online story world by depicting the fictional location of District 9 on a satellite-style map. Specifically locating the story in a fictional district of Johannesburg provides a link between the primary and the secondary world and illustrates how secondary worlds are imbricated into the primary world location. Here we have an instance of digital media capacity to be multimedial (Brugger, 2010:6). The *MNU* Community Watch page map is presented as an ‘as-if-real’ satellite picture and its verisimilitude is consolidated further with navigation aids in the shape of a compass, map legend and magnification tool. The satellite image evokes the ‘illusion of completeness,’ as it appears, at first glance, to be a satellite image, but, on closer examination, the image is far from clear (Wolf, 2012: 39). What the satellite-style map provides then, is a sense of typicality rather than an actual map of the location, so the location is performed rather than realised.

The *MNU* Community Watch satellite map is interactive too as it contains hyperlinked hotspots brought into operation by the performative action of the viewer. By moving the cursor over on the map, the viewer is alerted to the presence of nested ‘MNU News Alerts’ that light up. Clicking on them brings up short reports about alien-related incidents including car bombings, robberies, and suspected kidnappings, as well as vox pop interview with people(humans) on the city’s streets. These short films are not new narrative material, but excerpts from the film and its trailer, repurposed to play on the website. But what is achieved by this transmedia narrative imbrication is that all the different media elements are sutured together creating continuity and thereby adding credibility to this fictional world (Wolf, 2012:245).

In the world of *MNU*, time is rendered through synchronic as well as the diachronic dimensions of time. Events unfold in different quarters simultaneously giving the site a sense of liveness. Wolf describes this manipulation of fictive time, whereby the perception of events unfolding around us in the present is created as a ‘narrative interlace technique,’ (2012:167). Unlike the linear experience of the film’s narrative, the website’s secondary world is indifferent to conventional narrative chronology of cause and effect, creating the impression of the randomness of the world. There are other ways in which the website narrative experience differs from the film’s narrative experience too. From the viewers’ perspective, the path they take through the site is a predominantly linear experience much like any other time-based media experience , but the order in which the site is experienced is determined by the viewer.

The scenario is not confined to the film’s plot either. Its community watch map links to an interactive map of the United States, monitoring reports of alien sightings across America. Here again a sense of ‘liveness’ is created by streaming news feeds along the bottom of the screen, and the audience is invited to participate by calling a telephone number to report alien sightings. Sony’s president of digital marketing, Dwight Caine’s told the Los Angeles Times, ‘In two weeks, there have been 33,000 phone calls. Two thousand five hundred people left voice messages about alien sightings. And 92% of those calls come from mobile phones, indicating that people are opting in, on the spot, in the streets’ (Lee, 2009). In Wolf’s terms, the secondary world creates opportunities for ‘extrapolation,’ and the map of the United States provides material for speculation (2012:61). The inference of the narrative here is that the policy of containment in South Africa is not working and aliens are escaping District 9 and dispersing to other continents. This is narrative strategy enables the audience to infer what is happening and draw their own conclusion (2012:53).

Following this reading of the fictional world of *MNU*, it is interesting to consider how this promotional fictional world on the one hand works as ‘a massively scaled practical joke’ but from another perspective can be understood as a topoi (Lee, 2009). What is distinctive about the corporate world of *District 9* from a topoic perspective is how it is illuminated by the *MNU Spreads Lies* blog ‘authored’ by the alien known as Christopher (Jason Cope), where he tells the story from the alien perspective. The *MNU Tell Lies* blog presents an oppositional reading to the *MNU* site. Through a series of postings written in alien script, which, of course, must be translated to be read, Christopher presents a view of *MNU* as an evil corporation involved in corrupt practices. He calls for a boycott of *MNU* products, industries and services and audiences are not just invited to explore the secondary world but participate now. Christopher invites readers to develop their own narrative and participate in what Caillois described as ‘mimicry’ where players assume roles in the story world. One blogger assumes the identity of a miner, another blogger posts as a member of the resistance group, another as an ‘outlander.’ In sum, the contributors to the *MNU Spreads Lies* blog devise and perform extra-diegetic stories of their own making, illustrating how audiences can co-create the fiction, which begins to complicate the distinction between author and audience (Wolf, 2012:281).

This kind of narrative is a ‘paraquel’ as it has the capacity to alter audience’s frame of reference (Wolf, 2012:210). From the perspective of this oppositional site, the *MNU* corporation increasingly comes to be understood as an evil corporation. This site contributes to the thickening the ‘narrative fabric’ of the imaginary world (Wolf 2012:200). For the audience, foraging for story details, comparisons between the alien site and the *MNU* site become possible because of the film site is fuelling perception of *MNU* as an evil corporation.

The *District 9* fictional world is manifest across multiple platforms illustrating a breadth of transmedia storytelling within this promotional campaign. The film’s trailer provides the backstory about the landing of an alien spaceship in South Africa (and again reiterated in the introduction to the film). On *YouTube*, there are short films from the *District 9* world including a corporate ‘Welcome to MNU’ film and a ‘Level 5 Alert’ information film about non-humans escaping from the district, as well as a fictional world presence on social media platforms with character pages for both Vikus and Christopher on *Facebook*. Taken together these transmedial iterations have the effect of melting boundaries between the primary world and the secondary world and adding ontological weight to the fictional world (2012:36).

**4.6 Prometheus’ WeylandIndustries.com**

The third case study is the multi-award-winning online promotion for Ridley Scott’s *Alien* prequel, *Prometheus* (2012). *Weylandindustries.com* was designed by Ignition Interactive who developed pioneering campaigns for *The Hunger Games* with the Capitol Tour HTML5 Experience developed in collaboration with Microsoft; as well as the corporate campaign for Trask Industries and the Bent Bullet experience based on conspiracy theories about the assassination of JF Kennedy for *X-Men: Days of Future* *Past*.

The film’s online world is depicted in the words of the Creative Director, Chris Eyerman, as a ‘fully realised company website’ and what distinguishes it from its predecessors is its scale (Behance, 2013). The site’s landing page proclaims the company to be ‘The largest company on the planet’ and substantiates this claim with an elaborate story world that unfolds over the four-month period of the campaign (Ignition Interactive, 2017). *Weyland Industries.com* has three areas: Products; The Company; and Project Prometheus but the full extent of the site is not visible from the home page. Each section contains 6 or 7 further sub sections including short videos, participatory activities sites like the Employee ID card creator, the HTML 5-driven Training Centre and finally the ‘Discover New Worlds’ section. This area enables viewers to explore Weyland space stations and star systems detailing the year of their colonisation, the date of their ‘terraforming,’ and their populations, which all serve to illustrate the scale of the corporate entity.

What is evident from a comparison across the time period of the three film websites under consideration in here is that clearly the scale of storyworld sites, as well as the diverse modes of viewer engagement have increased. Specifically, the vast reservoir of corporate story world in this website is illustrated in the section named ‘Investor Information‘. Mimicking its primary world counterparts, it takes the form of annual company report-style data with a battery of tables, graphs, bar charts, pie charts and key statistics, all dressed in copious acronyms, and badged up with corporate logos and copyright statements to create what is described as ‘the veneer of corporate logics and aesthetic officialdom’ (Atkinson, 2014a:44). Indeed, what characterises the experience of looking through the site is that its dimensions exceed a single screen and require the performative action of scrolling to explore the content in its entirety which contributes to the sense that the fictional world extending beyond the screen.

In fictional world construction timelines and chronologies provide a useful device to connect events together temporally so that they form a backstory to the events that unfold in the film’s plot (Wolf, 2012:165). In *Weylandindustries.com* the secondary world’s temporal infrastructure is underpinned by a timeline mapping a period of more than 80 years, from the birth of the corporation’s Chief Executive Officer, Sir Peter Weyland in 1990 to 2073, when the film begins, providing the backstory to events taken up in the film. The timeline narrates the corporate biography, from the granting of a certificate of incorporation (which constitutes a kind of corporate ‘birth’ for Weyland Industries), through key points in the life of the company including market valuations, venture capital investment, buyouts, patent registrations, the manufacture of prototypes and even recall product notices - all in a prodigious quantity of detail that would far exceed the duration of the average site visit, which, according to an article in *Time* magazine at this time, is on average just 15 seconds (Haile, 2014).

The Weyland corporate timeline illustrates an expanded role for the fictional world site as an online hub for the *Alien* film series. Weyland Industries chronologically predates the Weyland-Utani company that featured in previous *Alien* films, so the timeline serves to create narrative continuity across the film cycle by looking forward to the forthcoming theatrical release of *Prometheus*, as well as referring back to previous iterations of the *Alien* film series (Wolf, 2012:53). For example, one point on the timeline previews the med pod –the automated diagnosis and surgical station in which Dr Elizabeth Shaw (Noomi Rapace) performs an abortion on herself in *Prometheus*. While reference is made to the invention of ‘hypersleep’ and Yutani corporation mineral mining which featured in previous films in the series. Both instances illustrate the narrative work undertaken by the site to incorporate *Prometheus* into the *Alien* universe. Furthermore, there are other points on the timeline referring to androids and terraforming which have become familiar features, not only of the *Alien* universe, but the science fiction genre as a whole. However, these transmedial references lie outside the scope of existing website or film text analysis techniques and it becomes evident that media specific analytical tools are unable to fully describe the transmedial nature of this site.

Online fictional worlds like *Weyland Industries* effectively incorporate multiple narrative threads from films in the series and braid them together to create the ‘narrative fabric’ of the *Alien* world (Wolf, 2012:200). In effect, the website operates as a ‘transquel,’ setting the films into a broader context which is apposite to a series of films like *Alien* where the order of the films’ production does not correlate with the chronology of the narrative (Wolf, 2012:209). For while *Prometheus* may be the latest film in the series, narratively speaking it paves the way for its predecessors, and so must be consistent with the narrative future of the *Alien* canon.

At first Wolf’s concept of ‘nested narratives’ seem to offer a way to model the storytelling framework in *Weyland Industries*. However, it refers to single medium narratives and lacks the dimension to explain how different transmedia elements relate to one another. To understand the relations between the transmedia components, a way to represent narrative features that exist across a media cycle, across a genre, across media platforms and articulate their relation to the real world is needed. In *Prometheus* there are six ‘nested stories’ that make up the story world: the film’s plot; the scenario of Project Prometheus; the *Weyland Industries* corporate website; the *Alien* film series; the science fiction genre; and finally, the primary world. Their relationship to one another is represented in the model below (see figure 4). The model illustrates how the narratives are transmedially referenced as stories nesting like Russian matryoshka dolls, stacked one inside the other. Moreover, for the viewer these layers of narrative may be remembered along what Colin Harvey refers to as ‘horizontal’ and ‘vertical’ vectors of memory which cohere the transmedia experience, and these vectors are represented in the diagram through the arrows in both directions (Harvey,2015). Engaging with these layers of fictiveness is what enables audiences to make sense of the transmedia story world of *Alien* (Harvey, 2015:93). However, it becomes evident that, by so doing, Jenkins’ transmedia principle of ‘immersion’ is no longer adequate to explain the transmedia story world experience. Wolf’s more fluid and dynamic metaphor of ‘absorption’ better articulates the experience of encountering these nested transmedia fictions. Absorption is a symbiotic process here; the viewer’s attention is absorbed as they proceed further into a story world, while the audience absorbs the fictional world into their imagination (2012:49).

Chart, sunburst chart

Description automatically generated

Figure 4. A model of the transmedia ‘nested narratives’ in the *Weyland Industries* website, like Russian matryoshka dolls, stacked one inside the other © Walden, 2019

Like the D-9 park benches, the *Weyland Industries* site narratively interlaces the primary and secondary worlds during the film’s promotional campaign (Wolf, 2012:167). At the 2012 WonderCon in Anaheim, California where the film’s trailer premiered, Weyland business cards were distributed to attendees featuring the company’s web address and phone number (Billington, 2012). Calling the number on the card met with a ‘caller busy’ message but by return, a text was received containing a link to the ‘unboxing’ video of Weyland’s latest product - the David 8 android - a format which has found considerable popularity online, in which a recording is made of the process of unwrapping a new product from its packaging and posted on *YouTube* (Ibid.). In this instance, the unboxing video provided a small, film-related, story-based reward for the caller’s interest in the forthcoming film (Ibid.).

As the campaign rolls out over a four-month period, site signatories are addressed diegetically as ‘investors’ or ’crew members,’ and the principle in operation is that the more visitors explore the site, that is to say, ‘invest’ their time, the more they were rewarded with additional information about *Prometheus’* fictional world. Even the web-based professional network *LinkedIn* is recruited into the campaign to target key ‘influencers’ – individuals who influence the opinions of others on the web (Ignition Interactive, 2017). By harvesting information from user profiles, personalised emails are sent to influencers inviting them to apply for positions on the *Prometheus* project (Ibid.; Dustin Curtis, 2012; Humphrey, 2012). The harnessing of the fictional secondary world premise to primary world online networks paid off in promotional terms, as journalists like the writer for the business magazine site *Forbes.com* allowed himself to be co-opted into the film’s promotional campaign as he wrote about his experience (Humphrey, 2012).

During the campaign, the three main characters in the film are introduced in advance of the film’s release through a series of short films. Sir Peter Weyland (Guy Pearce) introduces himself in a TED-style talk set in the year 2023 launched at the primary world event TED2012 complete with as-if-real speaker biographical notes on the TED site (Behance, 2013). The David 8 android (Michael Fassbender) debuts in a product commercial outlining Weyland Industries corporate goal to ‘create artificial intelligence almost indistinguishable from mankind itself’ (Walden, 2023:112) which debuted on Mashable and the Verizon network (Ibid). And the third introduction is to Dr Elizabeth Shaw (Noomi Rapace) in a video call-style where she makes her pitch to join the Prometheus mission (Walden, 2023:113). The rationale in operation here is for these short film paratexts to introduce a new character to the franchise so that by the film’s cinema release, the audience will already be familiar with the new characters, which in screen writing is conventionally regarded as one of the first tasks of the film itself (Field, 2005:105). These paratextual films were made by the director’s son, Luke Scott who regards contemporary film trailers as problematic because of their tendency to use the best scenes from a film to encourage audiences such that when they see the film there are few prizes left. Scott claims his strategy offers a new approach to promotion (Brewer, 2017).

It is in the third case study of *Weylandindustries.com* that we see how this film promotion campaign has become, what Mark Decker refers to as ‘a specific instance of ubiquity’ (2016:171). The corporate website is so often seen in film promotion online and in this instance it has appeared not just within one single destination site but multiplying across familiar web locations such as the TED platform, *LinkedIn,* and *YouTube*. In this way audiences may engage with the secondary universe ontology of the sites, as the applications used are familiar to those in their own lives in the primary world (Atkinson, 2014a:43-44). Moreover, the multimediality here is not just simulations of other media formats, but the situating of story elements on other media platforms and where story elements are branded (and by association incorporated) by those sites (Tedblog 2012). Furthermore, the very notion of transmedia suggests that the audience experiences something which lies beyond and, indeed, is independent of media screens (Wolf, 2012:247). Therefore, it can be argued that transmediations contribute weight to the secondary world providing a sense of completeness and consistency to what Wolf describes as its fourth ‘ontological realm’ (2012:36). Indeed, the experience of this secondary world bears a resemblance to our contemporary experiences of the primary world which are so often mediated through screens today.

**4.7 Conclusions**

This chapter set out to investigate what forms film promotion sites take and initial observations suggested one form that has gained traction was the use of fictional corporate sites for the companies featured in the film. Now, fictional worlds are not a new phenomenon, of course. They have been the focus of much attention in philosophical, literary as well as media and digital media scholarship. But to establish whether in-fiction corporate sites were, in fact, an emerging convention of online film promotion, a wider survey was needed. Capitalising on one of the web’s most frequently used journalistic styles- the listicle - an approach was devised to survey the web. This survey identified a corpus of nearly 100 sites confirming that this promotional device had become a convention. Moreover, by reviewing adjacent research into the prevalence of fictional corporations in 20th century literature and film, it became clear that the evil corporation is not just a cliché but may be potentially regarded as a topos. Assessment of the survey results suggest that the fictional evil corporation sites are the latest iteration of a persistent and recurring trope that has manifested periodically within 20th century popular culture and by situating the evil corporation websites within this trajectory of pop culture iterations, it becomes evident that the evil corporation site is more than just as standardised promotional technique, it is a topos.

Reasons for the pervasiveness of the evil fictional corporation topos are open to speculation. From a historical perspective, this form of world building could be reflective of a growing real-world wariness at the rise of multinational corporations, initiated in the 1980s under the Regan administration with its ethos of free market fundamentalism and deregulation. (Clare, 2014:8). From a political perspective, it could be argued that fictional corporations provide a mirror reflection of historically grounded relations within real world organisations, which have increasingly become the subject of media representations themselves in recent years. Or, from a cultural intermediaries perspective, it could be that for more pragmatic reasons promotional strategies deemed successful are lauded by the industry with awards, honours, and prizes, and thereby become models of good practice that are taken up by others in the business and proliferate (Huhtamo,2018: 37).Clearly there is an element of truth in each of these explanations although it would be challenging to definitively prove any one of these, and consideration of these reasons lies beyond the scope of this chapter and so must be set aside for others to answer. From this chapter’s perspective, though, what is clear is that this topoi is a long-established metaphor that carries with it a critique about corporate power and the corruption of the individual, and has clearly become a feature of conventional film promotion.

To examine in closer detail how this form has developed over the last two decades, three notable case studies were selected from the corpus for closer investigation, and analysis was undertaken using a combination of Wolf’s framework for world building, with Jenkin’s concept of transmedia and Huhtamo’s topoi, underpinned by web site analysis and film studies textual analysis techniques. The analysis revealed richly drawn fictional worlds and how, over the period, these sites had developed in scale, complexity, and their modes of engagement with their audiences.

Developments in scale over the period can be seen in the shift from stand-alone promotional ‘destination’ websites to a transmedia campaign encompassing a combination of on- and off-line platforms. By relocating promotion where audiences are online on social media, professional networking sites, and trending online locations, ad blocker technologies are side stepped and the promotional nature of the communication is camouflaged to an extent. Developments in dimension over time have resulted in promotional websites of encyclopaedic proportions, relative to the films they promote. Moreover, these online promotions are becoming increasingly cinematic with more and more short films orbiting around a film as well as online. The films are quite different from trailer films. Instead of extracting material from the film it promotes, these new kinds of promotional films introduce characters and provide prologues to create narrative bridges between films in a series. And lastly, developments in the modes of audience engagement see film sites developing layered experiences for different constituencies, from EPK-style informational resources to immersive worlds and gamification. So, in the light of this genre-based study, the question that arises: do different film genres have their own conventional forms of online promotion?

1. The ten commandments feature in the bible in two locations Exodus 20:2-17; and Deuteronomy 5:6-21. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Cyberdyne System T-shirts. Available at:  [https://www.amazon.co.uk/Cyberdyne-Systems-Inspired-](https://www.amazon.co.uk/Cyberdyne-Systems-Inspired-Terminator-T-Shirt/dp/B00PIRWT0O)

   [Terminator-T-Shirt/dp/B00PIRWT0O](https://www.amazon.co.uk/Cyberdyne-Systems-Inspired-Terminator-T-Shirt/dp/B00PIRWT0O) [accessed 15th May 2018 ] [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. A selection of mobile phone cases sporting the Cyberdyne System company name were available for sale for the iPhone 4. Available at: [https://www.amazon.co.uk/Cyberdyne-Systems-Computer-Terminator-Antiscratch/dp/B00LBVDJTG](https://www.amazon.co.uk/Cyberdyne-Systems-Computer-Terminator-Anti-scratch/dp/B00LBVDJTG) [accessed 15th May 2018] [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *Amantes Sunt Amentes* is a Latin adage meaning lovers are lunatics. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)