

Chapter 4

Is Reality Enough for Us? Ready Player One's Electronic Migrants Looking for New Identities in Cyberspace Age

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ABSTRACT

With the development of information technologies in the 20th century, a new type of space in which the social or individual life of the human being is exposed has emerged. More and more individuals are creating a representation of themselves through the avatars they have in these worlds, mostly designed as games. With the advancing technology, there is a possibility that people will be able to carry their entire existence to these spaces in the long run, and it is possible to see examples of this situation in the cinema texts. In Ready Player One, Steven Spielberg focuses on people trying to get rid of their realities and to exist in virtual worlds in a dystopic future. In this study, the related film will be subjected to qualitative content analysis within the framework of the concept of migration and representation to cyberspace. In this way, the migration of individuals to virtual worlds in an effort to get rid of their reality and the effects of this situation in social life as a phenomenon/possibility have been discussed through the film.

INTRODUCTION

With the emergence of mankind's ability to dream and imagine, his ability to create specific "topos" that are different from geographical space also began to develop. When the new kinds of spaces imagined become a drawing, writing, myth or epic, again "utopia!" is a "place that doesn't exist", but it has become a certain kind of reality for the people who imagine it. These spaces, set on the boundaries of the extraordinary and the fantasy, are places with certain kinds of social functions, whether it is to escape from the present reality or to show the possibilities that this reality can transform. Therefore, there is a continuous and rich relationship between the humanization of geography and the diversification of the

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special functions and qualities that space has. However, the understanding of space and its meaning have changed constantly. The transformation of “wild” and “untouched” spaces into humanized, culturally meaningful and shaped spaces, and the ongoing rich relationship between image and reality opened the door to multiple meanings of space.

One of these newest spaces is the type of space referred to as “cyberspace”². This type of space is quite different from the classical geographical space. Just like the mythical places of the oldest kind imagined, they seem to have no claim to reality; they have been imagined. However, the development of telecommunications, information, computer and image technologies has transformed this type of space into a phenomenon associated with the field of human experience.

In the twentieth century, a literature has begun to be developed to understand this new place, which has become a reality and covers an important part of everyday life. Moreover, a significant number of researchers consider this age in which we live as the “age of cyberspace” (Whittaker, 2004, p.3). However, it is difficult to predict what “cyberspace” is, what kind of features and effects it has, and what kind of transformations it will undergo in the future. According to Benedikt, “Cyberspace itself is an elusive and future thing” and early definitions are far from inclusive (1992a, p. 22). This interpretation, expressed by Benedikt in the early nineties, is valid today. There is a constant tension between what the concept of cyberspace promises, possibilities and what happens. It is difficult to determine from today what kind of consequences the relationship with cyberspace will have. However, an increasingly large group of people are meeting this type of place, being there “online”, playing games and shopping. It is possible to characterize the continuous motion in this non-existing space as “electronic flâneur” (Mitchell, 1996, p.7), or “hybrid existences” (Adams, 1997, s.155). In this respect, as space in general has (Lefebvre, 2014, p.25), cyberspace has a history. It is a history that is still happening, written and to be written.

As Harvey emphasized, each type of specific mode of production or social formation included a unique bundle of time/space practices and concepts (2010, p. 230). This also applies to late capitalism and cyberspace. The new type of space and the relationship with it requires a new “conceptual toolbox”. According to Webster, the age in which we live, which can be described as the “information society” or “information age”, represents a technological, economic, professional, spatial and cultural differentiation compared to previous periods (Webster, 2006, pp. 8-9). Conceptualizing this social structure with the phrase “network society”, Castells also described the new social form and its space as “space of flows” (Castells, 2008, p. 548). Hence, individuals participating in this network are becoming nomads who are always connected (Benedikt, 1992, p.10). The phenomenon of nomadism is not only a phenomenon that belongs to the earliest periods of humanity. As expressed by the theory of exit from Africa (Senel, 2006, p. 80), nomadism also gains meaning as a specific stage of being human. The phenomenon of nomadism has a function of overcoming the problems and troubles created in the practices of everyday life. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the situation of people who are constantly going to a new kind of “topos” and who are online there. Cinema texts have an important role in understanding this phenomenon. According to Bell, cinema can be seen as cyberspace, and the movie theater is a means by which people encounter and experience cyber culture (Bell, 2003, p.62). In addition, just as the concept of cyberspace has been introduced to literature by science fiction writers, film and literature appear to be an area where brainstorming can be arranged about what forms cyberspace will take in the future (Whittaker, 2004, p.8).

Based on these ideas, in this study, the issue of migration to cyberspace(s) will be discussed through a cinema text. Steven Spielberg’s *Ready Player One* (2018) is about a near future, with a cyberspace framing that promises fun for a gloomy world. *Ready Player One* presents this vision of the future from a

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