

Full Length Paper

Mystic Places in Cyberspace: *Second Life*

Ayşe Nil Kirecci, Maltepe University, Istanbul, Turkey
Department of Public Relations and Publicity
anilaksoy@maltepe.edu.tr +902166261050/2730

Accepted 8 April 2011

When we look at products that use mystic elements and the marketing activities related to them, we see that mysticism has become a passion for individuals and this passion has become an opportunity for marketers. Accordingly, when we look at the process in reverse, we might as well say that this is a tendency created by marketing activities and instilled into individuals' lives. Although, it is indisputable that the notion of mystic experiences originated in the East, it is equally true that the commodities charged with the so-called mystical qualities and meanings including services associated with these experiences have become a natural part of all of our daily lives like they have always been there in the first place. Most of these have become part of our beliefs, habits, and discourses and have entered into our present life styles in various ways. Technologies in general, an indispensable part of our lives, or even internet-based-services in particular make use of this attractiveness of mysticism. When we think about the associations of mysticism, although it might seem hard to relate the concept to technology, virtual reality an important feature availed by the internet technology provides the infrastructure for the mystic experiences in question. The most pervasive example of this is the use of internet technology to spread mystic experiences on the internet, extend it to as many users as possible, and make the products that have mystical qualities catch on. This paper is a research on *Second Life*, a cyberspace that is used as the basic means to make mystical elements spread on the internet. *Second Life* comes before us as an alternative to the real life on cyberspace and its approach and perspective is examined via a creative theory on mystic places by Chamberlain: *topomystica*. This focuses the paper in revealing the mystic elements of *Second Life* and associates these with the theories of economy politics of the internet in order to demonstrate how mystic elements have become a source of economic profit in digital platforms.

Keywords: Topomystica; Mystic Place; *Second Life*; Virtual Platforms; Digital Mysticism; Internet Economy.

INTRODUCTION

When examining how mysticism became a marketable element, neglecting cyberspace means overlooking an important portion of daily life experience. Technology has created a radical difference in people's lives in a sizable part of the world. While academics and experts continue to debate on how determining technology is over modern life forms, we might at least confine our focus to our observations on how forms of working, leisure time activities, process of interaction with the media, and forms of interpersonal communication have changed over the past years.

In terms of our communication with both cyberspace and others in it, the opportunities provided by the Internet and Web 2.0 technology have reached such unprecedented dimensions that it is now impossible to simply call them a "change". A good deal of cyber space culture researches' observations on interpersonal interactions, inability to make sense of time and space, and the role of human body on the internet come up with ideas reminiscent of those that we would normally find in sci-fi stories.

Calling digital platforms in cyberspace virtual places where we spend part of our lives is not inappropriate considering present discourses on technology in circulation. However, if we are to define an internet application as a “place”, we must deal with the interaction both between the individual and the application (that is, the place) and between individuals participating in the application. This is because what is at stake here is neither merely the simulation of a place that consists of visuals and sounds nor a cyberspace that can be experienced through the involvement of all the human senses. Within a cyberspace simulation, these digital platforms offer an opportunity to intervene in this place and, more importantly, to make interventions that would affect everyone on the platform. Users of the platform act as if they share a physical place or, in the case of *Second Life*, they act as if they share a real life with others being affected by other’s decisions and actions and constructing a world together.

THE INTERNET AND CYBERSPACE

Before defining virtual place in cyberspace, it will be useful to clarify some of the basic concepts in this field, as they are often used erroneously. First of all, let us start out with Internet, one of the concepts that we most frequently use. Internet can be defined as the technological infrastructure that makes digital communication possible. While the Turkish Language Society proposes the phrase *Genel Ağ* (General Network) as the correspondent of the Internet in Turkish, defining the term as “the unlimited and unauthorized network of international communication of information”.

On the other hand, the concept of “cyberspace”, a term much confused with Internet, is defined as a certain type of communication environment, by which is meant the part of society and culture that exists only in computer networks (Downing, Covington and Covington, 1999: 138). The concept of cyberspace was first used in a novel called *Neuromancer* by William Gibson published in 1984. Blending the words Cybernetics and space, Gibson was describing a global network that consisted of computers and telecommunication systems that made the experiencing of a hallucination possible. Gibson called this global network *Matrix* and the representation produced by this network as “cyberspace” (Downes, 2005: 3-4).

There are various discussions about the concept of cyberspace. As early as 1997 Stephen Pfohl made the point that everybody was excited to add “cyber-” in front of “reality”. Writers like Mike Featherstone and Roger Burrows stated that the concept has become one of the basic elements of popular culture and that everything that begins with the prefix “cyber” has become fashionable in scientific and technological researches. In contrast to these opinions Gerlach and Hamilton emphasized that there is more to “cyber” than just a semiotic allure and marketing strategy. In the light of optimistic opinions, it can be said that cyberspace indicates a virtual communication environment where individuals spend an important part of their public life in terms of authentic experience. Although there are undoubtedly inequalities in terms of possessing technological means and the knowledge to use them, it is within optimistic opinions that almost all societies of the world are at a certain stage of becoming cyber (Gerlach and Hamilton, 2001: 41).

VIRTUALITY AND THE CONCEPT OF CYBERNESS

In a more comprehensive definition, one of the concepts gaining more importance is virtuality, which is a cyberspace with multiple environments for communication that are digitally

3 Journal Academic Marketing Mysticism Online

transferred, and are experienced by their users (Downes, 2005: 3). Although we see in some texts that this quality is used in such a way as to represent cyberspace only or as a phenomenon that can only be experienced through cyberspace, it can be argued in fact that the concept has instigated a different set of discussions altogether along with cyberspace.

Discussions as to whether or not cyberspace and various platforms in cyberspace can be alternative to physical places of our real lives are also treated in conjunction with this concept.

The concept of cyberness that gains importance in cyberspace is defined as experiencing the exterior from within the interior. Opinions diverge on if cyberness is a new and extraordinary phenomenon or if it already existed in the past and has just been taken to a new level with the concept of cyberspace. Those who claim that it is a new and extraordinary experience argue that cyberness is a unique phenomenon that came into existence during the Industrial Revolution which created an important change in daily life. According to counter opinions cyberness was already existent and it was an experience that put the spectator - or the experience - into a so-called real environment through the long forgotten visual means such as panorama and stereoscope. That is, cyberness did not enter our lives in recent years with cyberspace but is a phenomenon that we have long been experiencing. All these opposing opinions combined, it is possible to say the following about cyberness: cyberness has in fact been experienced before by various means; however, providing an unprecedented possibility that no other means could provide, computer-based environments enabled humans to interact with virtual reality, change it, and control it (Sterne, 2006: 20-21).

Another concept confused with the concepts cyberspace and cyberness is the virtual reality. As is the case with the concept of cyberness and cyberspace and virtual reality, too, they are mostly used synonymously. In addition, a virtual reality place, a term used to define platforms like *Second Life*, is apt to changes. According to Kitchen and Dodge (2002) virtual reality places are subcategories of cyberspace. However, it must not be forgotten that in order to define *Second Life* with its multiple features, different terms can be used depending on the feature emphasized. For example, examining social behavioral patterns in *Second Life* Friedman, Steed and Slater defined the platform as a collaborative virtual environment (CVE) (Friedman et al, 2007: 2). Using a similar approach and laying their emphasis on multiplayer feature of the platform Bonsu and Darmody used the term "multiplayer massive online game" (MMOG) for *Second Life* (Bonsu and Darmody, 2008: 355).

VIRTUAL PLACE IN CYBERSPACE

Can cyberspace be an alternative for a real place? It can be asserted that cyberspace can be an alternative to the concept of place when treated in terms of real human-environment relationship. According to Downes as an *imaginary place*, cyberspace pushes us to probe the role of physical place that draws on the borders of human interaction. Sterne notes that cyberspace is important in terms of the relationship between space/emptiness and the human body, which is mediated by the sense of sight (Sterne, 2006: 20-21). According to Bell (2001) the concept of cyborg (cybernetic organism), an important concept in cyber-culture studies, opens concepts such as interaction, life, place, body in virtual places to investigation (Bell, 2001: 3-4).

However, the problem that arises when we try to define virtual place is that defining the concept of place is not as easy as it is thought. Before technology made virtual experience possible and postmodern culture made unimportant the differences between individuals' real experiences and their virtual experiences, defining *place* was relatively easy. However easy it was then, notwithstanding, it has always been difficult to assert a unanimously agreed definition for the concept of place.

To overcome this difficulty, we may start out by saying that the concept of place means different things in different contexts. The definition of place that we are most familiar with is the way it is dealt with in geography. In geography, place stands for the position of an area on earth. Location of place in space by a global positioning system rests on the assumption that place is an objective reality. Although limiting place within physical borders has a value in Cartesian thought system, concepts such as distance, space, and time, which imply physical data, are being reconsidered today in terms of human experience and interaction. New approaches that arise along these developments do not take space only as coordinates on earth but also put emphasis on the spirit of place (*genius loci*), the experience of individuals in place, and psychological effects of place (psycho-geography) as well (Chamberlain, 2001: 99).

This shift in looking at the concept of place points to a differentiation in science in its modern and postmodern stages. Although modernism set rigid and definitive rules on place, it is among current approaches today that the concept of place on its own cannot be treated as an objective reality. In this postmodern age in which nature is treated more in spiritual terms, we see that place is being gradually defined also in terms of human experience; spirituality is attracting growing interest; and these changes are acknowledged by postmodern science (Chamberlain, 2001: 97).

The reason that it is not easy to discern that a certain platform is a place in cyberspace is simply because there is no physical reality to it. However, new approaches to the concept of place and the undeniable pervasiveness of cyberspace in our daily lives make it easier for us to consider *Second Life* as a place. Everything else put aside, the founders of the platform define *Second Life* as a virtual world, that is, a place where common experiences of millions of users are constructed.

VIRTUAL MYSTIC PLACE OR VIRTUAL TOPOMYSTICA

As Linden Lab, the owner of the platform puts it; *Second Life* can be accepted as a simulation of place in cyberspace and treated accordingly. Although there are a lot of elements in *Second Life* that do not exist in the real world, the interface we see on the screen is intended to look like the real world. For example, although avatars have abilities such as flying and being beamed up, the rules of earth gravity still apply and most places (streets, buildings, stairs) are designed accordingly. It is possible to say the same for landforms. Mountains, seas, lakes, waterfalls, trees and plants are simulations of a real world although they retain their extraordinary properties.

Can we, then, say that *Second Life* is in fact a kind of virtual mystic place? In order to answer this question we need to dissect the concept of its constitutive elements and examine them separately because despite the availability of vast information on definitions for mysticism, definitions of mystic place are quite limited.

5 Journal Academic Marketing Mysticism Online

One of these is Paul G. Chamberlain's work titled "Topomystica: Investigation into the Concept of Mystic Place" published in the *Journal of Cultural Geography* in 2001. Trying to bring a satisfactory definition to the concept of mystic place, Chamberlain argues that shortcomings in this attempt are due to the aforementioned traditional approaches to place. In other words, considering place merely as physical condition that envelops individuals inevitably precludes approaches on mystic place (Chamberlain, 2001: 101). The first point that Chamberlain (2001) makes to clear up the issue is that although mysticism is not limited to religion; there is a tendency to associate religion with mystic place. Places that are regarded as sacred by universal belief systems such as Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam are important as locales for faithfulness, loyalty and venerability. However, despite this common belief Chamberlain drew attention to the fact that mystic places are not limited to religious places. In fact many places that we can consider as mystic do not carry any religious characteristics. Moreover, people who cannot be considered religious might show interest in such places. For example, Bermuda Triangle, although not a religious site, is accepted as a mystic place. Accordingly, Chamberlain made a definition of mystic place that is not related to traditional belief systems and he used the term "topomystica" to differentiate it from previous understandings of mystic place (Chamberlain, 2001: 98-99).

According to Chamberlain, for a place to be termed topomystica it must meet the following criteria: it must be a place where strange, mystical, and paranormal events are experienced. These events must be related to a supernatural power and stories as to this supernatural power must be created by imagination. At this juncture, Chamberlain draws attention to the concept of *genius loci*, which can be considered as the spirit of the place. *Genius loci* (spirit of place) can be defined as an extraordinary power or spirit that dwells in and is a part of that place. The last characteristic that Chamberlain talks about is the experience of individuals associated with that place. The place might be useful or fearful for those who interact with it. That is, a topomystica does not necessarily have to be a frightening place (Chamberlain, 2001: 104).

Apart from these characteristics, Chamberlain further defines the characteristics of topomystica based on his researches of various cultures of the world. These characteristics are composed of the most remarkable common characteristics determined by the analysis of many mystic places. Accordingly, topomystica can be a place that existed in the past as well as one that currently does. Moreover, this place does not have to be real either; an imaginary place can be a topomystica as well. The important thing is that the place in question exerts an important influence on the human spirit in some way (Chamberlain, 2001: 104).

I have stated that the designers of *Second Life* created a simulation of the physical environment that envelopes avatar and that they designed this digital platform as a place. When *Second Life* as a mystic place is further investigated in view of Chamberlain's response that topomystica does not have to be a real place, enables us to treat *Second Life* as a mystic place. It is possible to make some guesswork on the degree of *Second Life's* influence by looking at the number of users on the platform and the amount of time they spend on it. Nevertheless, how much influence the platform has on users is going to vary from user to user. Some users might be on the platform just to earn money and others, like us, might be on it for research purposes. However, there are those users who consider the platform really as an opportunity of a second life and as means by which they express themselves. These users are

also the ones who contribute to its mystic interface and share it with others on the platform.

TOPOMYSTICA IN CYBERSPACE: *SECOND LIFE*

Based on Chamberlain's definition we can examine whether or not *Second Life* is a mystic place, a topomystica. Even the name *Second Life*, with its millions of users, seems reason enough to examine this virtual platform under the rubric of mysticism. Indeed, *Second Life* promises its users a second life. Starting with the name chosen for the platform, we see that the whole marketing strategy is built on this promise. However, the most important characteristic of this promised life is that the users can design it. The widespread discourse in *Second Life* experience is limited only by the creativity of its users, which is another marketing strategy of the platform.

In real life, *Second Life*, founded by Philip Rosedale in 1999, is an internet-based, three-dimensional virtual platform that was launched in 2003 as a utopian alternative to real life by Linden Lab who launched *Second Life* not only as a platform that simulates real life but also a platform of which every user can reshape all its contents. With the exception of the basic conditions of the virtual platform, everything else was created by users' imagination and efforts. Stating that *Second Life* was an empty world before users, Rosedale puts emphasis on the fact that it is the input of the users that shapes the platform (Bonsu and Darmody, 2008: 356, 358).

For entrance the platform requires loading an application that enables the user to display the interface of the *Second Life*. Users choose between basic and premium memberships when signing up. Basic membership is an option free of charge. Users can benefit from various features of the platform with this membership. However, users who would like to purchase land must have a Premium account, which is charged for.

Participation in the platform starts with users creating their avatars with the properties they desire. It is possible for users to shape their avatars in any way they want. There are far more options for those experienced users who are willing and can afford to spend more on the game. However, even the options for internet users with basic membership, who do not want to spend much on the game, are quite satisfactory. It is possible to design every detail of the body of the avatar. When walking around in *Second Life*, it is easily noticeable that users pay great deal of attention to the appearance of their avatars.

Although it looks like a computer game, *Second Life* is quite different from usual computer games. For this reason, its members are regarded not as users but as *residents*, "individuals who reside at a certain place". Compared with usual computer games, attentions are drawn to the following characteristics of *Second Life*: There is no objective to attain as with other usual games. Moreover, many objectives such as education, earning money, shopping, worshipping or just killing time are limited by the possibilities offered by the platform.

As a virtual space, the body-space relationship in *Second Life* is noteworthy. It becomes possible to achieve *Cyberpunk's* dream of "transcending body" (Bell, 2001: 3) and do everything that can be done in real life commanding another body -or the simulation of your own body for that matter- in front of a screen. As emphasized earlier, it might be a bit of an exaggeration to claim that the platform might offer options of alternative experiences to real life

7 Journal Academic Marketing Mysticism Online

and everything that can be done in real life can also be done on it. These might well be marketing statements only or comments of academics and experts who put emphasis on the educational aspect of the platform. Whatever the sources of the claims, it is a well-established discourse that everything that is possible in real life is also possible in *Second Life*.

Additionally, whether or not *Second Life* constitutes an alternative to real life differs for every user. Considering especially the opinions that bedridden patients and people with physical disabilities play *Second Life*, in order to answer whether or not anything that is doable in real life can also be done in *Second Life*, the real lives of users must be investigated. The answer will sometimes be yes and sometimes no. Even this, however, is enough to make *Second Life* an interesting contributory part of the discourse on virtual experience, body, and space.

One of the most striking aspects of virtual experience in *Second Life* is that it is a collective experience. Reading this section, the readers will notice that apart from selling experience being the basic principle of marketing, living through an experience collectively is also part of popular marketing discourse today. *Second Life* is a platform founded on this principle both as a virtual place and as a spatial value and interaction with virtual bodies and objects on the platform. The virtual world and other virtual bodies are affected by every touch. It is not the platform's graphical and other technical elements, of *Second Life*, but the possibility of collective experience that it provides that makes it possible to liken its virtual reality to a second life.

Probing the platform through these features makes it easier to examine *Second Life* as a place. As is noted earlier, however, this place, in which interaction with other users and all the objects on the platform is possible, must not be sized up against the theories of physics and geography - because it does not exist in the real world but in cyberspace - but be dealt with on the basis of today's current criteria that take into account individuals' interaction with the place, interaction with each other in the place, and the effects of the place on the individual. When we consider if *Second Life* is a topomystica as a virtual place, it can be said that it is clear that the platform contains mystic elements. Although, it's a simulation of the real world, its avatars have extraordinary abilities. For example, they can fly to get to wherever they want to get to, be beamed up, or, if they like, they might prefer to walk or run. Moreover, many objects in the *Second Life* have mystic qualities. That the simulation of mystic places in the world is transported to the platform and that users participate in mystic experience support this position.

However, what makes it imperative for one to examine *Second Life* in view of "mystic marketing" is that these mystic elements indirectly sustain the platform and create the source that maintains its profitability. Mystic elements or the mystic experience gained on the platform have become a marketing element of *Second Life*. As a topomystica *Second Life* attracts numerous users and, this attention intensifies day by day causing users to invest more time and effort in the game.

POLITICAL ECONOMY OF INTERNET MARKETING

While Linden Lab presents *Second Life* to its customers as a second life in which there is equal opportunity, the platform receives criticisms because most of these opportunities are

purchasable. Moving one step further, studies on the political economy of *Second Life* suggest that *Second Life*, like other internet companies, take advantage of the free user workforce and, thus, maintains its profitability. As users participate in the platform voluntarily, we can assume that this is an ethical economy. Nevertheless, it is hard to ignore that *Second Life*, with mystic elements as part of its marketing discourse, provides an extraordinary amount of profit for Linden Lab.

Part of the studies that investigate the various aspects of cyberspace under the “cyber culture” heading sheds light on this economic structure on the internet. Although it might not be possible to make clear-cut distinctions between the approaches that appeared in certain periods, it is safe to say that the critical attitude has been growing and heating up lately. This situation is a result of the spread of internet use among general users and the growth of cyberspace as an area that grabs the attention of marketers. David Silver’s chronological classification seems illuminating in this regard (Scolari, 2009: 951-952).

Defined as the first stage of cyber cultural studies, Popular Cyber Cultural Studies involves studies that try to define cyber culture and examine internet use as a flourishing field. Although writers like Kirkpatrick Sale (1995), who pointed toward cultural corruption, political alienation, and social division, and Robert Coover (1992), who introduced the “end of the book” discussion, can be considered in this category, opinions that dubbed cyberspace as the new field of civilization and democratic digital field that would break the monopoly of giant companies hold sway. The current discussion of whether or not the internet can be a public sphere of its own goes back to the discourses of the past on freedom and collectivity on the internet (Scolari, 2009: 951-952). Growing especially after the second half of 1990s, Cyber Cultural Studies have become an academic avenue where many theories have been advanced as a result of various researches on the interactiveness of cyberspace and social networks that form the basis of virtual communities.

The encouragement of Arthur Escobar, the author of the article, “Welcome to Cyberia: Notes on the Anthropology of Cyberculture”, the first social sciences work that treats cyber culture as a legitimate field worthy of academic study, have yielded positive results (Gerlach and Hamilton, 2001: 41-42). Along with the sociology that examines virtual communities, fields such as “Cyborg Anthropology,” which examines the interaction between digital communities and networks, and ethnographic approaches to cyber culture, which examines the analyses of the identities and behaviors of users in a virtual environment, were born in this critical period (Scolari, 2009: 951-952).

On the other hand, Critical Cyber Cultural Studies, which Silver defines as the third stage, examine online interaction, digital discourse, internet access, designing cyberspace interface, and the relations amongst these fields. From 2000 on, the transformation of cyberspace, the changing role of users, applications based on user collaboration, the new structure of internet not unlike that of the traditional media, monopolization in platforms providing access to information, and the internet economy that provided extraordinary profitability for monopolizing internet companies have brought about many criticisms along with themselves (Scolari, 2009: 951-952).

It can be observed today that free and open-source platforms are run not by software developers who work to provide brand new opportunities for users but by companies that seek

9 Journal Academic Marketing Mysticism Online

to derive profit from every step of software developing. Cyberspace has become a playground of users who try to benefit from internet opportunities, companies that try to reach their users over networks, and internet companies that try to sell the interest, attention, and time of the users to these companies. However, this is a game quite carefully designed and for the time being everybody seems to be pleased with this game whose rules are set by the new internet economy. Every application in cyberspace is considered a field of marketing. And it is the users themselves that internet companies try to market to institutions that try to reach users. Advertisements that are priced over clicks per user - not over minutes, days, or space - are the most concrete examples of this situation.

Apart from numerous opportunities that it provides for internet users, there are various studies that critique the internet economy. Christian Fuchs (2009), for one, interpreted the basic elements of Marxist criticism from an internet point of view. The writer makes reference to Karl Marx's "A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy" in his work titled "Information and Communication Technologies and Society: A Contribution to the Critique of the Political Economy of the Internet" published in *European Journal of Communication*. In this study Fuchs examines the structure of hegemony and exploitation between internet companies or profit-oriented virtual institutions and ordinary users who use internet for personal purposes like communicating with others, accessing information, passing good time

According to Fuchs, global economic networks and cyberspace fulfill the function of channels where knowledge is produced as a commodity and distributed. In this system, which the writer names "Information Capitalism", channels like internet and property models that aim for capital accumulation are developed. According to Fuchs, what stands in diametrical opposition to this system is a collaborative production system that relies on open information. A production system that is based on free and open software enables us to question property-based models by placing the emphasis on information that is provided not for its exchange value but its use value (Fuchs, 2009: 78-80).

FREE APPLICATIONS AND MARKETING

However, the fact that there are so many free applications today is, in fact, not a promising situation. The aspect that Fuchs would like to stress is the ideological character of these free applications. Certain institution created the platforms; the contents and which users could only access was the basic form of the business model at the initial periods of the internet.

Today there are platforms called Web 2.0 applications, which allow for user interaction and collaboration instead of platforms created by an institution and that users could merely access without being able to actually intervene (Fuchs, 2009: 80-81).

The success of Web 2.0 applications, best examples of which are widely used platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, MySpace, lies in the following formula: The more service the more users; the more users the more profit. Open and free platforms try to attract as many users as possible to this area providing free service that would benefit users because they adopted a model that is based on profiting by selling the user interest to those who advertise. Therefore, the value of the receivers of advertisement on any platform is proportional to certain criteria such as the time a user spends on the platform (Fuchs, 2009: 80-81).

Approaching this issue in a rather different way, Dallas Smythe dwells on the possibility that users might be treated as a commodity. If internet companies, which profit by providing free service, measure the value of advertisement fields, then users are merely things, that is, commodities, that can be sold and bought, and are chargeable. In other words users who “google” information, watch a video clip on YouTube, put up their pictures on Flickr or form an online content on social network platforms such as Facebook become an object of commercial exchange, a “commodity mass”, for advertisers (Fuchs, 2009: 81-82).

Another aspect of the situation is that the source of the platform is essentially the users themselves. The basic conditions of the platform that make user interaction possible are ready and available. However, users themselves create the attention grabbing content that attracts new users, make users spend time on the platform and revisit it again and again. Without users, these platforms would lose their attraction for others and, therefore, rates of visitor number would decrease and the platform would suffer in terms of profitability. In such a model, behind the illusion of unique possibilities never before provided by any other means of communication - such as unlimited interaction, direct access to information, making one's own voice heard - lie, in fact, the profit-based practices of internet companies. Undoubtedly, this is not to say that these platforms do not provide any benefit to their users. One would like, however, to simply point out that these platforms are formed completely by the efforts of their users and, drawing on Fuchs' Marxist analysis, that they use users' free labor and turn it into their own resource to attract more users to the platform (Fuchs, 2009: 82-84). We know the rest of the story: the more users the more profit!

MARKETING SECOND LIFE WITH MYSTICISM

We can now put aside our optimistic opinions about cyberspace and this model in which profit-oriented internet companies market their free service to users and users to advertisers, and see how this model applies to *Second Life*. It seems easier to evaluate this profit-oriented model in the case of *Second Life*. Already, the economy of *Second Life*, its virtual institutions that convert real world money to Linden dollar - the currency of *Second Life* - and practices as to virtual property rights on the platform make this platform one of the most interesting examples of internet economy.

There are different aspects to be considered with all these applications behind the impression that they provide profit for their users. Although they provide a platform for users and brands where they make financial gains, *Second Life* has a structure that profits from every step of its users' activities. Many users spend time on *Second Life* free of charge. One has to simply open a *Basic* account on the platform. There are lots of things to do once you enter the platform but if you don't intend to spend any money, it is unlikely that what you can do with a *Basic* membership would satisfy you for a long time. Just like in real life, avatars, too, always ask for more.

As with many online platforms, *Second Life* is supported by the user entries. The formula above can be applied to *Second Life*; the possibility of a life presented by the platform, which can simulate the real world but is also completely shapeable by the users, draws millions of people to the platform (Bonsu and Darmody, 2008: 356-358). Everything done by the users' efforts makes the platform even more appealing while Linden Lab carries out an important regulation for protecting the rights of the virtual properties the users create within the platform

11 Journal Academic Marketing Mysticism Online

in order to increase participation. Because of this regulation the users can sell their own virtual properties to other users. The opportunity to convert the Linden Dollars they gain here to real currencies encourages the users to create virtual properties which are indispensable for the virtual world, such as houses, furniture, and clothing. In addition to that, Linden Lab provides the conditions for developing marketing models for real world brands that aim to reach the users through *Second Life*. Companies such as Nike, IBM and Adidas are among the brands commanding attention by their applications in *Second Life*.

It is noteworthy that the users derive profit for the platform by their efforts to make the *Second Life* an attractive place as much as by their payments for Premium memberships.

Hof's (2006) remark on this subject is interesting:

[Second Life] taps into something very powerful: the talent and hard work of everyone inside. Residents spend a quarter of the time they're logged in, a total of nearly 23,000 hours a day, creating things that become part of the world, available to everyone else. It would take a paid 4,100-person software team to do all that, says Linden Lab. Assuming those programmers make about \$100,000 a year, that would be \$410 million worth of free work over a year.

http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/06_18/b3982001.htm)

During the first years of *Second Life* the things the users could make were limited and everything they created belonged to Linden Lab. However, Linden Lab executed important changes concerning the users' rights on their virtual properties in order to support their activities in the platform and to encourage more contribution from them. These rights and authorities have as of today transform the *Second Life* into a capitalist world simulation (Bonsu and Darmody, 2008: 358, 360) do not differ from the free services provided by other Web 2.0 applications. One can confidently say that these applications are seen by the corporations that present them as a marketing model peculiar to cyber space, although they seem to us, as ordinary users, as applications for our benefit. Mustafa S. Tüter's explanation on this subject is further enlightening (Tüter, 2007: 8-9):

The only reality that ties your second (surrogate) life {,} which offers the opportunities for trying anything you can think of with your first life {,} is money. In fact this can be seen as a contradiction when one thinks of the logic underlying the Second Life project. The idea of creating a virtual world limited only by dreams is placed onto the basis of a concrete reality of materiality. In other words, Second Life holds tight to the most viable principle of the real world in order to escape from being a utopia. Gaining material profit becomes the main aim instead of the dreams of surpassing the material world. Furthermore, as the virtual world is not so successful to distance itself from the rules of the real world, you have to spend money for eating, hanging around and looking good, just like in the real world. Each and every activity you make has a certain economic value. Obviously, we cannot find it strange to find money involved in all this when we think of the fact that Second Life is the product of the video game industry. Had Second Life not had this economic dimension, it could have neither attracted the interest of the companies to this extent nor gained large number of members.

Now we can clearly see that the opportunities presented by *Second Life* are not based on Linden Lab's passion for cyberspace or voluntary goodwill. *Second Life* has become an interesting subject of study within the marketing discipline in recent years. Many aspects of *Second Life*, such as the fact that the users spend real world money on the platform, that the virtual properties, places and many more created by user entries increase the number of members on the platform, or that the real world brands invest in this platform as a marketing area, make the platform an interesting field for marketing practitioners and academics.

We can start examining the mystical character of the things created by the users in *Second Life* upon seeing that these creations, the authorizations given to the users and the abilities of the avatars contribute in the end to the user experience that yields a profit for the platform. Putting aside the users who are present in the platform only for the sake of profiting applications, what makes *Second Life* so important for many users are the mystical aspects, the opportunity of an experience in a mystical space. When we examine the mystical aspects in *Second Life* via Chamberlain's concept topomystica, we can see that *Second Life* is a mystic place, namely a topomystica.

MYSTIC SECOND LIFE, MYSTIC EXPERIENCES

According to Chamberlain, topomystica must be a place that the incidents are extraordinary and mysterious, and these incidents must relate to a supernatural power (Chamberlain, 2001: 104). Although *Second Life* is positioned as a simulation of the real life, the avatars have a number of extraordinary characteristics, which are impossible to have in the real world. At this point the appearance of the avatars alone can be a subject of examination. Besides the real human appearance, the avatars can be zombies or aliens while they can have mystical characteristics in their physical features, clothing and accessories. The avatars' basic abilities such as flying or transporting between places are among the main examples of the mystic experience gained on the platform. Moreover, the places in the platform and the objects in them have extraordinary and mysterious features. Several mysterious places and objects from the real world are replicated on the platform. All of these objects and places created by the users constitute the mystical interface of *Second Life* as much as they resemble the real world.

It is possible to say that *Second Life* is related to a supernatural power. In accordance with the discourses on the Internet, *Second Life* is designed to provide a platform without a social hierarchy. For a *Second Life* user, a second life means a world the ideology of which is freedom and justice. It is stated that the activities of the users to create the interface within the platform are motivated by the desire to contribute to the building of a community without the hierarchical pressures dominating everyday life. However, in spite of escaping into this virtual world with the hope of getting away from the inequalities of the real world, one comes across several signs pointing to the fact that the social hierarchies in the real world are also present here. Besides the inequalities between the users, Linden Lab has a privileged position in this structure. Linden Lab, known as "the Lindens", is clearly located at the top of the social hierarchy in the eyes of the users. Bonsu and Darmody underlies that "the Lindens" are perceived as demigods or sorcerers in the present structure (Bonsu and Darmody 2008: 261, 263).

Chamberlain states that the definition of topomystica also includes the possibility that the place can be beneficial or frightening in accordance with those who interact with the place itself

13 Journal Academic Marketing Mysticism Online

(Chamberlain, 2001: 104). The impressions and emotions of people concerning the place may cause it to be curative with positive effects on the human body and soul as well as to be spooky, insecure, dangerous and uncanny. For example, many religious places are seen as a topomystica with their positive effects on human soul while the Bermuda Triangle is a mysterious and scary topomystica.

When these points are considered, we can say that *Second Life* has a positive influence on the human soul by numerous beneficial applications it offers. First of all, what enables the users to spend their time in and contribute to the platform consist of certain motivations such as the desire to be recognized, accepted, respected and socially appreciated, or being part of a community. Apart from its being a part of non-traditional forms of production (Bonsu and Darmody, 2008: 355), as put forth by the economic and political analyses made on the Internet, many social benefits and other advantages provided by the platform are valued by large numbers of users.

One of the most striking advantages *Second Life* offers for the users is the education opportunity. Several universities have carried part of their campuses to *Second Life*. The leading contribution of education in the virtual platform for the universities is the flexibility, creativity, which make education an enjoyable activity. Simulations provide a real job experience for the students. In addition, numerous events, such as conferences and presentations, held there attract the interest of the users (Robbins and Bell, 2008: 283-285).

Chamberlain lists the qualities of topomystica; aside from three main features a topomystica should have, derived from the common aspects of places regarded as mystical by different cultures. Seeing that the three main features, which Chamberlain states to be necessary for topomystica hold true within *Second Life*, we can review his other qualities of topomystica in view of the *Second Life*. These seven qualities are discussed below (Chamberlain, 2001: 104-110):

Topos:

Striking natural landforms are among important features of topomystica. Land forms such as caves, springs, ponds, waterfalls, rocks and hills have a mystical allure on the human soul, especially if they are regarded as rare and exceptional. Chamberlain exemplifies the places with mystical land features by the mystic wall paintings made by the Neanderthals in the Lascaux Cave in France or by the Parthenon in Acropolis of Athens, while he also states that the mountains have especially been related to the supernatural force. They commonly have a special place in the main religions as they are regarded to be tying the land with the sky, that is to say the humankind with the house of gods. Clark and Piggott (1970) remark that in the cases in which the mountains do not naturally exist, the cultures put efforts to create them artificially. The Pyramid of Cheops in Egypt, appreciated as one of the seven wonders in the world, presents a distinctive example of this situation with its resemblance to a mountain in the middle of the desert.

When we begin to evaluate *Second Life*, we can see that it is composed of numerous attractive landforms. Alongside the parts simulating the urban life, the seas, lakes, mountains, waterfalls, caves and the extraordinary flora make the interface of *Second Life* absolutely more

colorful. Part of these can be said to duplicate the mystical places in the real world for the virtual world. For example, a replica of Lascaux Cave is present in *Second Life*. It is possible to see many mystic places like this one in *Second Life*. The landforms aside from these also seem to be designated to create a mystical atmosphere. Radiating mushrooms, flowers, large green areas, big trees, caves and many more landforms render *Second Life* an attractive mystic place.

Morphology:

Chamberlain states that topomystica includes irregular forms in terms of their natural topographical features on earth. However, in places without striking natural features or when the mystic allure of a place needs to be increased, geometrical elements are added to these places. According to the writer, geometry means order; order means design and design points to the existence of a secret force or a supernatural power.

The geometric pattern most frequently seen in mystic places is the circle. Circles have been used in the urban design for a long time by virtue of the compactness, accessibility and security they provide. Yet according to Tuan (1974), the circle pattern also reflects the form of the universe, that is to say the mystic power. Besides the circle has an aesthetical appeal. Cornish (1933) claims the circle form contributes to the beauty of the earth. Apart from the circle patterns, the triangle forms seen in mystic places such as the Bermuda Triangle, Mount Olympus or the pyramids, and straight lines pronounced in the columns are among the important geometrical forms for topomystica.

There are many structures and areas incorporating striking geometrical patterns in *Second Life*. The houses of the users in *Second Life*, the buildings of the brands in the platform or the places the avatars spend their time together in are noteworthy by their creative design. Everything on this point is up to the users' creativity and investment of time. Virtual agents called *Prims* enable the users to create architectural designs freely in the platform. A variety of *prims* constitute the basis of the extraordinary designs in *Second Life*. These flexible agents, with different scales of color, texture and brightness, collectively help the users to create complex structures.

Dialecticism:

The imposition of geometry onto the place reflects humankind's passion for order. According to Chamberlain, however, despite the struggle to create order within disorder, people actually need complexity in order to animate their ordinary lives. Western writers' conscious efforts to impose chaos to Bermuda Triangle for long years to sell more books exemplify the situation. In Chamberlain's opinion, topomystica is a place, which brings conflicting elements such as order and disorder together. The oppositions such as never-ending battle between people or between the humankind and the nature, or the fight between good and evil, are among the contradictions of the stories about mystic places.

We can mention the existence of many contradictions, which we especially come across in politico-economic analyses, in *Second Life*. Tüter (2007) points out the most distinctive of these: It is a total contradiction itself that the real world money is used in the platform which actually aims to get away from the pressure of the material world by creating a world limited

15 Journal Academic Marketing Mysticism Online

only by the users' imagination and that many users' goal in the platform is achieving material gain.

Not all users in the platform aim for material gain, however. It is possible to speak of an opposition between the users and the corporations whose goal is material gain in *Second Life*. There is a group of people not concerned with such gains who only want to have a good time in the platform and make it a more interesting place with their creativity. Nevertheless a good number of users, corporations and brands take part in *Second Life* only in order to make financial profit. Bonsu and Darmody explain this situation in "Contradictions in Second Life" by stating that behind the veil of giving authorizations and powers to the users in the platform in order to animate the work force, Linden Lab actually aims to gain profit (Bonsu and Darmody, 2008: 361).

This situation is a reflection of the opposition mentioned earlier between the users producing public information in various applications in the cyberspace and the application owners who want to profit from them (Fuchs, 2009: 77). While they talk about the opposition between two groups in *Second Life*, Bonsu and Darmody denominate those who are present in the platform with the aim of discovering new forms of socialization as "creatives", while they denominate the users, brands and corporations which join *Second Life* in order to turn the present sources in the platform into financial profit as "corporates" (Bonsu and Darmody, 2008: 262).

There is a tension going on between these two groups in *Second Life*. The users struggle against the controlling of the corporate and its effects. These users, denoted as "creatives" by Bonsu and Darmody, have organized protests with boycott posters in the virtual world. But at this point too there is a contradiction. The members of this group continue to buy brand products for their avatars while at the same time protesting against the persons and corporations who want to profit from the platform (Bonsu and Darmody, 2008: 262-263).

Chronology:

According to Chamberlain, topomystica is timeless; it exists outside the normal time frame of human experience. Every culture has symbols and sayings evoking the myth of the endless return. For example, the medicine wheel used by North American Indians is a primitive clock mirroring the cosmic repetition of time in the universe.

Medicine wheels are still used today as mystic rituals. The linear time, however, is the exact opposite of this understanding. In the *Second Life* time seems to be a bit complex. As a simulation of the real world, the linear time of the real world is valid there. Although the users find their avatars in the place and situation they have left them, *Second Life* constantly changes by the user entries, as it is a virtual place with intervention by millions of users at the same time. In other words, each time the users enter into the system, many changes will have taken place in this world.

Syncretism:

According to Chamberlain, topomystica is a synergic place, which adds to itself from each culture it comes across with. *Second Life* is absolutely the same: It has millions of members

from every corner of the globe with the authority of creating new things that comprise the bits and pieces of the platform. Each of these users carries their various cultures, beliefs, rituals and habits to the platform. While the places taken hold of by the profit oriented corporations and brands are shaped in resemblance to the everyday life of people living in big cities, many places are designed in accordance with the lives, experiences and beliefs of people from different cultures sometimes by taking inspiration from past and present places and sometimes independently from them.

Naturopathy:

The positive effect of nature on living species' health has long been noticed. According to Chamberlain, an important character of topomystica is this mysterious healing power. This healing power constitutes the source of defense against the criticisms on *Second Life*. It is possible to say that *Second Life* is indeed a healing application for a group of users, such as bedridden patients or disabled people, who find the promise of a second chance more hopeful than the rest. For example, it can be a therapy to dance or to accomplish tough physical activities in *Second Life* for a person who cannot walk in the real life.

The cyber-therapy or avatar therapy, which is recent in *Second Life*, is among the important applications concerning the healing power of the platform. Avatar therapy is even used in the treatments of phobias such as acrophobia or claustrophobia, social anxiety disorder, depression, addiction and even autism. The persons who benefit from the application most are those who are too timid to visit therapists in real life. *Second Life* enables these people to meet with real therapists (http://www.sabah.com.tr/Gunaydin/Saglik/2011/01/29/avatar_terapi). Aside from many universities and corporations from the real world, there are now virtual clinics and hospitals in *Second Life*.

Gestalt:

While mentioning the three main characteristics topomystica should have, we have said that topomystica can be scary or beneficial for those who interact with it. What Chamberlain wants to talk about under the headline of Gestalt is this feature. For the bedridden patients, disabled people and the user group needing therapy mentioned in the former heading, this place has immense advantages.

As stated before, the education opportunities presented by *Second Life* are among the beneficial applications that this place provides for the users. Many important universities use *Second Life* in order to carry out their distance learning programs, foreign languages education and other corporate training programs as well as organizing virtual courses, seminars and conferences. The first virtual campus of Turkey on *Second Life* belongs to METU. The academic staff of METU uses the campus on *Second Life* to support their courses. In the virtual campus there are group meeting and study buildings, a lecture hall for bigger gatherings, teaching methods classes, virtual courts as well as areas for students to spend time with their friends (<http://hurarsiv.hurriyet.com.tr/goster/ShowNew.aspx?id=16914152>)

Virtual Worship in *Second Life*

The simulation of mystic places belonging to the real world on *Second Life*, itself a mystic

17 Journal Academic Marketing Mysticism Online

place according to Chamberlain's definition of topomystica and their applications on the platform are subject of study in their own rights. Many mystic places located in the real world such as cathedrals and temples are replicated in the *Second Life*. You can light virtual candles for Shabbat, transport to a Buddhist temple, or consult with an oracle for divine guidance here. Just like among the real world churches, mosques and synagogues, there are varieties, quarrels and divisions in terms of beliefs in the *Second Life* (Crabtree, www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/06/15/AR2007061501902.html)

Beth Brown, the creator of the first synagogue on the *Second Life*, has received an unexpected interest from the users. Although Brown did not aim to draw attention of the users in *Second Life* or to create some sort of virtual community, she says that the synagogue began to be visited from the very first hours on. The synagogue's members now exceed 200 people. Brown says that she has done this as a spiritual task, with the intent of creating a worship area for everyone's use, rather than as an activity to spend time in *Second Life*. At Brown's synagogue the candles are lit every Friday evening and a great number of people join in (Crabtree, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/06/15/AR2007061501902.html>)

There are numerous Buddhist centers and several virtual places in which meditations of Far Eastern religions are practiced as well as hundreds of churches with surprisingly large numbers of members in the platform. One of the interesting places on *Second Life* is the virtual Mecca. Walid Wahba, the creator of the island in which the virtual Mecca resides, says that his aim is to inform the users about the Hajj pilgrimage (<http://news.sky.com/skynews/Home/Sky-News-Archive/Article/20080641297721>). Theology and computer sciences professor Noreen Herzfeld from Saint John University states that this application reflects the community, identity codes, rituals and practices defined by her as the "external face" of religion (Crabtree, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/06/15/AR2007061501902.html>)

CONCLUSION

The use of Chamberlain's extensive definition of topomystica, which he developed concerning mystic places that are traditionally related to religious places in this study, is in order to evaluate the virtual world of *Second Life* which has become very popular in recent times. It is obvious that the *Second Life* is a "place" in light of new approaches; moreover, it can also be accepted as a "mystic place" in the context of Chamberlain's topomystica concept. The mystic component and experience presented by *Second Life* makes the platform more attractive to the users because it promises a second life full of mystical elements that can be shaped by the users, which is then used as the basis of its marketing strategy.

Mystic experiences offered by the *Second Life* in addition to being an important part of its marketing strategy also provide the user interest and work force which are the main sources of the platform. Had *Second Life* been an exact simulation of the real world conditions filled with ordinary avatars profiling ordinary human features, it could not have been this much attractive. The mystic experience in *Second Life* as a topomystica enables the users to invest in terms of time and effort, thus increases the fascination of the platform on a daily basis. It can be readily accepted that the platform is not only discovered by the ordinary users but also by many profit oriented corporations and brands as the owner of the platform; Linden Lab develops new

applications that would yield profits for persons and brands.

As with many open and free internet applications, *Second Life* too has a structure that turns the user contributions into its own source. Nonetheless, it presents an important example of mystic marketing in cyberspace by showing how the mystic abilities and mystic experiences gained in a virtual mystic place can become an attraction to follow and for turning the user contributions in question into financial profit.

REFERENCES

Bell, D. (2001). *An Introduction to Cybercultures*. USA: Routledge.

http://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=MRNlLK6ZIMYC&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=An+Introduction+to+Cybercultures&ots=fQiNru67I&sig=ZRiO2JkcUEj_k3nJtNn4XJ2te74#v=onepage&q&f=false [GS SEARCH](#)

Bonsu, S. K. and Darmody, A. (2008). Co-creating Second Life: Market Consumer Cooperation in Contemporary Economy. *Journal of Macromarketing*. 28, p255-368.

<http://jmk.sagepub.com/content/28/4/355.short> [GS SEARCH](#)

Chamberlain, P. G. (2001). Topomystica: Investigation into the Concept of Mystic Place. *Journal of Cultural Geography*. 19 (1), p97-123.

[http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:ahnL4hj0sywJ:www.highbeam.com/doc/1G189576770.html+Chamberlain,+P.+G.+\(2001\).+Topo+Mystica:+Investigation+into+the+Concept+of+Mystic+Place.&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&source=www.google.com](http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:ahnL4hj0sywJ:www.highbeam.com/doc/1G189576770.html+Chamberlain,+P.+G.+(2001).+Topo+Mystica:+Investigation+into+the+Concept+of+Mystic+Place.&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&source=www.google.com) [VIEW ITEM](#)

Clark, G. and Piggott, S. (1970) *Prehistoric Societies*. London: Penguin

<http://www.getcited.org/pub/101208023> [GS SEARCH](#)

Coover, R. (1992). *The End of Books*. NY: The New York Times

http://scholar.google.com/scholar?q=The+End+of+Books&hl=en&btnG=Search&as_sdt=1%2C5&as_sdt=on [GS SEARCH](#)

Crabtree, S. (2007). *Finding Religion in Second Life's Virtual Universe*. Available:

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/06/15/AR2007061501902.html>
Last accessed 7th March 2011. [VIEW ITEM](#)

Çüçen, A. (2001). *Derin Ekoloji*. Available: <http://dogaokulu.net/notlar/derinekoloji.pdf>. Last accessed 12th Feb 2011 [VIEW ITEM](#)

Downes, D. M. (2005). *Interactive Realism: The Poetics of Cyberspace*. Available:

<http://catalog.wmu.se/cgi-bin/koha/opac-detail.pl?biblionumber=61054> Last accessed 12th Feb 2011. [VIEW ITEM](#) [GS SEARCH](#)

Downing, D. A., Covington, M. A. and Covington, M. M. (1999). *Açıklamalı Bilgisayar ve İnternet Terimleri Sözlüğü*. Hacettepe: Taş Kitapçılık.

<http://www.google.com/search?hl=en&q=Downing%2C+D.A.%2C+Covington+M.+A.+and+Covington%2C+M.+M.+%281999%29.+A%3%A7%C4%B1klamalı%C4%B1+Bilgisayar+ve+%C4%B0internet+Terimleri+S%C3%B6zl%C3%BC%C4%9F%C3%BC.+Hacettepe%3A+Ta%C5%9F+Kitap%C3%A7%C4%B1%C4%B1k>. [VIEW ITEM](#)

19 Journal Academic Marketing Mysticism Online

Escobar, E. (1994). Welcome to Cyberia: Notes on the Anthropology of Cyberculture [and comments and reply]. *Current Anthropology*. 35 (3), p211-231

<http://fido.rockymedia.net/anthro/arturo.pdf> [GS SEARCH](#)

Friedman, D., Steed, A. and Slater, M. (2007). Spatial Social Behavior in Second Life. *Lecture Notes in Computer Science*. 4722, p252-263. <http://www.cs.ucl.ac.uk/staff/a.steed/SLbot.pdf>

VIEW ITEM [GS SEARCH](#)

Fuchs, G. (2009). Information and Communication Technologies and Society: A Contribution to the Critique of the Political Economy of the Internet. *European Journal of Communication*.

24, p69-87. <http://ejc.sagepub.com/content/24/1/69.short> [GS SEARCH](#)

Gerlach, N. and Hamilton S. N. (2001). Cyber, Inc: Business Restructuring Literature and/as Cybertheory. *The International Journal of Research Into New Media Technologies*. 40 (7), p40-

60. <http://con.sagepub.com/content/7/1/40.short> [GS SEARCH](#)

Hof, R. D. (2006). *My Virtual Life*. Available:

http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/06_18/b3982001.htm VIEW ITEM [GS](#)

[SEARCH](#)

<http://hurarsiv.hurriyet.com.tr/goster/ShowNew.aspx?id=16914152>

Last accessed 12th Feb 2011. VIEW ITEM

<http://news.sky.com/skynews/Home/Sky-News-Archive/Article/20080641297721>

Last accessed 12th Feb 2011. VIEW ITEM

http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/06_18/b3982001.htm

Last accessed 12th Feb 2011. VIEW ITEM

http://www.sabah.com.tr/Gunaydin/Saglik/2011/01/29/avatar_terapi

Last accessed 12th Feb 2011. VIEW ITEM

Kitchen, R. and Dodge, M. (2002). The Emerging Geographies of Cyberspace in Johnson, R. J. et al (eds). *Geographies of Global Change: Remapping the World*. UK: Blackwell Publishing

http://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=WZ2VZQRePfgC&oi=fnd&pg=PR9&dq=Geographies+of+Global+Change:+Remapping+the+World&ots=B9RNNncz4i&sig=cZ4vqXJInRB_haG0c7INMHJQOiw#v=onepage&q&f=false [GS SEARCH](#)

Robbins, S. and Bell, M. (2008). *Second Life for Dummies*. USA: Wiley Publishing.

http://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=KeW_jK5VkckC&oi=fnd&pg=PA1&dq=Second+Life+for+Dummies&ots=yRrQs83MKO&sig=wsFJm5_CiaqEwbvC3D_C8EB3Bew#v=onepage&q&f=false [GS SEARCH](#)

Sale, K. (1995). *Rebels Against the Future: The Luddites and Their War on the Industrial Revolution: lessons for the computer age*. Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company.

<http://www.getcited.org/pub/103205684> [GS SEARCH](#)

Scolari, C. A. (2009). Mapping Conversations About New Media: The Theoretical Field of Digital Communication. *New Media Society*. 11, p943-964.

<http://nms.sagepub.com/content/11/6/943.short> [GS SEARCH](#)

Sterne, J., Silver, D. & Massanari, A. (eds.) (2006). *Historiography of Cyberculture*. USA: New York University Press. p17-28.

http://scholar.google.com/scholar?cluster=2856647159598023749&hl=en&as_sdt=0,5 [GS SEARCH](#)

Tuan, Y. (1974). *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes and Values*. NJ: Prentice-Hall

<http://www.getcited.com/cits/PP/1/PUB/101407664> [VIEW ITEM](#)

Tüter, M. S. (2007). Aynı anda iki hayat mümkün mü? *Gündem Analiz*. 12, p4-13.

http://boteb.ogu.edu.tr/~wiki/index.php/Second_Life [VIEW ITEM](#)