

Character Game Naming in Ready Player One Movie: A Literary Onomastic Analysis

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Abstract. This research aims to analyze character naming in “Ready Player One” movie through the lens of literary onomastics. The research used a qualitative descriptive approach using Abbasbeyli’s framework, which categorizes names into official, symbolic, and conceptual elements. This research explores how the names Parzival, Art3mis, and Aech in virtual narratives serve as complex symbols that enrich themes and reflect cultural views on identity in digital spaces. The findings reveal that Parzival’s name connects to Arthurian legend, symbolizing heroic quests in a virtual context. Art3mis blends Greek mythology with modern gaming culture, reflecting independence and digital symbolism. Aech’s name highlights identity fluidity in virtual spaces, masking real-world identity. The findings suggest that character names in virtual narratives serve beyond identification, reinforcing themes of authenticity, transformation, and human connection in digital spaces. This research underscores the role of onomastics in contemporary media as a narrative tool shaping thematic depth.

Keywords: Onomastics, Ready Player One Movie, Character Naming

1. Introduction

The word name is commonly used to mean a term that can signifies anything, functioning as an essential linguistic tool for identification and differentiation. In literature and film, character names are more than mere labels. Names often carry symbolic meanings, reflect personality traits, or contribute to thematic development. The study of names and their significance, known as onomastics, provides a deeper understanding of how naming conventions shape narratives and audience perceptions [1]. Theoretical onomastics examines the origins of well-known names within language and speech, as well as their presence in literary and dialectal contexts. It explores the principles behind naming, the evolution of names over time, and their practical usage in communication. Additionally, this field analyzes the geographical and linguistic distribution of names, along with their structural composition.

The study of names, known academically as onomastics, is a branch of linguistics that studies proper names, the history of their origin and change, as well as their meanings, and distributions. Onomastics has long been recognized as a crucial field for understanding how language reflects and shapes human culture, identity, and social relationships. Onomastic

studies have become increasingly relevant as storytellers craft names that must resonate across multiple layers of meaning, particularly in science fiction narratives where names often bridge real and imagined worlds. The film adaptation of Ernest Cline's "Ready Player One" presents an especially rich text for onomastic analysis, as it operates simultaneously in both physical and virtual realms, each demanding its own complex system of character naming and identification.

Ready Player One movie exemplifies the rich implications of onomastics through its diverse array of character names. Each name in the movie serves a dual purpose: it identifies the character while simultaneously reflecting their personality or role within the narrative. These carefully chosen names not only enhance character depth but also engage readers with intertextual references that enrich the overall experience of the story. Ready Player One movie intricate naming conventions reflect deeper thematic concerns about identity, digital consciousness, and the intersection between reality and simulation in contemporary society. This analysis employs literary onomastic theory to examine how character names in "Ready Player One" operate as complex semiotic markers that enhance the narrative's exploration of virtual reality, gaming culture, and human connection in a digitally mediated world.

Previous research on hyperreality in Ready Player One movie has been conducted by Sarniyati Dalimu, Ansor Putra, and Rahmawati Azi. Their study, "The Portrayal and The Effects of Hyperreality in Ready Player One Movie by Steven Spielberg," employs Jean Baudrillard's theory of hyperreality to analyze how the virtual world of the OASIS represents a hyperreal environment where imagination and reality merge into an indistinguishable new reality [2]. Furthermore, [3] conducted a comprehensive analysis of the OASIS virtual reality system in Ready Player One movie, examining its multifaceted implications on identity and social dynamics. The researchers identify key aspects of virtuality in the film, including the emotional impact of virtual experiences, the creation of digital personas, and the formation of social communities within virtual spaces [3].

Continuing the exploration of onomastics, [4] explores the significance of unembodied names in seventeenth-century French tragedies, comedies, and tragicomedies. Sfeir categorizes these names based on their relation to time, space, and their relevance to the play's action, arguing that they create a referential texture that expands the play's temporal and spatial scope [4]. Similarly, this research investigates three primary character names, Parzival, Art3mis, and Aech through Abbasbeyli's framework, which classifies names into official, symbolic, and conceptual elements. While Sfeir's study focuses on absent names that shape a play's narrative and setting, this study concentrates on the naming significance of three primary characters: Parzival, Art3mis, and Aech, revealing how these digital pseudonyms not only construct identity within the virtual realm but also reflect the characters' aspirations, cultural knowledge, and social positioning.

Therefore, the primary purpose of this research is to conduct a comprehensive literary onomastic analysis of character naming conventions within the film "Ready Player One," with particular emphasis on the virtual gaming identities portrayed in the narrative. This research aims to demonstrate that character names, particularly in science fiction and gaming contexts, are not arbitrary designations but rather carefully constructed semantic units that carry significant philosophical, cultural, and narrative weight. Through a detailed examination of the film's character nomenclature, this research seeks to uncover the underlying philosophical foundations, symbolic meanings, and cultural references embedded within each character's gaming identity.

2. Literature Review

Onomatology is derived from two terms: *Onomo*, which signifies name, and *logos*, which refers to teaching or theory. The total collection of proper names within a language's lexicon is known as onomastics, while the linguistic discipline that studies these names and their significance is referred to as onomatology. The use of name symbolism to convey deeper insights into characters, themes, and archetypes is an important part of onomastics. For instance, a character named "Hope" may symbolize optimism, while "Grim" could evoke a sense of foreboding. This practice extends beyond traditional literature into gaming and digital culture, where players choose usernames and avatars that frequently reflect their personalities or the identities they wish to create for themselves.

According to Abbasbeyli, onomastic analysis consists of three main types of objects. First, official names encompass all entities with formal designations, including anthroponyms (personal names), toponyms (place names), hydronyms (water body names), and pragmonyms (institutional names). Second, symbolic names refer to proper names that hold fixed meanings within their semantic framework, often representing a particular aspect of reality. Lastly, concepts verbalized with proper names include any ideas or phenomena that have been assigned or can potentially receive a suitable name within a linguistic group. These classifications highlight the diverse functions of names in language and communication.

While the Abbasbeyli model posits that each given name passes through a conceptual filter, recent studies have called for more frameworks that examine not only the thought process behind naming but also the social communicative functions that names fulfill in storytelling and a subtly signal the values, motivations, and archetypes that these characters represent. These frameworks help illuminate how, in the OASIS, characters can build unique identities through names that are chosen with the intent to evoke specific associations in the minds of both the character and the audience.

Despite the relevance of these theories in understanding name symbolism, there is limited research on how names function as layered identifiers in virtual or speculative settings like the OASIS, where identity construction is highly complex. Ready Player One provides a meaningful case study that demonstrates how names can convey a combination of personal goal, cultural reference, and digital identification. However, more research is needed to explore how names in digital or virtual narratives serve as conduits for character depth and thematic resonance.

3. Methodology

This research used a descriptive qualitative method. The qualitative method was chosen for this study because it aims to obtain in-depth and comprehensive results. Research with this method produces information in the form of descriptive data or notes that are included in the text being studied, providing a clear and systematic picture. The descriptive method is a method based on facts and empirical deductions. This method is used to explain and describe complexity and variation in a context. Qualitative research is a method that is related to quality in the form of written word variables about certain things that are observed. This method helps researchers to explore the context, perspectives, and experiences of individuals or groups.

4. Discussion

Ready Player One is a sci-fi adventure set in 2045, where much of humanity escapes their harsh reality by immersing themselves in a virtual universe called the OASIS. The story

follows Wade Watts, an orphaned teenager, who joins a high-stakes treasure hunt within the OASIS to find an "Easter egg" left by its late creator, James Halliday. The winner gains control of the OASIS and its immense fortune. Wade and his friends face thrilling challenges and battle a powerful corporation determined to seize control of the virtual world. Directed by Steven Spielberg, the film explores themes of identity, nostalgia, and the intersection of reality and virtuality.

The film delves into themes of digital identity, the power of corporations, and the balance between virtual and physical realities. Through its richly detailed environment, it explores how individuals navigate their identities in digital spaces and the impact of technology on human connection. The OASIS serves as both an escape and a battleground, reflecting societal struggles and aspirations. By weaving in iconic cultural elements, the movie not only pays homage to the past but also raises questions about the future of technology and its role in shaping our lives (*Ready Player One*, n.d.). These themes of identity and authenticity provide the perfect backdrop for an onomastic analysis of the three main protagonist avatars, Parzival, Art3mis, and Aech, whose names function as carefully constructed identifiers that reveal character motivations, cultural knowledge, and the complex relationship between virtual personas and their real-world counterparts.

Additionally, after going through the data collection process, the researcher analyzed 3 main types of onomastic objects: official names, symbolic names, and concepts verbalized with proper names. In collecting the data, the researcher focused on each name game character given in the Ready Player One movie. The results of this research show that the character names in Ready Player One are not randomly assigned but intentionally created to reflect deeper meanings, personal identities, and thematic elements of the story. This analysis reveals that each character's in-game name carries significant linguistic and cultural references.

1. Parzival



Figure 1. Parzival

Parzival, origin to Percival, a character from Arthurian legend. Parzival, also used by the 13th-century German poet Wolfram von Eschenbach, symbolizes the pure-hearted knight on a quest for the Holy Grail (*Parzival Etymology*, n.d.). Parzival is officially recognized in Western literature and mythology as representative of a specific character with noble traits and a historical background. Parzival representing themes of quest, purity, virtue, heroism, and idealism. In Arthurian legend, Percival is often depicted as a seeker of the Grail, representing the quest for enlightenment and the challenges faced along the way. The name also signals Wade's role as a hero with the qualities of bravery, morality, and dedication, qualities essential for his quest.

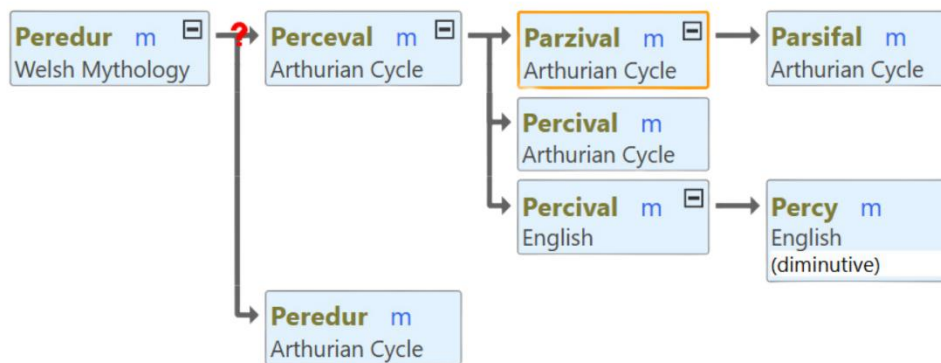


Figure 1. The etymology of Parzival's name

The etymology of Parzival's name in Ready Player One movie reveals a fascinating evolution through Arthurian mythology and medieval literature, demonstrating the depth of onomastic significance in character naming. The image illustrates how the name originated from "Peredur" in Welsh mythology, which then evolved into "Perceval" in the Arthurian cycle, ultimately branching into multiple variants including "Parzival," "Parsifal," and the English variations "Percival" and its diminutive "Percy".

In the context of Ready Player One, Wade Watts' choice of "Parzival" as his OASIS avatar name carries profound onomastic significance, as it deliberately connects to the medieval German poet Wolfram von Eschenbach's spelling "Parzival," representing a pure-hearted knight on a quest for the Holy Grail (*Parzival (Ready Player One)*, n.d.). This choice exemplifies all three of Abbasbeyli's onomastic categories: as an official name rooted in Arthurian legend, as a symbolic representation of heroic virtues and spiritual questing, and as a verbalized concept embodying Wade's personal journey of transformation.

The name "Parzival" chosen by Wade Watts for his OASIS avatar reveals director Steven Spielberg and author Ernest Cline's intention to establish a meaningful parallel to Arthurian legend. Parzival (or Percival) was a knight of King Arthur's Round Table who successfully completed the quest for the Holy Grail, mirroring Wade's journey to find Halliday's Easter Egg. This deliberate naming creates a symbolic connection between medieval questing and Wade's virtual adventure, both involving protagonists who begin as outsiders but demonstrate exceptional persistence, moral courage, and the ability to see beyond surface appearances.

2. Art3mis.



Figure 2. Art3mis

The character name “Art3mis” represents a sophisticated example of onomastic layering that combines classical mythology with modern digital culture. The name’s foundation derives from Artemis, the Greek goddess of the moon and hunting, known for her independence, strength, and protective nature, attributes that perfectly mirror the character’s role in the narrative. Art3mis concepts linked to her character, such as empowerment, independence, and female resilience. In the OASIS, Art3mis is a highly skilled, self-assured competitor, exemplifies the ideal of a strong female protagonist who can independently take charge of her journey.

The deliberate substitution of the number “3” for the letter “E” in “Art3mis” has several key aspects that suggest her technological sophistication while maintaining the mythological connection. First, it exemplifies “leetspeak,” a digital language convention where numbers replace letters, demonstrating the character’s integration into gaming culture. Second, this modification creates a unique digital identifier, essential in the OASIS’s virtual environment where distinctiveness is prized. Third, it symbolically bridges the ancient and modern, connecting the classical mythology of Artemis with contemporary digital culture.

Following Abbasbeyli’s onomastic framework, “Art3mis” functions as an official name through its connection to Greek mythology, a symbolic name reflecting qualities of independence and strength, and a verbalized concept representing digital age identity

transformation. The character embodies these elements through her resourceful, brave actions in the OASIS, demonstrating how the onomastic choice of her name reinforces both her character development and the movie's broader themes about identity in virtual spaces.

The etymology of this name traces back to the Greek "Artemis," which has evolved into various forms across different languages and cultures: from Ancient Greek variations like Artemidoros and Artemisia, to modern adaptations in Eastern European languages: Belarusian "Artsiom", Estonian "Artjom", Western European languages: Italian "Artemio", Spanish "Artemio", and Slavic languages: Russian variations including "Artem" and "Artyom". The widespread adoption and adaptation of this name across cultures mirrors the OASIS's nature as a global virtual space where identities transcend cultural boundaries.

The choice of "Art3mis" as Samantha Evelyn Cook's avatar name is to invoke classical mythology as a thematic framework for her character's role. Artemis, the Greek goddess of the hunt, wilderness, and the moon, was known for her fierce independence, exceptional hunting skills, and protective nature, traits mirrored in Samantha's determined resistance against IOI and her skilled gameplay. Just as the goddess Artemis was respected for her strength rather than her beauty alone, Samantha's character transcends the typical female supporting role, embodying courage, resilience, and tactical intelligence that prove essential to the ultimate victory against corporate exploitation.

3. Aech.

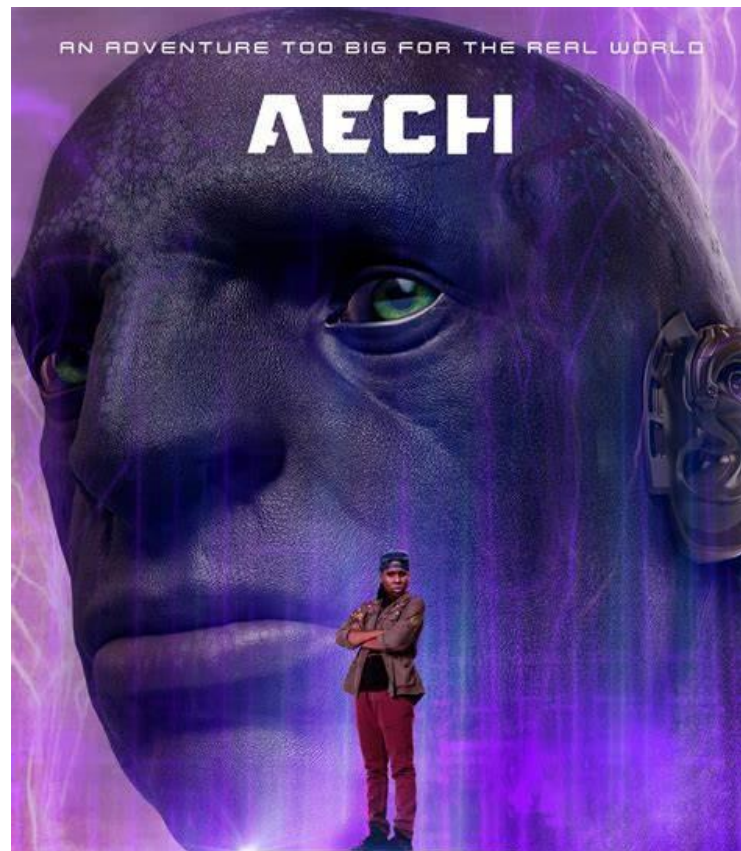


Figure 3. Aech

The name “Aech”, as an official name, serves as a phonetic representation of the letter “H” cleverly referencing the character’s real-world identity as Helen Harris while maintaining deliberate ambiguity. The French linguistic influence, where “H” is traditionally silent, adds another layer of meaning, symbolically representing how Helen’s true identity remains silent or hidden within the OASIS. Phonetically pronounced as “H,” the name serves as both a clever homophone of her first initial and a digital mask that allows Helen, a Black lesbian woman, to navigate the OASIS as a white male avatar, highlighting the film’s commentary on how virtual worlds can simultaneously liberate users from real-world prejudices while perpetuating deception.

The simplicity of “Aech” as a chosen identifier is particularly significant in the onomastic analysis, as it allows Helen to transcend gender constraints in the male-dominated gaming world of the OASIS (*Aech*, n.d.). This aligns with the concept of names as tools for self-creation and identity expression, where the chosen name becomes a vehicle for personal empowerment and social navigation. The onomastic significance extends further as the name “Aech” embodies the character’s straightforward, no-nonsense personality while serving as a broader symbol of how virtual environments can provide opportunities for individuals to reconstruct their identities free from societal prejudices and constraints.

The name’s historical roots can be traced to Scotland, specifically to Perthshire in 1841, where historical records document the existence of the Aech family name. This historical context adds depth to the onomastic analysis, as the name belongs to a family of similar-sounding surnames including Pech, Mech, Cech, and others, suggesting a linguistic pattern in Germanic and Celtic naming conventions (*Aech Family History*, n.d.). The choice of “Aech” as an avatar name embodies three key conceptual elements: gender neutrality, allowing Helen to transcend gender-based prejudices in the gaming world; self-creation, representing the freedom to construct one’s identity in virtual spaces; and liberation through anonymity, enabling the character to be judged solely on skill and personality rather than societal expectations.

Helen’s choice to present differently online reflects the complex reality of discrimination she faces, while the revelation of her true identity to Wade becomes a pivotal moment reinforcing the film’s message about authentic human connection transcending digital facades. The name exemplifies modern digital naming conventions through its minimalist design, while simultaneously functioning as a powerful symbolic representation of identity fluidity in virtual spaces. The deceptively simple name enables the character to function as a critical examination of how marginalized individuals might find both freedom and complexity in digital self-representation, making Aech/Helen one of the most nuanced explorations of virtual identity in the narrative.

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