An analysis of Tolkien's use of Old English language to create the personal names of key characters in *The Lord of the Rings* and the significance of these linguistic choices in regards to character development and the discussion of humanity in the novel more widely.

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As a professor of Anglo-Saxon and English Language and Literature at the University of Oxford, Tolkien's keen interest in Anglo-Saxon literature and philology is evident in his trilogy, *The Lord of the Rings*. For several years Tolkien worked as a research associate, verifying and detailing etymologies at the Oxford English Dictionary. The meticulous nature of this work exhibits Tolkien's awareness and knowledge of the finer detail and wider significance that lies beyond the surface of a word. Tolkien also had a comprehensive understanding of multiple Indo-European languages such as Old English, Old Norse, Finnish, Old High German, and several others. This demonstrates he had a vast philological foundation to work from when it came to creating his own languages and history. However, Tolkien noted himself that language should not be developed purely for communicative factors, but the aesthetics of language should also be contemplated, such as the pleasure of articulation and sound; he implied that languages should have a 'phonetic fitness'.[1] This would suggest that he considered these factors when creating the languages of Middle-earth; both the phonetic sounds and the roots of linguistic origin were intended to portray a sense of atmosphere and a deeper understanding of a character's personality, hierarchical status, and morality. Tolkien stated in his essay *On Fairy-Stories* that 'To ask what is the origin of stories…is to ask what is the origin of language and of the mind'.[2] Therefore, considering his working and academic background, it becomes apparent why looking at the original languages and how Tolkien uses them can be extremely important to further understand and appreciate the complexities of his work. The focus of this essay will explore Tolkien's manipulation of Old English language, in particular, to create another level of significance and meaning behind the personal names of key characters, whilst also discussing why Tolkien makes these particular choices in regards to his expressed intent and belief about linguistic development and how this extends beyond the names to issues discussed more widely in the novel as a whole.

The central plot of Tolkien's trilogy follows the quest, in which all the races of Middle-earth unite, to destroy the Ring of Power. The Ring has been uncovered and becomes the possession of the hobbit Frodo Baggins, but the material possession of the Ring extends to embody his responsibility in bearing it throughout the quest. The personal name Frodo originates from the Old English (OE) *frōd* meaning wise, prudent.[3] Wisdom is generally

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[1] J. R. R. Tolkien, 'A Secret Vice', in *The Monsters and the Critics and Other Essays* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 2006), p. 211. (All subsequent references to this text and Tolkien's other essays will be taken from this same edition and their titles abbreviated in succeeding references.)
[2] Tolkien, 'On Fairy-Stories', p. 119.
[3] Henry Sweet, *The Student's Dictionary of Anglo-Saxon* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1897), p. 68.

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understood as having a good sense of judgement, usually from an accumulated knowledge and experience. This is a personal name that becomes more fitting to Frodo's character throughout the trilogy. The wisdom that Frodo's name encompasses is formed by his journey across Middle-earth and extensive experience of war. This is revealed when comparing Frodo's sense of morality and compassion at the beginning and end of the novel. When discussing Gollum in *The Fellowship of the Ring*, he exclaims it was a 'pity that Bilbo did not stab the vile creature, when he had a chance'.[4] Gandalf explains that 'It was Pity that stayed his hand. Pity, and Mercy: not to strike without need' and that one should 'not be too eager to deal out death in judgement. For even the very wise cannot see all ends' (I. 59). The lesson Gandalf imparts is that even if the hope of redemption is small, there is still a chance of it, and that should not be lightly ignored. Dowie notes that Frodo 'learns well and spares the same Sméagol later in the story, with the result that he is instrumental in the successful destruction of the Ring and Mordor', which suggests that pity, mercy, and hope are vital elements of wisdom.[5]

The development of Frodo's wisdom is also exhibited when he spares Saruman and states that 'it is useless to meet revenge with revenge: it will heal nothing... He is fallen, and his cure is beyond us; but I would still spare him, in the hope that he may find it' (III. 1019). Gandalf's initial lesson and the experience of war is shown to have changed Frodo; the 'Battle against true evil has done the opposite of hardening Frodo. When he returns to the Shire, he is positively pacific'.[6] When considering the fate of Lotho and how best to deal with the ruffians that have taken control of the Shire, Frodo asserts that 'No hobbit has ever killed another on purpose in the Shire, and it is not to begin now. And nobody is to be killed at all, if it can be helped' (III. 1006). It is through Frodo's compassion towards his enemies and those who have committed crimes that his wisdom is apparent. He acknowledges that advocating a way of life in which killing is deemed acceptable is a lore that should not be encouraged, which demonstrates his wisdom and greater understanding of morality and judgement from an accumulated knowledge that is implied by the OE origin of his name.

Through Frodo's personal journey, Tolkien shows the vulnerability of humanity in the way that Frodo is not wise at the beginning of the trilogy and it is not certain that he will become so. Gandalf hints towards Frodo's potential greatness in terms of his sacrifice: 'He is not half through yet, and to what he will become in the end not even Elrond can foretell. Not to evil, I think. He may become like a glass filled with a clear light for eyes to see that can' (I. 223). Flieger points out that Tolkien's specific use of the auxiliary verb *may* is significant as its derivation from OE *mægen*,[7] meaning strength, might, and efficacy, describes 'capacity, not actuality. What Gandalf sees is potential in Frodo', but it may or may not be realised.[8] Thus, Tolkien's specific linguistic choices in creating his personal names can be seen to provide a more developed reading and analysis of his characters. Furthermore, his play with language within the body of his novel also demonstrates that these names are not determinative or concrete; wisdom and morality are in flux and have potential to be realised within everyone.

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[4] J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring: The Lord of the Rings Part I*, 1954 (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2011), p. 59. (All subsequent references to *LOTR* shall be taken from the same publication and indicated in parentheses in the body of the essay, noting the specific volume and page number.)
[5] William Dowie, 'The Gospel of Middle-Earth', in *J. R. R. Tolkien, Scholar and Storyteller: Essays in Memoriam*, ed. by Mary Salu and Robert T. Farrell (London: Cornell University Press Ltd., 1979), p. 277.
[6] Dowie, p. 277.
[7] Sweet, p. 111.
[8] Verlyn Flieger, *Splintered Light: Logos and Language in Tolkien's World*, 2nd edn. (Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2002), p. 157.

Tolkien explores this potential for morality by playing with the names of his character Gollum. Before he became Gollum he was named Sméagol, 'the most inquisitive and curious minded' member of a 'family of high repute…stern and wise in old lore', a people akin to hobbits (I. 53). The root of Sméagol comes from the verb of Germanic origin *smūgan*, 'to creep or penetrate gradually'.[9] From this derived the OE verb *smēagan* meaning to 'scrutinize, investigate'.[10] The *–ol* ending is an OE adjectival declension, therefore giving Sméagol's name the literal translation of 'inquisitive'. Another derivation comes from OE *smēag* meaning 'sagacious', which was often used in OE to describe a worm.[11] However, the Anglo-Saxon word *worm* had a broader semantic field and was 'applied to various kinds of animal that creep or crawl, including reptiles and caterpillars' and also for 'a serpent, snake, dragon', which is prominent in heroic poetry.[12] This is particularly significant when considering the Old Norse (ON) cognate of *smēag* is *smaug*, which is the past tense of the verb *smjúga*, 'to creep through an opening', which Tolkien has used for the name of his dragon in *The Hobbit*.[13] All of these different roots and meanings are combined in the way Tolkien depicts the dual Gollum-Sméagol personality and his role within the narrative. Even when he was a hobbit-like creature he 'burrowed under trees…tunnelled into green mounds' and once he had possession of the Ring he 'wormed his way like a maggot into the heart of the hills' (I. 53-4). This suggests that these worm-like and creeping attributes were inherent to Sméagol and provided the potential for corruption by the Ring. In *The Two Towers* when he is following Frodo and Sam through Emyn Muil he is described 'like a nasty crawling spider on the wall', and as he climbs down the sheer precipice it looks as though he is 'creeping down on sticky pads, like some large prowling thing of insect-kind' (II. 612-3). This indicates that the sneaking and creeping behaviour that was characteristic of Sméagol, and his name, have been exaggerated by the power of the Ring as it has turned him into a feral creature.

Tolkien's construction and depiction of this dual personality is interesting when reading in relation to his lecture 'Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics'. Tolkien claims that:

> Beowulf's dragon…is not to be blamed for being a dragon, but rather for not being dragon enough… there are in the poem some vivid touches of the right kind…in which this dragon is real worm, with a bestial life and thought of his own, but the conception, none the less, approaches draconitas rather than draco: a personification of malice, greed, destruction (the evil side of heroic life), and of the undiscriminating cruelty of fortune that distinguishes not good or bad (the evil aspect of all life).[14]

A correlation is drawn between Sméagol and the dragon from *Beowulf* not only through the etymological link of his name, but the physical and dynamic characteristics of a bestial and villainous creature. Therefore, it may appear that by presenting this Gollum-Sméagol dual personality Tolkien is doing exactly what he criticises; he is not presenting Gollum to his full monstrous and malicious potential. However, the doubling is key to several aspects Tolkien addresses throughout the narrative. For example, when climbing the stairs to the Morgul Pass there is a moment when Frodo and Sam are sleeping and it is noted that 'the gleam faded from [Gollum's] eyes, and they went dim grey, old and tired' and he shakes his head 'as if engaged in some interior debate' (II. 714). He touches Frodo's knee, but almost like a

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[9] Sweet, p. 157.
[10] Sweet, p. 156.
[11] Peter Gilliver, Jeremy Marshall, and Edmund Weiner, *The Ring of Words* (Oxford: OUP, 2006), p. 191.
[12] Gilliver, p. 221.
[13] Gilliver, *The Ring of Words*, p. 191.
[14] Tolkien, 'Beowulf', p. 17.

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'caress' rather than with sinister intent, and it is suggested that had they witnessed this moment 'they would have thought they beheld an old weary hobbit…an old starved pitiable thing' (II. 714). By including these moments of humanity and compassion Tolkien demonstrates the issues of morality that he frequently addresses, and is trying to reinforce the lesson of not only Gandalf, but also that of Sam's father that 'where there's life there's hope' (II. 700). These 'rare appearances, that some remnants of old truth and sincerity' are still inside Gollum, imply that these attributes of Sméagol are in constant battle for consciousness against the evil and malice that has manifested through the power of the Ring (II. 643). The way Sam refers to the contention of Gollum-Sméagol as 'Slinker and Stinker' further reinforces this idea that there are two personalities conflicting and striving against one another (II. 714). These glimpses at Gollum's humanity highlight Tolkien's point that Beowulf's dragon 'is not to be blamed for being a dragon' in the same way that Gollum should not be blamed for being inquisitive or for being manipulated and corrupted by the Ring; it is an innate vulnerability of his character that cannot be helped.[15] It is for this reason that Tolkien deliberately chooses not to present or develop Gollum to the malicious potential that he has because there is still hope for him, he is not the villain of this story.

Additionally, his inquisitive nature as Sméagol and the lure of the Ring resulted in the murder of his friend Déagol. Alike to Sméagol, Déagol's name is adjectival, meaning 'secretive'.[16] Through the metaphoric portrayal of the murder of secrets by mystery and investigation, and by showing the previous ringbearer guiding the current one, Tolkien presents an image that creates a sense of both sympathy and threat. Gollum is visibly tormented and has been consumed and driven to psychosis by the Ring. By presenting him side by side to Frodo, the detrimental power of the Ring is highlighted, creating sympathy for Gollum. However, it also suggests that this potential for corruption is within Frodo too. This is further depicted through the metaphor of secrets, as Gollum stole away to the darkness of the mountains after Déagol's murder, but 'all the "great secrets" under the mountain had turned out to be just empty night' (I. 55). The Ring becomes encapsulated by the metaphor of a secret as it is kept hidden by the fellowship, but as Tolkien implies that secrets turn out to be only empty darkness it infers that nothing good or sustainable can come from the Ring. Christine Chism supports the metaphoric threat of the Ring as 'the Ring itself both catalyzes and signifies this disenchantment of curiosity into appetite, the artistic…investigation of mystery into its murder, and Sméagol into Gollum'.[17] Therefore, it becomes evident that with the attempt to keep the Ring a secret, the threat upon Frodo is ever greater with the implication that Sauron's search for what is being kept hidden may result in murder.

The threat of Frodo being corrupted in a similar way to Gollum is strongly suggested in two particular episodes. Firstly, when Sam finds Frodo in the tower of Cirith Ungol he offers to share the burden of the Ring, but Frodo calls him a thief and snatches it from him, 'staring at Sam with eyes wide with fear and enmity' (III. 912). This violent behaviour not only resembles the detrimental effect of the Ring on Gollum, but it echoes the volatile outburst from Bilbo in Rivendell; for a moment Bilbo becomes like 'a little wrinkled creature with a hungry face and bony groping hands' when presented with the Ring again (I. 232). Secondly, Sam offers to help Frodo once again on Mount Doom, but 'a wild light came into Frodo's eyes' and once more becomes very defensive (III. 937). However, Frodo says that 'it is too late' for Sam to help by carrying the Ring, for he is almost in its power and he exclaims: 'I could not give it up, and if you tried to take it I should go mad' (III. 937). Here

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[15] Tolkien, 'Beowulf', p. 17.
[16] Sweet, p. 42.
[17] Christine Chism, 'Middle-Earth, the Middle Ages, and the Aryan Nation', in *Tolkien the Medievalist*, ed. by Jane Chance (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 84.

Tolkien reinforces the danger of the Ring and Frodo's potential to be consumed by its power. But this self-knowledge also emphasises Frodo's growing wisdom and Flieger's point that 'his willingness to be subsumed into a greater cause than himself' is where Frodo's capacity and potential to become wise will be actualised.[18]

Samwise Gamgee is one of the most pivotal characters to the trilogy, yet has one of the simplest of names. It has no link to OE or any of the other Indo-European languages that Tolkien uses. The word *gamgee* was known to Tolkien to mean cotton wool, originating from Dr Joseph S. Gamgee who invented a type of surgical cotton wool dressing.[19] Tolkien wrote in a letter that he wished the name to bring out 'the Englishry of this jewel among the hobbits' and in hindsight felt he 'should have given all the Hobbits very English names to match the shire' and its idyllic representation of England.[20] This suggests this decision was not only to show a basic linguistic connection with Rosie Cotton's family, but that the simplicity of Sam's name was intended to reflect the simplicity of his character role. The majority of Tolkien's readers would have little knowledge of OE, therefore, perhaps Tolkien did not want any further underlying linguistic significance to Sam's name that his readers would not understand. This could explain why he would choose and incorporate the word *wise*, despite already using its OE form for Frodo. As already discussed, the OE origin of Frodo's name creates a platform for ambiguity in relation to his moral character; wisdom is something he learns and develops through experience. By using the same word to construct their names automatically connects the two together, but the differing languages could imply that the wisdom their names suggest differ from one another. This could be supported by their character disparities from the beginning of the novel and the different ways in which they grow throughout. For example, initially Sam is relatively humble and is not short-tempered or aggressive, and his protective nature over Frodo and general kind-heartedness never changes throughout. Though, alike to Frodo, the journey and experience of war changes him, it forces him to not be so timid and to grow in bravery. That is not to say that war hardens him, he remains kind and loyal, but he learns to become less hesitant and more active, rather than passive and uncertain. This is demonstrated when Frodo has been taken by Shelob and Sam does 'not wait to wonder what was to be done, or whether he was brave, or loyal', he acts instantly and attacks (II. 728). It is through these loyal actions that Sam's wisdom becomes apparent to the reader; he knows that if he hesitates to consider his actions more carefully it could be detrimental to his chances of saving his friend.

Frodo is set up as the hero of the novel, and Elrond states the destruction of the Ring is a task specifically destined for him, and that if he does not 'find a way, no one will' (I. 270). Galadriel conveys the enormity of the task to Frodo and Sam by stating: 'your Quest stands on the edge of a knife. Stray but a little and it will fail, to the ruin of all' (I. 357). However, as Clark notes, it is Sam's vow to stay with Frodo and 'his faithful performance of his oath' that is 'crucial to the story of the Ring', implying that Sam is actually the true hero, as the success or failure of Frodo is actually dependent on Sam.[21] For example, when Frodo is 'in deadly peril', Sam finds 'a sudden violence and strength that was far beyond anything that Gollum had expected from this slow stupid hobbit' (II. 726). This indicates that many of the other characters overlook Sam's heroic potential, but this potential is realised when he defeats Shelob, as 'not the doughtiest soldier of old Gondor, nor the most savage Orc entrapped, had ever thus endured her, or set blade to her beloved flesh' (II. 729). Despite being underestimated by other characters, Tolkien ensures Sam's heroics and bravery are made blatant and transparent to the reader through such acts of loyalty.

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[18] Flieger, p. 158.
[19] Arne Zettersten, *J. R. R. Tolkien's Double Worlds and Creative Process* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 30.
[20] Tolkien, 'Letter 76: to Christopher Tolkien, 1944', p.88.
[21] George Clark, 'J. R. R. Tolkien and the True Hero', in *J. R. R. Tolkien*, ed. by Harold Bloom (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2008), p. 50.

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The connection Tolkien makes between Sam's heroic growth and his loyalty and morality is similar to the way he presents Frodo's growth of sympathetic empathy in relation to his morality. In turn, this indicates their different sources of wisdom and it reinforces the way that Tolkien grounds wisdom in morality. When Sam believes Frodo to be dead from Shelob's sting, he is caught by an inner debate as to whether he should continue on with the quest or to stay by Frodo's side, but he feels as though seeing the task through without Frodo is 'altogether against the grain of his nature' (II. 733). Sam's feelings are justified by Háma's assertion earlier in the novel, that 'in doubt a man of worth will trust to his own wisdom', which further supports that Sam's loyalty is the source of his (II. 511). This also suggests that wisdom is subject to individual difference, which can account for the variances between Sam and Frodo. Sam declares that 'they must understand…Elrond and the Council, and the great Lords and Ladies with all their wisdom' that his place is by Frodo (II. 735). The strength of the modal verb *must* indicates Sam's firm belief that wisdom is rooted in morality and loyalty, for if they are truly wise they would understand that Sam 'can't be their Ringbearer. Not without Mr. Frodo' (II. 735). Therefore, it can be seen that despite claiming he should have used English names for all of the hobbits, Tolkien's use of the word wise in two different languages actually benefits his depiction of Sam as hero and the recurrent discussion of the varying sources of individual wisdom.

There are several possible OE derivations that could form the name of Saruman, with a mix of positive and negative undertones, which is interesting when considering that Tolkien's linguistic play with personal names tends to have a link with the character's sense of morality. The clearest connection is with the noun *searo* with definitions of device, work of skill, cunning and treachery, but also pertains to connections with armoury and machines.[22] Therefore, Saruman's name could translate directly as 'cunning man'. Yet, it is explicitly stated that this OE word could be employed with good or bad connotations. Saruman is supposedly the leader of the White Council, of a 'high and ancient order, most excellent in Middle-earth'; therefore, his cunning could be positively interpreted in terms of his wisdom and knowledge (III. 581). Nevertheless, his cunning and ability to plot skilfully is shown to be corrupt in the way that he chooses to seek success at whatever moral cost. As Shippey point out, he looks to join the side of Sauron 'for no other reason than that it is going to win', but when Gandalf shows no inclination of changing sides, Saruman suggests they could try to wield the Ring themselves, demonstrating his treacherous cunning in the way 'he is prepared to betray the "new Power" too'.[23]

Treebeard communicates another negative view of Saruman, reflecting the possible meaning of treachery and armoury as he states Saruman no longer walks and talks with him in the forest like he used to: 'he has a mind of metal and wheels; and he does not care for growing things, except as far as they serve him' (III. 473). Saruman's loss of regard for the trees is further displayed as he has allowed them to be 'just cut down and [left] to rot' or 'hewn up and carried off to feed the fires of Orthanc' (III. 474). This exhibits the contention in the idea that the root of his name could be good or bad, that perhaps once his cunning and 'mechanical ingenuity' was positive; he was once a wise and compassionate wizard, but has since been corrupted by his greed and aspiration.[24] Additionally, his seeming indifference and destructive attitude towards the Ents also indicates another possible link to the OE word *sār*, which when used as a noun can mean pain of either body or mind, wound, and grief, or meaning painful and causing sorrow when used as an adjective.[25] Pain of both the body and

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[22] Sweet, p. 150.
[23] Tom Shippey, *J. R. R. Tolkien: Author of the Century* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2014), p. 75.
[24] Shippey, p. 170.
[25] Sweet, p. 145.

mind is caused through Saruman's lack of loyalty towards the Ents, trees of whom many 'had voices of their own that are lost for ever now' (III. 474). Not only is there a sense of injustice in the physical damage and deaths caused, but also the mental trauma and grief it causes Treebeard and the sense of immorality of an attack against nature.

The Voice of Saruman also exemplifies this idea of pain and grief of the mind, 'its very sound an enchantment…seemed wise and reasonable', and leads the Riders of Rohan to momentarily doubt Gandalf and even their own King Théoden in their leadership (III. 578). Saruman claims the men of Rohan forced him into war, and if by that account he is a murderer then 'all the House of Eorl is stained with murder' (III. 580). His melodic and enchanting voice is employed by his skill and wit as he tries to excuse his crimes by manipulating the minds of men and accusing them of needless war and murder. Therefore, the Voice of Saruman implies that his characteristic connections with the meaning of *sār* are perpetuated by *searo*: Saruman's cunning.

Tolkien establishes Saruman and Gandalf almost as counterparts. Despite being lower in status than Saruman in the order of the wizards, Gandalf's name could imply a higher level of importance or authority. Gandalf's name is of Old Norse origin, as many of the Elven names and languages are. Tolkien believed both aesthetic and communicative criteria were necessary in the construction of a language. The completed language of Elvish complies with these criteria, such as 'a highish level both of beauty in word-form…and of ingenuity in the relations of symbol and sense, not to mention its elaborate grammatical arrangements, nor its hypothetical historical background'.[26] The sounds and complexity of this language reflect the grace and ancient establishment of the race of Elves. Therefore, with Gandalf's name relating to the same linguistic influences, the same sense of a higher order, authority, and wisdom is replicated. The difference in linguistic origins between Gandalf and Saruman may not be clear to a lot of readers, but Tolkien clearly plays with the development of what he terms the 'individual linguistic character' through the ambivalence of their status.[27] Tolkien sets them up with similar appearances, their main distinction being their colours. Tolkien writes no explicit explanation or significance behind their colours, but white naturally holds connotations of purity, wholeness, and sincerity, associations that appear to fit more comfortably with Gandalf rather than Saruman whose purity and sincerity are unstable. Therefore, when Gandalf is reincarnated with the colour white, he is mistaken for Saruman, but there is a sense that this colour change indicates a rightful shift in power, due to his compassion and wisdom; he has returned as Saruman 'as he should have been' (III. 495). Furthermore, after the battle for Helm's Deep, Gandalf says to Saruman: 'You have no colour now, and I cast you from the order and from the Council' (III. 583). This reinforces the shift of authority to Gandalf who appears the more worthy possessor as suggested by his higher sense of morality and wisdom evident in both his character and the linguistic origin of his name.

The importance Tolkien places on a name becomes more distinct once Saruman has been banished from the order, as he loses his name and is then referred to as Sharkey. Jane Chance notes that Saruman and Wormtongue's transference of control from Isengard to the smaller rural province of the Shire 'mirrors the epic devolution of the two. Just so, their cleverness diminishes into wordless animality ("Worm," "Sharkey") to signal their moral and natural deterioration'.[28] This degradation of deeper linguistic meaning to one of purely debased animal characteristic indicates a total loss of morality and humanity. Additionally, it is noted that this nickname is probably of Orkish origin, from *sharkû* meaning 'old man' (III. App F, 1132). Saruman loses his name only to gain a nickname from an invented language: a

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[26] Tolkien, 'A Secret Vice', p. 210.
[27] Tolkien, 'ASV', p. 211.
[28] Jane Chance, *Lord of the Rings: Mythology of Power* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2010), p. 67.

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language of lesser communicative and aesthetic notability. Tolkien's construction of Orkish shows his focus of 'pleasure in articulate sound, and in the symbolic use of it'.[29] From Orkish we can 'deduce the kinds of sound that Tolkien regarded as ugly — guttural and palatal consonants', which reflect the corrupted and lowly creatures that adopt this tongue.[30] In fact, Tolkien notes that orcs:

> had no language of their own, but took what they could of other tongues and perverted it to their own liking; yet they made only brutal jargons, scarcely sufficient even for their own needs... And these creatures, being filled with malice, hating even their own kind, quickly developed as many barbarous dialects as there were groups or settlements of their race, so that their Orkish speech was of little use to them in intercourse between different tribes (III. App F, 1131).

Therefore, Saruman's change of name to one that implies inhuman, animalistic qualities, but also belongs to a language of debased creatures that cannot even communicate effectively among their own race, reflects his ultimate defeat and demise. In the way Tolkien displays a sense of ephemerality and transience on personal names he consequently demonstrates his belief in their importance and their linguistic meaning, which he reinforces through character development and narrative progression.

Another possible etymological root of Saruman's name is the OE word *sēar*, which means dry, withered, or barren.[31] This is a less obvious characteristic connection until Saruman leaves Orthanc and he and Gríma resemble 'an old man…clothed in rags' and a slouched and whimpering 'beggar' (III. 983). This shows that Saruman has withered in his physical appearance from a high and respected wizard to a weakened old man. In one last attempt at revenge he uses his mechanical and industrial mind to pollute the Shire by cutting down 'an avenue of trees', burning down houses and putting up 'ugly new' ones and a 'tall chimney of brick…pouring out black smoke' (III. 1004). After a failed attempt to stab Frodo, Saruman states that Frodo has grown 'wise and cruel' and his mercy has robbed Saruman's 'revenge of sweetness' (III. 1019). Saruman's bitterness and attempts to harm the Shire and hobbits displays the connection to *sēar* in terms of his moral deterioration. Wormtongue eventually murders Saruman and the description of his body combines all the possible derivations of his name:

> about the body of Saruman a grey mist gathered, and rising slowly to a great height like smoke from a fire, as a pale shrouded figure it loomed over the Hill... Frodo looked down at the body with pity and horror, for as he looked it seemed that long years of death were suddenly revealed in it, and it shrank, and the shriveled face became rags of skin upon a hideous skull (III. 1020).

His connection to industry and machines from *searo* are pictured in the smoke and grey mist; his body has physically withered, linking to the meaning of *sear*; and finally, *sār* is suggested in not only his pain in death but also the feelings of pity and horror the image of his body stirs in Frodo. Therefore, Tolkien succinctly encapsulates all possible etymological sources to Saruman's name and character in one final description of his demise. His pride and ambition

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[29] Tolkien, 'ASV', p. 208.
[30] E. S. C. Weiner and Jeremy Marshall, 'Tolkien's Invented Languages', in *From Elvish to Klingon: Exploring Invented Languages*, ed. by Michael Adams, (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011), p. 83.
[31] Sweet, p. 150.

had led him to a total loss of morality and even his physical body was starting to weaken and fail him. Throughout his gradual moral deterioration over the trilogy, he is offered several chances for help, mercy, and redemption, yet refuses them all. Therefore, this final withered depiction of Saruman presents all the negative connotations associated with the linguistic roots of his name, and implies the threat of such immorality and the abandoning of reason and wisdom for pride and vengeance.

Gríma Wormtongue's name is interesting in similar linguistic and developmental ways as both Sam and Saruman. His name contains the OE element *grim*, meaning mask.[32] The idea of a mask closely links to Wormtongue's role within the plot, as Croft points out that he is a character who 'masks his true intents and deeds under a fair cloak of concern for his king's health and peace of mind'.[33] However, this name with a deeper linguistic meaning is soon lost, comparable to the way Saruman becomes Sharkey, as Gandalf notes 'that all save' Théoden name Gríma 'the Wormtongue' (II. 516). Therefore, being more commonly known as Wormtongue, the absence in his name of a more complex linguistic significance makes his role more transparent to Tolkien's readers, in a similar way to Sam.

His character is developed around animalistic qualities and behaviour relating to the name Wormtongue, which is demonstrated when Gandalf calls him a 'witless worm' and instructs him to 'be silent, and keep [his] forked tongue behind [his] teeth' (II. 514). These animalistic links are reminiscent of Sméagol and the concept of worm relating to all creatures that creep and crawl, including snakes. Gandalf presents Wormtongue to Théoden and exclaims: 'here is a snake… To slay it would be just. But it was not always as it now is. Once it was a man, and did you service in its fashion' (II. 520). Once again, this echoes Sméagol's fortunes and his corruption by a stronger dark power. He is presented, and indeed occasionally acts, as a malicious character, exemplified when he bares his teeth 'and then with a hissing breath' spits at King Théoden after he has been offered a chance of redemption (II. 520). Nevertheless, Tolkien clearly depicts Wormtongue as Saruman's tool; he is used as an instrument for evil, but is not truly evil himself. This can be observed in moments of vulnerability, such as when he throws the palantír from the tower of Orthanc, but with poor aim 'maybe because he could not make up his mind which he hated more,' Gandalf or Saruman (II. 584). Théoden, Gandalf, Galadriel, and finally Frodo all show Wormtongue mercy by offering him the opportunity to leave Saruman and be free of his manipulation. Each time Wormtongue is shown to hesitate, torn by his wish for freedom but also by his fear of it. This is most clear when Frodo offers him the chance to stay in the Shire to build up his strength, as he halts, 'half prepared to stay' (III. 1020). But, in one last act of cruelty and assertion of power over him, Saruman reveals that it was Wormtongue that 'stabbed [Lotho] in his sleep' and it would be best if the hobbits left it to Saruman to deal with him (III. 1020). At this, 'a look of wild hatred came into Wormtongue's red eyes' and he exclaims it was Saruman that told him to, and made him do it (III. 1020). Wormtongue then murders Saruman, and is thus shot down by the hobbits' arrows as he tries to flee. Yet, this declaration and the final act of killing Saruman demonstrates that although Wormtongue cannot be excused for committing such evil deeds, he is not necessarily thoroughly evil himself, as his crimes were the result of Saruman's manipulation and control. Thus the presentation, or even the absence, of linguistic significance in his name develops Wormtongue's character alongside Saruman, which consolidates their relationship and moral connection. But, this absence of underlying meaning has the added benefit of ensuring clarity among the audience of Wormtongue's function and character. He is to be viewed as a manipulator, but also as the manipulated. He is to be pitied because of glimpses of humanity, vulnerability, and the hope

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[32] Sweet, p. 77.

[33] Janet Brennan Croft, 'Gríma (Wormtongue)', in *J. R. R. Tolkien Encyclopedia: Scholarship and Critical Assessment*, ed. by Michael D. C. Drout (Abingdon: Taylor & Francis, 2007), p. 261.

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of redemption, a continual theme throughout the novel, which is also displayed in Tolkien's discussion of morality in regards to both Saruman and Gollum.

In many ways Rohan appears to parallel Anglo-Saxon England in several aspects of culture, lifestyle, values, and their personal names. The language and names of the Rohirrim and people of Rohan are either close relations or direct borrowings from OE. The royal house of Eorl is a direct use of the OE word to mean nobleman, chief, or a brave man.[34] This royalty is reflected in the personal names that Tolkien assigns some of the characters. For example, Théoden is a direct borrowing of an OE word meaning 'chief, lord, prince, King'.[35] However, this is not necessarily a name Tolkien assigned simply for a symbolic linguistic significance to fit with Théoden's character and royal status. Tolkien constructs the personal names of these characters with a strong resemblance to the way Anglo-Saxon names were. There were loose conditioning factors for Anglo-Saxon personal names, such as 'family association' and 'level in society'.[36] Although Théoden is a direct borrowing from OE, his name could also link to OE *þēod*, which means nation and race, or as a plural form could be used for a Gentiles, men, or people.[37] This would explain and exhibit a family association with the prototheme of his son's name Théodred. The deuterotheme could derive from *ræd* meaning advice, council, and other meanings of good fortune, sense, and understanding.[38] Not only do these show the family association but also preserve within the name their noble and royal level in society. This is also evident in the dithematic personal names Éomer and Éowyn. The prototheme element of both comes from OE *eoh* for horse, which demonstrates the recurrence of an element perhaps due to their sibling relationship.[39] The deuterotheme of Éomer derives from OE *mær* or *mer* meaning glorious or famous.[40] This conveys his respectable and high social status within the house of Eorl, though he does not share a direct linguistic naming element with King Théoden due to their slightly more distanced familial connection as uncle and nephew. Therefore, the recurring elements in Tolkien's characters' names and the link with royalty and high social status equates to the naming system of the Anglo-Saxons.

In addition to the resemblance with Anglo-Saxon personal names, there are several cultural similarities with Anglo-Saxon living. One key example is the royal burial of King Théoden. King Théoden's body was taken back to Edoras and 'laid in a house of stone with his arms and many other fair things that he had possessed, and over him was raised a great mound, covered with green turves of grass and of white evermind' (III. 978). The traditions of the Anglo-Saxons 'allowed for both kinds of burials: cremation and inhumation' and grave-goods was a long-established pagan custom, and continued but gradually decreased as Christianity became the dominant religion.[41] The size of the grave and value of grave-goods is believed to have been dependent on the status and importance of the person buried. After the burial, the 'Riders of the King's House…rode round about the barrow and sang together a song of Théoden' (III. 976). Hammond and Scull note the physical grave site and the ceremonial behaviour are all funeral elements 'recorded as having been part of the burial of famous leaders in the early medieval period in Europe', which supports the view that Théoden's burial could resemble one of Anglo-Saxon nobility or royalty.[42]

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[34] Sweet, p. 52.
[35] Sweet, p. 181.
[36] Peter Kitson, 'How Anglo-Saxon Personal Names Work', *Nomina: Journal of the Society for Name Studies in Britain and Ireland*, 25 (2002), 91-131 (pp. 100-1).
[37] Sweet, p. 181.
[38] Sweet, p. 138.
[39] Sweet, p. 51.
[40] Sweet, p. 112.
[41] Ruth Johnston Staver, *A Companion to Beowulf* (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2005), p. 203.
[42] Wayne Hammond and Christina Scull, *The Lord of the Rings: A Reader's Companion* (London: HarperCollins Publishers: 2005), p. 641.

The personal names of the characters from Rohan appear to fit their personalities and social roles, in a similar way to other characters. However, due to the wider linguistic and cultural links with Anglo-Saxon England, and the connection of their names to ideas of nobility and social roles, instead of individual character analysis, it could be more fitting to explore Rohan and the Rohirrim's collective role within Middle-earth. For example, despite the linguistic and cultural links Tolkien draws between Anglo-Saxon England and Rohan, Gondor is the central realm of Middle-earth and not Rohan. However, Shippey comments that the 'planning behind Tolkien's cultural tableaux shows in the further set of contrasts and similarities round the Mark', which makes the Riders of Rohan 'in a sense central';[43] Rohan can be used as a central point of comparison against Gondor, the Shire, and even for individual character comparisons. Tolkien does not present Rohan and the Mark as a perfect and noble representation of men; Théoden too has a weakness and vulnerability to the bewitchment of Saruman. Yet, Gandalf is able to cure Théoden, whereas the Steward of Gondor, Denethor, appears noble but abandons hope and is overtaken by 'pride and despair' (III. 853). But as Baltasar comments, Tolkien 'saw the variances in language as indicative of its ability to create anew, not merely to retell or represent another story'.[44] Therefore, perhaps it is not a question of direct and finite allegory: who are the central people and what is Tolkien attempting to say about Anglo-Saxon England. Tolkien said that Beowulf 'has been used as a quarry of fact and fancy far more assiduously than it has been studied as a work or art' and sometimes in the search for historical importance and allegory, 'Poesis [is] usually forgotten'.[45] The contrasts he presents between the different realms and peoples of Middle-earth are perhaps more important. By contrasting the nobility of the Rohirrim and Gondor, Tolkien in fact shows the similarity between men in that there is vulnerability and the possibility of corruption in everyone, just as he depicts through the negative psychological power of the Ring on Frodo and Sméagol. Perhaps Tolkien's aim was not to draw a comparison between Rohan and Anglo-Saxon England but to utilise his knowledge to demonstrate a wider issue of unity across languages, peoples, and cultures. In a letter to Milton Waldman, Tolkien wrote that 'without the high and noble the simple and vulgar is utterly mean; and without the simple and ordinary the noble and heroic is meaningless'.[46] This could suggest that his multiple linguistic and historical sources were used to depict an ideal and that it is unity and a collective effort that brings out a truer sense of morality and nobility.

Tolkien places a great emphasis on the significance of a name, as is evident from the way he plays with his vast knowledge of philology and Indo-European languages to construct suitable personal names to fit the individual characters' personalities. By exploring the linguistic roots of individual key characters and comparing against their development and function within the novel, it becomes apparent that their OE origins do not only hint towards their personality, but point towards a much bigger issue for discussion: morality and the role it has to play in the events that come to pass. Personal names become a way for Tolkien to communicate and discuss morality without it becoming an overbearing focus in the novel. Readers with little or no understanding of OE will not necessarily recognise any linguistic significance in the personal names, but they will not feel displaced by this due to the 'phonetic fitness' Tolkien applies to the languages. They will still receive the same overall sense of morality from the way Tolkien communicates and develops the story and characters

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[43] Tom Shippey, *The Road to Middle Earth* (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2005), p. 146-48.
[44] Michaela Baltasar, 'J.R.R. Tolkien: A Rediscovery of Myth', in *Tolkien and the Invention of Myth*, ed. by Jane Chance (Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2004), p. 20.
[45] Tolkien, 'Beowulf', pp. 5-6.
[46] J. R. R. Tolkien, 'Letter 131: to Milton Waldman c.1951', *The Letters of J. R. R. Tolkien*, eds. Humphrey Carpenter and Christopher Tolkien (London: HarperCollins, 2006), p. 160. (All subsequent references to Tolkien's letters shall be taken from this publication.)

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more generally. However, knowledge of OE and the ability to deconstruct and analyse the personal names provides a more comprehensive sense of Tolkien's concept of morality, the different types of wisdom and knowledge, and how their interaction functions in creating a unified and cooperative life. This is portrayed not only through individual examples, but Tolkien extends this moral dialogue to the names of groups of people such as the men of Rohan and the Rohirrim. By placing this linguistic significance on both an individual and collective scale it implies that Tolkien is addressing a much wider issue of morality that is not exclusive and differs between races, nations, or kingdoms, but endures in the same capacity across the entire living landscape that exists within the same world. Thus, instead of reductionist and simplified readings of direct and finite allegory, the recurring issues of morality, wisdom, and redemption point towards a much larger notion of life within Middle-earth as a representation of humanity on whole. Therefore, the study of OE in key personal names in *The Lord of the Rings* is merely the catalyst for a greater exploration of humanity; the interaction of cultures and languages, and the cooperation of different and sometimes conflicting nations, is depicted as having a far-reaching positive impact upon the lives of all those who disregard prejudices and unite to work together for a greater moral purpose.

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