

**A STUDY OF ANTHROPOMORPHISM
IN J. R. R. TOLKIEN'S *THE HOBBIT***

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A submission presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements
of the University of South Wales / Prifysgol De Cymru
for the degree of Master of Philosophy

September 2019

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Anthropomorphism in Tolkien

Introduction

This essay is a comparison of Tolkien's *The Hobbit: Or, There and Back Again* with my own novel, *Their Earth*, looking specifically at the quality of anthropomorphism. In the Anglophone tradition, the anthropomorphic treatment of animals in imaginative literature has been largely confined to children's literature. It was, however, Aesop - the ancient Greek fabulist - who was first known to employ a cast of animals (and others) to interact with human protagonists. Aesop's 725 fables are short stories from the sixth Century that were originally passed on by word of mouth as a means for relaying or teaching a moralistic lesson. They are essentially allegories portraying animals (e.g. foxes, grasshoppers, frogs, etc) representing humans and are linked to the ancient belief of animism. "More than the human ... it is the animal characters – the talking animals – who catch our attention in the fables ...in order to make a sharp critique of human foolishness" (Gibbs).

The tradition begun by Aesop has continued down the years as allegorical fiction (Orwell) (Bach), and the idea of animal sentience still permeates modern society. Animism as an ethnic religion is still practised today, "the ecological resonance of [which] is probably part of the reason for its persistence" (Sponsel). Current scientific findings regarding animals' abilities also support "animist understandings that humans are far from alone in possessing or performing culture ... or in our communicative and cognitive abilities" (Harvey 24). The concept of talking animals occurs in stories and religions across the

world, but in the UK Anglophone tradition it originates in the written word from the pre-Christian Celtic tradition of wise and speaking animals. “These early Celtic documents open a door on a world of shifting realities and ambiguities, where animals interact closely with both humankind and the gods” (Green 4). Gwrhŷr Gwalstawd Ieithoedd is an interpreter between human and animal-kind occurring in one of the earliest Arthurian tales, *Culhwch and Olwen*, to be found in *The Mabinogion* (Guest). Gwrhŷr talks to the Oldest Animals and, even in this earliest of stories, it seems man and ecology are in conflict.

The Owl says that when he was first in his valley it was a wooded glen: “y cwm mawr a welwch glynn coet oed,” he says, continuing that “y deuth kenedlaeth o dynyon idaw, ac y diuawyt, ac y tyuwys yr eil coet yndaw,” which is to say that there came a race of men [to that glen], and that it was laid waste. (JKW)

It is these traditions we see echoed in the work of Tolkien, although he seemed himself to have a somewhat ambivalent relationship with his literary heritage. As a practising Christian, Tolkien would also have been very aware of biblical animals which, whilst they do not speak with humans (barring the notable exceptions of the serpent in *Genesis* and Balaam’s ass in the *Book of Numbers*), are often analogous to human traits: Proverbs 6:6-8 (Bible)

⁶Go to the ant, O sluggard;
consider her ways, and be wise.

⁷Without having any chief,
officer, or ruler,

⁸she prepares her bread in summer
and gathers her food in harvest.

As an Oxford don, Tolkien specialised in Old English and was a staunch defender of his English (as opposed to British) heritage. In writing, he set about creating a mythology for England. At the same time, however, he was very knowledgeable on things Celtic and says of Sindarins (one of the Elvish languages) that it was: “deliberately devised to give it a linguistic character very like ... British-Welsh ...because it seems to rather fit the Celtic-type of legends and stories told of its speakers” (Carpenter). Equally, there are echoes of Irish Celtic mythology in Tolkien’s work. “The parallels of these two ... the Tuatha Dé Dannan in Ireland and the arrival of the Noldor in Middle earth are remarkable” (Fimi 161-162). Tolkien is perceived to be part of a continuing tradition, from the very earliest writers to those of the present day, whereby animism, personification and anthropomorphism imbue animal and other non-human characters with the ability to interact with us in ways that are preternatural.

A number of animals in Tolkien’s *The Hobbit* are anthropomorphised to varying degrees. He does not treat all animals in the same way, investing some with more human traits than others. This analysis looks at the rationale for these portrayals and what evidence can be found to exemplify, and take inference from, Tolkien’s practice. The possibility of intelligence (emotional/social and intellect) among animals has long fascinated mankind, but there remains no consensus on how intelligent various species are, what types of intelligence are attributable to species and even whether some plants might possess a form intelligence (Perlmutter 164; Rogers; Adamatzky, Harding and Reokhin 357-

387; Trewavas 1-20). The fantasy genre allows exploration of ideas and possibilities beyond the factual evidence of the real world. Nonetheless these authors' depictions may be based in a grain or more of biological fact (Shaw). Science fiction has often presaged developments in the technological, and sometimes biological, world (Sawyer 58-81; Vinge and Euchner 11). Might fantasy contain the intimations of discoveries only just beginning to be made in the real world, concerning our fellow inhabitants? What then, would be the motivations of our animal cohabitants, and how does Tolkien reveal his animals' natures, when we view them through the medium of anthropomorphic representations?

In the introduction to this study, the heritage and influences of anthropomorphism in our literary tradition has been considered. Chapter One goes on to identify all the animals portrayed by Tolkien in his children's book *The Hobbit* – in order, as we encounter them upon reading. As each is discovered, it becomes apparent that there are variations in Tolkien's treatment of sentience as it attaches to his animal characters. Chapter Two looks at my own view of how sentience might be evidenced, as depicted through my novel's animal characters, and in comparison with Tolkien's. I conclude through this initial analysis that Tolkien's work demonstrates a continuum of sentient ability, of different degrees culminating in true wisdom (i.e. sapience), over the various animals he characterises. In Chapter Three, therefore, I return to Tolkien in order to examine this continuum more closely and determine where exactly each animal falls along it, how we know this, and what it might convey to the reader. In this manner I look to determine the rule Tolkien has applied. I then look again, briefly, at my own work to understand whether or not I have applied

a similar rule. In concluding, I posit a future wherein the real world might come to echo fantastical literary theory.

At different points on this essay, I shall use the terms “sentience”, “intelligence” and “sapience”. These, and similar terms, are defined in the glossary; but, for ease: I use “sentience” to mean conscious and responsive, capable of feeling. This definition is widely accepted as pertinent to many animals nowadays but, in Tolkien’s day, was not. I use “intelligence” to define attributes fully akin to those of humans and covering emotional, social and cognitive intelligence. I also use the rather archaic “sapience”, to mean not only allied with *homo sapiens* but possessing of specific element of wisdom.

Chapter One

An Identification of Tolkien's Sentient Animal Characters

We meet several groups of sentient animals in *The Hobbit*, though Tolkien moves on in his *Lord Of The Rings* series to further invest in his animal cast. In *The Hobbit*, Tolkien appears to have established his continuum of animal awareness. The reader must decide where the creatures are personified (aping human actions) or anthropomorphised (behaving exactly as humans¹.) Imbuing his creatures with the power of speech places them firmly as the latter. Tolkien was far ahead of his time with his clear portrayal of animal sentience. In the real world, the ability of animals to be aware, and demonstrate emotions in relation to their surroundings and interactions, has now been recognised and enshrined in law². For Tolkien (amongst others) this was a leap of imagination, focussed on both animal and vegetable life. There is a step further, that goes beyond the scope of this essay, that is to ask: if Tolkien was right about his basic assumption of animal sentience, was he also showing prescience when writing of trees? (Grant) “Some of my kin look just like trees now, and need something great to rouse them; and they speak only in whispers. But some of my trees are limb-lithe, and many can talk to me” (Tolkien). This is a literary foretelling of Peter Wohlleben's findings in his influential book *The Hidden Life of Trees* (Wohlleben). Wohlleben draws on modern science to explain how trees act like families – parenting their children, communicating with them and sharing

¹ Definition of these terms for the purposes of this essay, where this distinction needs to be clear. In some dictionaries, however, they are defined as similar– see glossary.

² The Lisbon Treaty which came into force in 2009 amended the 'Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union' (TFEU) and introduced the recognition that animals are sentient beings in article 13 of Title II.

nutrients with those that need them. Tolkien's vision of trees, and Wohlleben's subsequent observations, lend the pathetic fallacy in relation to vegetable life much greater significance: perhaps for our exploration in future years.

There has been a considerable amount of eco-criticism produced that concerns Tolkien's representation of landscape and the reflections of good and evil in nature and technology (Ulstein 7-17; Simonson 6). There is also work on the anthropomorphic aspects of his humanoid (but non-human) characters, and on their connection to the natural world (Dickerson and Evans 71-94; Dickerson and Evans 95-118; Jacobs; Gunderman): "So they laughed and sang in the trees; and pretty fair nonsense I daresay you think it... Elvish singing is not a thing to miss, in June under the stars, not if you care for such things" (Tolkien 46-47). We also find reference to his mythical beasts and his relationship to God.

The overtly botanistic coverage may be due to Tolkien's own confessed affection for the vegetable world: "I am (obviously) much in love with plants and above all trees, and always have been; and I find human maltreatment of them as hard to bear as some find ill-treatment of animals" (Carpenter 220). This quotation focuses on his relationship to vegetation, but he also shows a sympathy with animals within his writing. There is a large animal cast that populates his narrative and plays a crucial role in his stories. He clearly gave them considerable thought. Critics have looked at Tolkien's treatment of animals in relation to the existence of the soul: asking whether by humanizing other species, Tolkien implies their admittance to the Kingdom of Heaven (Eden 131). There is, however, negligible interest from critics in the animals for their

own sake. If we deliberately bracket this religious aspect, to focus simply on the character of the animal, what then can be made of Tolkien's creatures and their place in Middle Earth?

Here, the range of abilities Tolkien attributes to his animal cast is considered. Some animals appear to merely mimic men's actions; some are subservient, while others demonstrate higher intelligence and are allied with men's plans and society; some show a similar ability to calculate yet remain far more true to their animal societal bonds and distance themselves from those of men: "What is all this uproar in the forest tonight?' said the Lord of the Eagles. ... He swept up into the air, and immediately two of this guards from the rocks at either hand leaped up to follow him" (Tolkien 96).

Looking at *The Hobbit*, and taking the animal characters in order of their emergence, we first meet perfectly ordinary ponies, ridden by the dwarves and Bilbo as they venture forth: "That's how they all came to start, jogging off from the inn one fine morning just before May, on laden ponies; and Bilbo was wearing a dark-green hood" (Tolkien 29). There is no mention of these creatures being in any way communicative. Animals such as the ponies appear to be just like animals we encounter in our everyday world. They fulfil the tasks we expect and are not treated as part of the cast, but merely as a functional part of that reality. Goblins steal ponies to eat and when Smaug eats the ponies there is no sense of characters lost, only of the loss of a means of transport. Tolkien does make reference to the fact that the ponies were "excellent" creatures but there is no empathy for the animals' plight.

In chapter six we encounter the Wargs. They are, to all intents and purposes, merely wolves. Tolkien identifies them as Wargs, however, because they are also dubbed evil – the implication is that the Warg is a separate beast from the wolf. A Warg seems moved by design and not merely by instinct. It is not explained in *The Hobbit* how this breed of demonic wolf was brought about but, from wider literature, there are links with Mordor, and the wolves ally with goblins and orcs (Wolfe). These creatures think, plan and speak not only amongst themselves but with other species, though not all species: “These they guarded too, while all the rest (hundreds and hundreds it seemed) went and sat in a great circle in the glade; and in the middle of the circle was a great grey wolf. He spoke to them in the dreadful language of the Wargs. Gandalf understood it. Bilbo did not...” (Tolkien 94). They are not completely elevated to men’s status, however, as they are used as steeds by goblins and their nature is still very much that of the wolf: living wild in packs and hunting. This is a sort of mid-level animal, caught somewhere between personification and bestiality. In a letter to Gene Wolfe Tolkien states: “Warg ... is an old word for wolf which also has the sense of an outlaw or hunted criminal ... this particular brand of demonic wolf” (the Deutsche Tolkien Gesellschaft 91-92). The “relationship of wolf to evil is very established in the popular imagination ... The Wargs ... are created by Melkor by corrupting the nature of dogs to serve his evil plans. The orcs ride them. The Rohirrim are afraid of them because they tear the horses’ bellies ... the sun destroys their evil power” (Albero Poveda). Whilst all this (as detailed in *The Silmarillion*) is not apparent from a reading of *The Hobbit*, their evil nature and their partial subservience is: they attempt to kill the band of adventurers and they are ridden by goblins. Here we have a thinking, scheming, self-motivated group but one which remains in thrall, to some extent, to the

more humanoid goblin race. They represent pure evil but they may be wielded by others higher on the intellectual continuum. "Tolkien's Wargs work with the goblins and their talk 'was dreadful to listen to...' (Tolkien 102), but they betray their animal-like nature (when compared to the evil of the goblins) as the narrator observes, 'Wolves are afraid of fire at all times, but this was a most horrible and uncanny fire' (Tolkien 103);" (Singler, Guthmiller and Smith). Immediately on the heels of the Wargs we encounter the eagles and, specifically, the Lord of the Eagles. The eagles are both more and less anthropomorphised than the Wargs. Whilst the Wargs are heavily involved in the power-struggles of the various species, becoming allied with those that suit them and joining in with pre-planned attacks, the eagles are in every sense above all that. There are frequent mentions of how disinterested the eagles are: "They did not love goblins, or fear them. When they took any notice of them at all (which was seldom, for they did not eat such creatures) ... The eagle only sharpened his beak on a stone and trimmed his feathers and took no notice" (Tolkien 97). Yet we learn later that the Lord of the Eagles (very unlike a real-world bird) wears a golden crown which is, undeniably, a piece of clothing. Whilst Bilbo could not understand the "terrible" language of the Wargs (Tolkien, *The Hobbit* 94), he takes instruction from the eagle who transports him. Gandalf, being a wizard, understands all speech; but it seems there is a distinction between other species, since speech is not always accessible to all. Perhaps the eagle is speaking the language of men (or, at least, of hobbits.) "Don't pinch!" said his Eagle. 'You need not be frightened like a rabbit, even if you look rather like one. It is a fair morning with little wind. What is finer than flying?'" (Tolkien 105). The Great Eagles are also ridden like the Wargs, when they rescue the band, but there is a different sense here. It is the eagles, not the

riders, who are in charge. Apart from Gandalf who – as a wizard – is the equal (or superior) of all, the eagles merely offer beneficence to the travellers, who are very minor players in the eagles' world. This is no partnership: "Eagles are not kindly birds. Some are cowardly and cruel. But the ancient race of the northern mountains were the greatest of all the birds" (Tolkien 97). These birds are on the highest social stratum, perhaps equalled by elves and wizards, but far above all other creatures.

A few pages later we suddenly come across sentient horses. This raises a question, which is not answered, over the ponies we have already encountered. These horses "looked at them intently with very intelligent faces" (Tolkien 110), yet there was no mention of intellect with the earlier equines. These are Beorn's horses, Beorn being a skin-changer or were-bear with a special connection to all things natural. Beorn has (or lives beside) horses with which he communicates freely. They warn him of the approach of strangers, in the manner of soldiers or guards: "They have gone to tell him of the arrival of strangers," said Gandalf" (Tolkien 110). These horses inhabit a higher echelon on the intellectual plain than the other animals who coexist with Beorn, being self-governing and speaking; yet they also serve – though whether as comrades or subservient characters is unclear. They bear little relation to the ponies, which distinction seems not to trouble the narrator.

Beorn's other animals, as revealed here, seem to cross a line into an almost cartoonish anthropomorphism as the animals move beyond domestication to embrace being actual domestics. "Then baa – baa – baa! was heard, and in came some snow-white sheep led by a large coal-black ram. One bore a white

cloth embroidered at the edges with figures of animals; others bore on their backs trays with bowls and platters and knives and wooden spoons, which the dogs took and quickly laid on the trestle-tables” (Tolkien 117). Beorn’s servants are perhaps the most curious construct. They are clothed and so reminiscent of children’s books where this is the norm, for example Beatrix Potter’s characters. This is a very child-like image and possibly at odds with the rest of the construct, where we see animals behaving much more as their real-world versions, but with added intellect. At Beorn’s home, horses, dogs (which can stand on their hind legs), sheep and a ram tend the fire, lay a table and serve them. These animals, whilst housed, clothed and fed by the largesse of Beorn, are servants. They are not living freely. We do not know if they are granted free will and choose to serve, and they do not speak. No other animals seem to inhabit this particular and peculiar segment of personification within the novel. Beorn’s animals are still serving their man-shaped master, as all domestic animals do, whereas the Wargs and eagles can and do operate as their own societies independent of such a connection. Beorn, the skin-changer, is fearsome as a bear yet accommodating in a gruff sort of way as a man: Bilbo “woke up when everyone else was asleep, and he heard the same scraping, scuffling, snuffling, and growling as before ... A goblin head was stuck outside the gate and a Warg-skin ... Beorn was a fierce enemy. But now he was their friend” (Tolkien 122-123). Perhaps the overt humanisation of docile animals is a way to ameliorate any threat posed by the figure of the were-bear. A similar diminution of horror is seen in the spiders.

Beorn alone is an animal who also occupies the body of a man. He is surely the most anthropomorphised character, as he retains his human intent in his animal

form. Although a fearsome beast, as a man he is shown to be caring and have good manners, and to live a life as closely respectful of the natural world as it is possible to be. Manners are surely the conceptual epitome of what it is to be human. As Bloom observes: “in *The Hobbit* those characters whom the author would like his readers to emulate (the hobbit, the dwarves, Gandalf, the elves, Beorn, Bard) have good manners, and those characters he would not like his readers to emulate (the trolls, the goblins, Gollum, the Wargs, the spiders, Smaug) have bad manners” (Bloom 23). Manners, then, can also be used as a yardstick for the anthropomorphising of animals to behave like their good or evil human counterparts.

So, if we set aside Beorn who is all but human, we seem now to have three sub-sets of anthropomorphics: Eagles, who operate for themselves alone; Wargs, who join with other species and are deeply invested in the political world; and Beorn’s domestics, who are so involved with the man-like world that they fulfil traditionally human roles within it. We see very little of the horses, who appear to function as part of Beorn’s animal commune, but in a much less servile role. The housekeepers seem the least independent of thought and deed. Although clearly treated extremely well by Beorn, they are effectively his mute servants.

Like the wolves, the spiders are portrayed as being fearsome, though without any demonic characteristics. Bilbo, who could not follow the Wargs’ speech can apparently understand the spiders, whose “voices were a sort of thin creaking and hissing”. Oddly, Tolkien writes of the spiders in a vaguely clownish way. One talks about a dwarf having had “a bee-aautiful sleep” and Bombur kicks one

“with a noise like a flabby football” who falls from his branch like a slapstick villain (Tolkien 145). They are fooled by invisibility, and confused and surprised by Sting, as Bilbo becomes the accidental hero, saving his dwarf friends from the spiders. He leads the spiders a merry dance and mocks them singing: “Old fat spider spinning in a tree! ... Lazy Lob and crazy Cob,” to infuriate them (Tolkien 147). Jorgensen writes that “this music and poetry is both functional and powerful in altering emotional states” (Jorgensen). A situation that is inherently horrific is made amusing by Bilbo’s mocking and by the narration accompanying the antics of the spiders. The fearsome beasts become our animal clowns, children’s story characters. Despite being thinking, speaking beings, they are bumbling and unsuccessful. *The Hobbit* is a children’s book, and it may be that this limits how horrifying its characters may appear.

Nonetheless, the Wargs were portrayed as more vicious and the scene where their fur was set alight lacked the subtle “black humour” of the spider scenes: “The rage of the wolves was terrible to see ... If a spark got in their coats it stuck and burned into them ... those that were burning were ... howling” (Tolkien 96). The spiders are of a less calculating breed which perhaps only seems evil³ because the reader empathises with the hobbits. The spiders follow their instinct to seek prey, not any differently to the human imperative to seek sustenance.

There are other animals who play lesser roles, similar to Beorn’s horses. In chapter fifteen, having first read of ordinary ponies, then the mythical Smaug, we have a glimpse of a thrush when Balin states: “I cannot follow the speech of such birds, it is very quick and difficult” (Tolkien 234). This sentence seems to

³ See glossary

imply that all creatures must have language which it merely behoves others to learn. The thrush, however, leads us to Roäc of the ravens who speaks in the tongue of men: "Bilbo could understand because he used ordinary language and not bird-speak" (Tolkien 235). In common with their relatives the eagles, the ravens seem at a slight remove from the doings of the warring species below but, unlike the eagles, have a connection - an old loyalty - with the dwarves. They act as messengers, seeing all and reporting it. Roäc gives advice but takes no side: "We would see peace once more among dwarves and men and elves ... I will not say if this counsel be good or bad ... but I will do what can be done." Each group of animals has its own character, and each is different in its involvement with, relationship to, and role in, the world.

When battle commences, the goblins are aided by "the bats ... above his army like a sea of locusts. They ride upon wolves and Wargs are in their train" (Tolkien 255). These dark animals seem to be weighting the odds in the goblins' favour, until we read Bilbo's joyous cry of: "The Eagles! The Eagles!" Whilst the eagles take no interest in the minutiae of others' politicking, when large scale events look apt to tip the balance of the world, they will act to right the scales. Afterwards, they return to their own business: "gone back to their eyries. They would not stay here, and departed with the first light of morning" (Tolkien 261-268). The idea that the giant eagles could have been used to carry Bilbo and the dwarves to Mount Doom (even despite the archer men of the Vale of Anduin) has not been overlooked. The construct of having these great birds hold themselves aloof from the doings of mankind is a useful one. It means that the character-building odyssey of Bilbo and the dwarves' journey can proceed, yet, in times of extreme strife, the eagles may still be summoned to influence

the main storyline, granting a favour to Gandalf in return for his previously saving the life of their chief.

Chapter Two

A Comparison with my own Fictional Animalia

My novel, *Their Earth*, similarly aimed at children, has a cast of both humans and animals. With my own writing, defining a suitable place on the continuum for an animal character has been of central importance. My book is all about man's relationship to animals and to the natural world around him. The central tenet is that factions within the animal world have views upon man's existence and its intervention in the natural course of things. Their attitudes range from those wishing to eradicate man, as a species that has brought nothing but harm; to the indifference of those who wish to simply live out their own lives; to those who see man as having been the instigator of the natural world's demise but being now necessary in order to be its saviour. It is the technology of man that has caused the world's pain, but many animals believe it requires our technology to right the matter also. My character Loulou is a Bernese Mountain dog:

“Loulou edged a little closer and searched Evie's face as she spoke.

“Evie, just imagine an increasing number of people all trying to put the world right! That's Lifelink's dream.”

“What's the Misants' dream?” Evie asked in a whisper.

“That humans as we know you today cease to exist.” Evie blinked. “That you give up all scientific and technological endeavour and return to a stone-age lifestyle ... or that you simply die out. They have no strong preference. If you could leave on a rocket ship I am sure that would do

just as well. Remove modern-day humans and the world will gradually right itself.” (McLaren 47)

Like Tolkien, I have a continuum, but mine is one of attitude towards mankind. Tolkien’s animals seem to have different abilities when it comes to interacting with the world of man-like peoples and it is far from clear whether all animals are equally endowed with intellect. In my work, the presumption is that all those we meet are sentient and those with whom the characters interact are clearly sapient. The reader may infer that all animals are similarly so. The difference between them, however, is in their ability to communicate with one another.

There is clearly a Venn diagram of language ability in Tolkien’s *The Hobbit*, and in this respect my work is similar. Rather than “language”, in my case, it may be better termed “the ability to understand speech” – since my novel is set in the UK and presupposes English as a first language for humans without identifying the languages of animals. The ability of each character to understand other species is randomised, rather as if each possessed a selective Babel fish: the universal translator organism imagined by Douglas Adams in *The Hitch-hiker’s Guide to the Galaxy*. A character may be able to understand all species, some, or only one. This talent is called “creaturespeak”. As any of my characters may or may not have the ability to converse with other groups, I am able to simply choose my boundaries: Kath is a Lifelink agent who runs a Spar shop: “It’s a funny old thing, creaturespeak, no rhyme nor reason to it sometimes. You can’t always speak to everyone. Just have to give it a go. See, me, I’m only dogs! Best one though, dogs ... Not surprised that cat let us down. No empathy, cats, I don’t trust them, not as far as – as I can swing ’em!” (McLaren 36)

Tolkien's animals and people seem to have a hierarchy of communication ability that may be too complex for its scheme to be determined. There is, also, a recognition that the nearer a person or animal is to the natural, vegetative world, the better "soul" that individual seems to possess. For example, the often-vegetarian elves are a force for good; the were-bear lives a vegetarian life; both care for the land and for the animals around them. It may be also that the higher up the intellectual ladder - or indeed the higher up the ladder of things magical - a character is, the more he is able to speak with all those around him. Gandalf, as a wizard, understands all peoples, as do the elves. Bilbo, as a hobbit, does not understand many. Tolkien portrays a complex world of groups with political affiliations. My far simpler novel aims to do the same but in a more straightforward way: my groups are fewer and are determined only by their attitudes towards mankind, other characters as individuals and their ability to communicate.

Tolkien's works seem to convey an ecological message in an almost subliminal⁴ way, by aligning his most good⁵ and attractive characters with the most natural lifestyles – among nature and in the sunlight. Those who value the natural world and live at one with it are on the side of all that is positive. Those who live in darkness away from greenery, and who eat the most (especially raw) meat, are the villains of the piece:

⁴ See glossary

⁵ See glossary

[The] Free Folk of Middle Earth, are bound by their common membership in a tightly-knit community. The essence of this community's philosophy is an emphasis on an interrelation with and respect for the natural world. Through *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien offers this philosophy as an alternative to the technocratic paradigm prevalent in this, the Fourth Age of Middle Earth ... Tolkien recognized that in its pursuit of industrialization, modern society is in danger of becoming alienated from the natural world. (Resta)

In my work, the ecological message is central to the thesis so is far more overt. Nonetheless, those who are at one with the animal and plant world are those who wish to see the Earth thrive. The politics of my novel are a little greyer, inasmuch as the characters perceived as villains are also very much a part of that natural world and the reader might empathise with their view of the world, even though sympathy is with the protagonist.

In my novel, there is a prominent ecological message and, underpinning that, there are political and social groups with motives that engage the reader. In Tolkien's work, there is a complex political world and social hierarchy, with an underlying ecological message. Both books grant sentience to animals, and some animals evidence a higher intellect. In mine, if an animal can communicate with other characters, then he or she is sapient – though it is apparent that, as with humans, there are differing degrees of IQ. I have tried to adhere to what I imagine the character of a certain animal to be, when ascribing motivation and concerns; all my animals are of a type: the thinking version of that natural animal, living and adhering to a real-world animal's habits for the

most part - with the exception being pockets of interactions and cooperation with man. In Tolkien's cast, however, his treatment of animals is not all-encompassing and we have, as earlier described, differing degrees of humanity attributed to the animal characters. Although I have managed to draw some parallels between my work and Tolkien's, I think this is where our concepts differ quite significantly. Although he too has animals that adhere closely to their real-world counterparts' habits (e.g. Wargs living in packs, eagles living in eyries) even these also carry people, and are above normal size, which is atypical. Others of his creatures go so far as to walk upright and don clothes. They are far more anthropomorphised than my own.

Tolkien himself appears to have struggled with rationalising his animal characters' human-like abilities in *The Hobbit* (Hartley 125). He wrote the book for his children and it became very much a precursor to the subsequent *Lord Of The Rings* (LOTR) series. Although the chief of the eagles existed in his Legendarium before *The Hobbit*, following Tolkien's own rules of Maiar and the Children of Iluvitar does not explain how the eagle descendants in *The Hobbit* can possess will, intellect and self-awareness (Eden 127). The same can be said of the novel's Great Spiders. It is not until later (in *The Two Towers*) that Tolkien begins to address the spiders' abilities by filling in a back-story of descent from Shelob and so from Ungoliant, who possessed all the qualities of Maiar; however, the fact that *The Hobbit's* spiders are generations removed, denies Tolkien the connection and explanation he tries to fashion here because his own rules of reproduction do not allow the Maiar faculties to be passed down. Nonetheless he has fully intelligent spiders and eagles in *The Hobbit*.

My book *Their Earth* is an exploratory novel. It arose from my own interest in the work that is beginning to surface in everyday media around the world detailing naturalists' discoveries regarding both animal intellect and communicative abilities (Wasserman 211; Sasaki and Biro 15-49; Pika, Wilkinson and Kendrick 598). At the same time, saving our environment from irreversible catastrophe is clearly a topic of current debate. This is a present world issue, but it will also be the issues to be addressed by generations to come: by our children. I therefore elected to write a children's novel, engaging with these topics. For the sake of the story, I wanted access to the animals' ability to communicate, so created that with "creaturespeak". I wondered what the animals, if they could communicate, would think of the changes man has made to the Earth that is their home. Now, having written the novel, it has shown me ways in which I might develop this theme and set about creating a rather more involved series of books to follow. This appears to me to mirror the process Tolkien may have moved along: writing *The Hobbit* to crystallise his concept and to entertain his children, but then becoming more involved in his premise and developing it to embark on his LOTR series.

In both *The Hobbit* and *Their Earth*, the voice of the narrator is imbued with a distinct viewpoint or personality. *The Hobbit's* narrator is informative: a tour guide through the novel, supplying additional information and history to better aid our understanding, but also adding humour through his observations – the spiders being an example. In *Their Earth*, it is a wry humour that picks out the focus of a scene to add nuance. Using the narrator's viewpoint as our lens, not just the voices of the characters themselves, we can identify a number of characteristics for each persona in the novel. These characteristics may help us

define an animal's place more clearly on the continuum: whether each is merely a plot device or is portrayed with some depth - so becoming a character to whom we in some way relate. In order to determine the distinction between one animal's role and another's, it is helpful to consider: their status within the novel; their moral/ethical characteristics; and, their degree of personification.

To summarise the cast in *The Hobbit* we see: apparently non-speaking animals; Beorn's servants (dressing and aping men, child-like as with Beatrix Potter); talking horses (reporting back as soldiers); spiders (made to behave comically); Wargs (evil, savage, but defeated); Great Eagles (regal, wise, removed); and Beorn (an animal recognisable as a man.) Each of these has a place in the world of *The Hobbit* and each fulfils a different narrative need. The voice of the narrator aids us in discerning these, often commenting on the typology of a group. In *Their Earth*, we have Misants (who wish to see the demise of mankind); neutrals (who wish to live their own lives and remain aloof); and members of Lifelink (the organisation that believes mankind can save the planet). Each of Tolkien's animal species appear to function largely as a whole, with no vast distinction between individuals of the same species. My creatures function predominantly as individuals, who also align themselves with a certain group, equally if not more so than with their species. My narrator's viewpoint underlines the characters' attitudes to events. Each of *The Hobbit* and *Their Earth* has a set of characters that can be placed upon a narrative continuum, but they are different types of construct. One is a continuum of intellectual ability and the other is of political affinity.

Chapter Three

An Examination of Rules

At the front of the novel, there is a note by Tolkien entitled, in runic letters: "The Hobbit". In this, Tolkien acknowledges the fact that there is a language barrier to his tale which is narrated, once its events are history, in English; although "At that time the languages and letters were quite different from ours today" (Tolkien, *The Hobbit* 1). From this we may infer that there is some room for interpretation, despite the narrator's best efforts to translate the complex communications between animals and humanoid peoples. It is this subjective space that is explored here and for which an attempt at quantification is made.

Tolkien begins with animals that appear to differ in no way from those with which the reader is familiar in everyday life: "They were on ponies, and each pony was slung about with all kinds of baggages" (Tolkien, *The Hobbit* 29). These same ponies are later eaten by Smaug and are never treated as being in any way sentient. The narrator shows no compunction when he states: "The ponies screamed with terror, burst their ropes and galloped wildly off. The dragon swooped and turned to pursue them and was gone" (Tolkien, *The Hobbit* 201). There is evidence of many other ordinary animals in the simple fact that hobbits and other races eat meat, such as the "Roast Mutton" which is the title of the second chapter. Animals that are used as beasts of burden, or for food, are at the bottom of our scale.

Beorn's servants, whilst clearly able to think and perform household duties, must rank next. Although we assume they communicate, we never hear them speak. The narrator observes them in a detached manner: "They went out again and soon came back carrying torches in their mouths, which they lit at the fire and stuck in low brackets ... the dogs could stand on their hind-legs when they wished, and carry things with their fore-feet" (Tolkien, *The Hobbit* 117). There is no mention of talk from these animals, between themselves or in response to Beorn's orders. They seem to all intents and purposes "dumb animals", so they are not humanised in that manner. Yet, they are given the man-like attribute of standing on hind legs and carrying platters, and the most domestic of duties: laying the table, making beds, etc. They appear to hover somewhere between being personified and being animals who have been taught to perform tricks to command. Indeed there is more narrative interest in the paraphernalia the beasts lay out than in the creatures themselves as beings. For this reason, we would position them next on our scale. Neither of these levels of animal are depicted as possessing any of the considerations posited above as measures of humanity. Their status in the novel is no more than a textual device to further the narrative. They are not shown to evidence any moral or ethical stance; and they have either no, or very limited, degrees of personification. There is clearly a difference between the two groups, as only the latter adopts the role of domestic help – thereby occupying the first rung on Tolkien's ladder of personification - but neither has any influence within the novel or presence as intelligent beings.

It is Beorn's horses that seem to take the next step, into the realm of reasoning. We see these creatures only briefly and they do fulfil a particular role in the plot:

of forewarning Beorn of his visitors' arrival. The very fact that they can observe this arrival and reason that a warning must be carried to Beorn, however, proves that they are thinking beings possessing self-will. They appear to live alongside Beorn in some form of service, since they are message carriers, and they embody the role of lookout or sentry: his equine soldiers on watch. They are a step removed from the domestic servants, as they take the lead and decide for themselves to find and speak with Beorn:

“Some horses ... looked at them with very intelligent faces; then off they galloped to the buildings.

‘They have gone to tell him of the arrival of strangers,’ said Gandalf.”

Then:

“ The horses were standing by him with their noses at his shoulder.

‘Ugh! Here they are!’ he said to the horses. ‘They don’t look dangerous.

You can be off!’” (Tolkien, *The Hobbit* 110)

The horses have served their purpose, introducing Beorn as a being who communicates with other creatures and has them at his beck and call. We begin to be able to evaluate the three aspects of humanity against these creatures. Their status is still relatively negligible, they move the plot along, they are a useful device, but as an indicator of Beorn’s status more than their own. If we were to attribute ethical characteristics to the horses, we could do so in the vaguest sense, inasmuch as they choose to align themselves with Beorn - as the narrative progresses, we will discover that Beorn is in general a force for good. Here, there is a more tangible personification of the horses, in that they are given the capacity to warn Beorn of strangers and to do so by speaking to

him. This, however, is inferred from Tolkien's careful mention of "intelligent eyes" – we are certainly meant to attribute a higher degree of sentience here. The horses tread a fine line between being mere guard dogs and being sentries on watch. It is this suggestion of intelligence, rather than merely being conditioned to react, that weights them towards subjectivity and the ability to decide.

Next in the continuum are spiders and Wargs. Each of these demonstrates a considerably greater degree of characterisation than the animals previously mentioned. The spiders, however, have a more two-dimensional quality to them than the Wargs and it is they who should be placed next on the ladder. There is a greater degree of texture involved in the creation of the giant spiders' society. We are privy to their conversations, we see them discuss, decide and act. They are clearly possessed of some degree of intelligence:

"Don't hang 'em too long,' said a third. 'They're not as fat as they might be. Been feeding none too well of late, I should guess.'

'Kill 'em, I say,' hissed a fourth; 'kill 'em now and hang 'em dead for a while.' (Tolkien, *The Hobbit* 145)

The spiders are full blown characters within the novel, providing threat and adventure, and interacting with the main cast. As for their moral or ethical portrayal, it is easy to seize upon them as being evil – they capture, imprison and intend to eat the dwarves. The fact that the dwarves are sapient, however, is the single aspect that denotes the spiders' actions as evil. If we remove this to look at the narrative from the spiders' viewpoint alone, then they are merely

creatures who are existing by hunting for food. They have no ulterior motive and nothing to gain politically from killing the dwarves. The reader allies naturally with the dwarves and hobbit and, as a result, it is easy for us to label the spiders as evil for attacking our protagonists; but it seems they are more likely to be simply fulfilling their animal instincts. The narrator plays a large part in our view of the spiders by ridiculing them: "One of the fat spiders ... fell off the branch ... The stone struck the spider plunk on the head, and it dropped senseless off the tree, flop ... no spider has ever liked being called Attercop, and Tomnoddy of course is insulting to anybody' (Tolkien, *The Hobbit* 145-147). The spiders are too ridiculous to be evil. They are personified but as clowns. Whilst these creatures appear social and able reason, they are not of a higher order: we come closer to that with the Wargs.

The Wargs are not acting merely as speaking animals, following their instinct to kill prey in order to live. They move on a considerable step, as they hold political alliances. The Wargs are anthropomorphised to a significant degree. Alongside this, however, they also retain their animalistic natures, their pack, and are seen as subservient to the goblins who ride them. The fact, however, that they can willingly join with the goblins (given that there is no suggestion of coercion) demonstrates an added facet of awareness within their characterisation. The narrator confirms this: "They often got the Wargs to help and share the plunder with them" (Tolkien, *The Hobbit* 94). It is clearly a partnership, albeit the goblins are the more senior partner. The narrator also leaves us in no doubt as to the Wargs' moral stance: "eyes blazing and tongues hanging out ... the wild Wargs (for so the evil wolves over the Edge of the Wild were named)" (Tolkien, *The Hobbit* 94). The Wargs play a considerable role in the story and we are given

some Warg history to ground them in the novel further. Although the wolves are finally scared off by fire, they are not ridiculed in the same way the spiders were, and we have some small empathy with their plight: “The rage of the wolves was terrible to see ... those that were burning were running about howling and setting others alight, till their own friends chased them away” (Tolkien, *The Hobbit* 96). The Wargs are strongly characterised, despite their adherence to the pack and the wild, and are fully anthropomorphised as a result. Tolkien’s remaining animal characters bring us to the top of the anthropomorphic ladder.

The Great Eagles are a higher order both literally and narratively – they seem both physically above, and mentally aloof from, the goings on of Middle Earth below them. From their first introduction to us, the eagles are clearly intelligent, independent beings: “‘What is all this uproar in the forest tonight?’ said the Lord of the Eagles. He was sitting, black in the moonlight, on the top of a lonely pinnacle of rock at the eastern edge of the mountains. ‘I hear wolves voices! Are the goblins at mischief in the woods?’” Tolkien gives us a regal image, worthy of perhaps Henry V surveying his estate and watching out for signs of unrest (Shakespeare V. 1. 1-3). The narrator continues to leave us in no doubt of the status of this character: “He swept up into the air, and immediately two of his guards from the rocks at either hand leaped up to follow him ... The Lord of the Eagles of the Misty Mountains had eyes that could look at the sun unblinking” (Tolkien, *The Hobbit* 96). The narrator then goes on to give us great insight into the back story of this race. We can judge from this their importance to the tale. No interest was shown in the history or social structure of the creatures surrounding Beorn, but now we have a group that is given

considerable time and space within the novel: a narrated history and description that is equal in depth to that of the hobbits or other major characters. The eagles survey events from above: they need not interfere but choose to do so. Although they have an undeniable aloofness, in that they do not stoop to parley with goblins, Wargs or similar members of the cast, they reveal an ethical standpoint through their actions. This is laid out for us with great clarity by the narrator: “the greatest of all birds; they were proud and strong and noble-hearted. They did not love goblins, or fear them. When they took any notice of them at all ... they swooped on them and drove them back to their caves, and stopped whatever wickedness they were doing.” The eagles are a monarch race, maintaining a degree of peace across their kingdom, but not meddling in the small matters that do not threaten their rule. Gandalf addresses the Lord of the Eagles as an equal: “‘We are already deeply obliged to you. But in the meantime we are famished with hunger.’ ... ‘That perhaps can be mended,’ said the Lord of the Eagles” (Tolkien, *The Hobbit* 103). These two chat as two great men might and no distinction is made between the capacities of the wizard and the eagle. Here we have race fully anthropomorphised with all the characteristics one might attribute to a human of similar standing. This, too, is equal to the degree of anthropomorphism I employ in my own novel, where I wish the animals cast to be as worthy of the reader’s alignment and empathy as the human.

Last and highest on our scale, is Beorn. He occupies a curious place on the continuum, as he is both an animal and a human-like being. He has to be the most anthropomorphic, as he is a man for part of his existence. What we do not see, however, is how he behaves when he inhabits the form of a bear. He does

not revert to the mental capacity of a beast, as he tells the dwarves that he has gleaned intelligence from the goblin and Warg he encountered. Bilbo asks him what he did with them: “Come and see!’ said Beorn, and they followed round the house. A goblin’s head was stuck outside the gate and a Warg-skin was nailed to a tree just beyond. Beorn was a fierce enemy. But now he was their friend” (Tolkien, *The Hobbit* 123). It seems that, as a bear, Beorn remains fully man-like in his psychology. He is a key character in the novel, who aids the troupe enormously on their quest; he has strong moral and ethical characteristics, though they may not be what we would choose; and he is utterly like a man. The Lord of the Eagles and Beorn are Tolkien’s most fully anthropomorphised creatures. His attribution of sapience, or higher intelligence, to animal characters appears to be directly correlated to their importance in the story. We do not hear of intelligent beings who are not main characters. Those characters that are lesser within the narrative have commensurately lesser intellect: a degree of sentience sufficient only unto the role they fulfil in the novel. This seems to be the “rule” by which Tolkien has endowed his creatures with mentalities.

In *Their Earth* I have a simpler rule. Rather than use the degree to which any character influences the narrative as a guide to its sentient abilities, I have conceived of a world wherein all creatures are deemed intelligent, but our access to their thoughts and actions is governed by a capability that each may or may not possess: the “creaturespeak” talent. I therefore have animals appearing within my novel who do not possess the power to talk inter-species, just as there are humans within my novel who are unaware that “creaturespeak” exists. In this way, the world of my novel may coexist alongside the world of the

reader (reality). It aids the suspension of disbelief, as it is a world-within-a-world, where there are rules that explain why it is not accessible to all.

Alongside the inability of most humans to access “creaturespeak” is the accepted rule for all non-human creatures to keep their communicative abilities secret, as a means of self-preservation: “They surely don’t intend to reveal co-operation between creatures? I can’t imagine the public chaos if they do!” (McLaren 162) .

My narrator spends very little time on non-creaturespeaking animals: “There was a small, black cat, flat out and fast asleep, on what was clearly an operating table.” And later: “The lady took the little cat away and returned after a moment saying, ‘No, no micro-chip, madam. But if you’re sure you don’t want her, we’ll keep her here...’” (McLaren 33). Speaking animals are, however, treated with exactly the same attention to detail as their comparative human cast. This paragraph refers to a feline operative: “Now Artemis raced for her life, towards the arm of the lock ... she had no idea if she could crouch small enough inside to fully avoid prying beaks and talons, but there was no other shelter and she had no more time to think” (McLaren 70). As well as providing a little background information to situations, my narrator’s voice suggests a quiet good humour, offering the reader some warmth and companionship on the journey through the novel: “Mr T was not as agile as some cats. Nor was he as young as he once was, and nowadays walked with a slight waddle, due to living a life divided mostly between dozing and eating... Mr T shuffled about on the wall, conscious that his discomfort had little to do with being seated on bricks” (McLaren 9). At this highest end of the continuum there is no discernible difference between the anthropomorphism of Tolkien’s animals and my own. My

readers are allowed to see into the thoughts of my main animal characters, whereas in *The Hobbit* we see their actions and hear their words, but do not enter their points of view. This aside, the concept of a sapient being, who is able to fully communicate, is common in both works and hearkens back to our analogical fabulist roots.

Conclusion

Tolkien, as does any writer using animal characters, became part of a long-standing tradition of imputing our own drives, hopes and fears to our planetary cohabitants. Unlike the fabulists of old, however, in many of his creatures Tolkien attempts to do almost the reverse: he tries to inhabit their minds and demonstrate the attributes specific to that species as part of his portrayal. He keeps his more evolved animals truer to their real-life animal traits. On the surface, it might appear a curious choice – to invoke in his characters speech, thought and interactions with people – then make equal effort to retain their animalistic qualities, especially since he also portrays animal servants who walk upright and bear trays. Could it not, however, simply evidence a recognition that animals in the real world very probably have their own intelligence and motivations, which do not cease to exist simply because we do not have any mode of understanding them? They can be intelligent, and still remain animals, as aping humanity is not the only way to evidence self-determination.

The spectrum of differently portrayed species (mirroring reality, fable and even cartoon) might simply reflect the fact that, above all, *The Hobbit* is a story written to entertain. It seems to use all manner of visions to interest and entice a younger audience: “A coming of age story, a rollicking adventure tale, a delicious fantasy, and a droll commentary on human foibles — *The Hobbit* is all that” (Barron). My contention is merely that, in amongst these, Tolkien also appears to acknowledge the possibility of sentience, and even high intelligence, amongst other genera.

I chose *The Hobbit* for comparison as it seemed to me that, not only does it contain some forward-thinking philosophies concerning the natural world, but that my story is the natural descendent of Tolkien's speculation – just as Aesop is the literary progenitor of his. My work confirms the assumption (now proven) of sentience and also looks to the future possibility that other species might find a way, not just to communicate with us, but to influence our world and try to redress the mistakes that mankind has inflicted upon the planet as a whole.

Tolkien's work, and by implication my own, connects the past and the present through its focus on anthropomorphism. As long ago as Aesop's day, and deep in the Celtic tradition, story tellers gave animals the ability and right to function as social entities who were aware of themselves and who empathised with those around them. Writers reached out to their animal characters, as Tolkien has, and imbued them with similar traits to those encountered in humanity: the most familiar form of sapience for an author. This clearly anthropomorphises them. It makes them more human.

For a long time, it was assumed that to be more sentient did in fact equal being more human, as people were deemed the only life forms to possess this. Now, however, science is constantly discovering more examples of ways in which our animal cohabitants are thinking, feeling, remembering beings. Sapience is no longer the privilege of humans alone, and, while to anthropomorphise still means to make more human, we may soon need to define a further term to mean simply equally intelligent – with humans and others. "Scientists do have ample, detailed, empirical facts to declare that nonhuman animals are sentient beings, and with each study, there are fewer and fewer sceptics... Nonhuman

animals even worry ... ample evidence shows they do worry about their well-being" (Bekoff). Tolkien, and others like him throughout literary history, may be exhibiting a literary prescience of the real world in this respect. In the same way that Tolkien's animal characters appear to evolve along a continuum towards the sentient and the intellectual, so it seems we are now continuously discovering that more of our fellow species are increasingly cognitively and emotionally intelligent.

In my novel, I take Tolkien's vision of intellectual animals to one logical extension: I give the animals the right to try to influence the world. Much as HG Wells predicted aspects of modernity (*Handwerk*), perhaps the work of Tolkien and others affords us a glimpse of the future relationship between humans and our fellow creatures.

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Glossary of Terms as taken from the Oxford English Dictionary

Anthropomorphism: The attribution of human personality or characteristics to something non-human, as an animal, object, etc.

Bestiality: The nature or qualities of a beast; want of intelligence, irrationality, stupidity, brutality.

Emotional Intelligence: Perceptiveness and skill in dealing with emotions and interpersonal relationships; (now usually) spec. (orig. Psychology) the capacity to be aware of, manage, and express one's emotions, and to handle a variety of interpersonal situations in an intelligent, judicious, and empathetic manner. Popularized as a concept in the specific sense by Daniel Goleman's book *Emotional Intelligence* (see quot. 1995).

Evil: The antithesis of GOOD adj., n., adv., and int. in all its principal senses. In Old English, as in all the other early Germanic languages except Scandinavian, this word is the most comprehensive adjectival expression of disapproval, dislike, or disparagement. In mod. colloquial English it is little used, such currency as it has being due to literary influence. In quite familiar speech the adj. is commonly superseded by bad; the n. is somewhat more frequent, but chiefly in the widest senses, the more specific senses being expressed by other words, as harm, injury, misfortune, disease, etc. Morally depraved, bad, wicked, vicious. Also absol. Obsolete as applied to persons. Doing or tending to do harm; hurtful, mischievous, prejudicial. Of advice, etc.: Misleading. Of an omen, etc.: Boding ill.

Good: Good is the most general and most frequently used adjective of commendation in English, and one of the most common non-possessive adjectives in all periods from Old English to the present day. Almost all uses convey the sense of being of a high (or at least satisfactory) quality, useful for some purpose (specified, implied, or generally understood), and worthy of approval. Of a person: distinguished by admirable or commendable qualities; worthy, estimable, fine. As a term of general commendation or approval. In early use usually implying distinguished rank or valour; in later use typically suggestive of honest reliability or decency, or personal worth regardless of rank or status.

Intellect: That faculty, or sum of faculties, of the mind or soul by which a person knows and reasons; power of thought; understanding; analytic intelligence; (also) an instance of this. Occasionally used of an animal. Intellect generally excludes, and is sometimes distinguished from, sensation, imagination, and will. In extended use: intellect embodied; spec. (a) a being or spirit possessing understanding (obsolete); (b) a person of (usually great) intelligence; (also) such persons collectively.

Intelligence: The faculty of understanding; intellect. Also as a count noun: a mental manifestation of this faculty, a capacity to understand.

Personification: The attribution of human form, nature, or characteristics to something; the representation of a thing or abstraction as a person (esp. in a rhetorical figure or a metaphor)

Preternatural: Outside the ordinary course of nature; differing from or surpassing what is natural; unnatural; abnormal, exceptional, unusual (obsolete).

Sapience: Wisdom, understanding. (A learned synonym. Now rare in serious use.)

Sentience: The condition or quality of being sentient, consciousness, susceptibility to sensation.

Subliminal: Physiology. Of a sensory stimulus or sensory stimulation: below the threshold (limen) required for conscious perception. Also (more generally): below the threshold required to elicit a response. Cf. Supraliminal adj. Subconscious; of or relating to the subconscious. Esp. in subliminal self. Particularly associated with the psychological theories of F. W. H. Myers (1843–1901).

Vocalisation: Senses relating to utterance with the voice. Phonetics. The production or utterance of a sound or letter, esp. a consonant, with vibration of the vocal cords; conversion from voiceless to voiced. Expression in words or speech; articulation. Frequently with of. A call or other sound produced in the vocal tract by a bird, mammal, etc.; (sometimes also) any of various sounds produced by animals in other ways; (as a mass noun) sounds of this kind. Also: the action of uttering or producing such a sound.