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The spiritual Tolkien milieu : a study of fiction-based religion

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Chapter 12. Esoteric Historians on the 'Truth' Behind Tolkien's Elves

There exists a subgenre of alternative history – we can call it conspiracy genealogy – which purports to reveal the secret history of a royal (and potentially messianic and/or magical) bloodline. Since Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh, and Henry Lincoln's best-seller *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail* (1982), it has been genre convention that (a) the royal bloodline has survived to this day, (b) that the contemporary heirs are known to the authorities, but are being denied their birth right, and (c) that the bloodline can be traced back in history through various European dynasties (especially the Merovingians) to Jesus Christ and Mary Magdalene. Later writers have elaborated on this basic scheme and offer various views on exactly *who* can legitimately claim messianic heritage and on exactly *how* the lineage can be traced back and how far. Any book in the genre will offer a complicated genealogy including prestigious dynasties (Merovingians; Stewarts) and legendary peoples (such as the Tuatha Dé Dannan), seek the origin of the bloodline among ancient civilizations (Egypt; Mesopotamia), and claim that the bloodline's supporters and protectors throughout history have included secret societies (Knights Templar; Freemasons) and heretics (esp. the Cathars).

This chapter focuses on the work of conspiracy genealogists Laurence Gardner (who should not be confused with Gerald Gardner) and Nicholas de Vere, both of whom passed away while I was working on this book. Gardner styled himself Presidential Attaché to the European Council of Princes and Jacobite Historiographer Royal, and de Vere claimed to be HRH Nicholas II de Vere, Prince of Drakenburg, Hereditary Dragon Lord, and Grand Master of the Knights Templar. Besides being colourful figures, Gardner and de Vere are relevant for this thesis because they link Tolkien's literary mythology to their own pseudo-historical speculations. They have done so by demonstrating that certain motifs can be found both in Tolkien's narratives and in bloodline lore and by suggesting that Tolkien therefore must (or at least might) have known about the royal bloodline and consciously hinted at it in his books.

In the previous chapter I mentioned that Gardner and de Vere's esoteric historiography contributes to plausibility maintenance in the Elven movement. In the present chapter I analyse the content of Gardner's *Realm of the Ring Lords* (2000/2003) and de Vere's *The Dragon Legacy* (2004). In the cultic milieu in general, Gardner is the more influential and well-known of the two, but de Vere, who was an associate and informant of Gardner's before going solo, is interesting as well because he makes more sweeping claims about the bloodline, lead a political-religious organisation that claims to represent

it, and because he draws more extensively and explicitly on Tolkien's literary mythology to support his claims.

The writings of Gardner and de Vere differ in two related ways from (most of) the empirical material otherwise considered in part II of this thesis. First, Gardner and de Vere are not engaged in Tolkien spirituality in the strict sense of integrating elements from Tolkien's literary mythology into their beliefs and practices. They do not, for instance, make shamanic journeys to Middle-earth or worship Varda. Second, Tolkien's mythology occupies a different, indeed inverted, position in Gardner and de Vere's dynamics of belief compared to standard Tolkien spirituality. Normally, Tolkien spirituality involves, first, the integration of Tolkien elements into actual beliefs and practices, and, as a second step, a justification of the religious use of a fictional source. The alternative historians in this chapter, by contrast, have first developed their bloodline theories without integrating any Tolkien material, most strikingly ignoring Tolkien's Maian-Elven-human bloodline (cf. section 9.2.1). Only as a second step do Gardner and de Vere compare Tolkien's work with their own theories and *affix*, as it were, his work to their own. Reading Tolkien in the binocular mode, they invoke his works as sources of legitimisation, claiming that Tolkien consciously, but indirectly referred to the 'real' bloodline, i.e. the bloodline they themselves claim to reveal. It is therefore more precise to label the use of Tolkien's literary mythology by Gardner and de Vere as *Tolkien-affixing* rather than Tolkien-integrating.

The unusual position of Tolkien's mythology in the dynamics (or rhetoric) of belief of the conspiracy genealogists is reflected in the organisation of this chapter. The first and longest section analyses the conspiracy genealogy of Gardner and de Vere as Tolkien-affixing religion. After providing some necessary background information on conspiracy genealogy, I discuss Gardner's and de Vere's theories in turn with an emphasis on their legitimising use of Tolkien. A second section raises the questions *why* esoteric historians (can) use Tolkien's work as a source of legitimisation. I seek the answer in the authority and prestige which Tolkien's literary mythology and Tolkien himself enjoy within the cultic milieu.

12.1. The Elven Bloodline: Tolkien and Conspiracy Genealogy

12.1.1. The *Sang Réal*: Esoteric Speculations about a Secret Royal Bloodline

Gardner and de Vere draw on two established notions within conspiracy genealogy, namely that (a) the line of the Merovingian king Dagobert II secretly survived and that (b) Jesus Christ and Mary Magdalene married and had children. They also add many of their own ideas, but let me begin by introducing the Merovingian and messianic motifs.

The Merovingian motif is tied to Rennes-le-Château. This French hamlet rose to fame when Robert Charroux (1962) publicised Noël Corbu's claim that a nineteenth-century priest, Bérenger Saunière, had found a huge treasure here. The treasure legend

inspired Pierre Plantard to claim that some secret "parchments", originally recovered by Saunière, had come into his possession. Plantard's associate Gérard de Sède (1967) published the content of some of these parchments which allegedly demonstrated the survival of the line of Dagobert II, a 7th century Merovingian king of Austrasia (a part of the Frankish empire). Plantard hereby challenged the established view among historians that Dagobert II died without an heir, after which dominion over the Frankish empire gradually shifted from (another line of) Merovingian kings to their Mayors of the Palace, until one of the Mayors, Charles Martel, proclaimed himself Duke of the Franks and founded the Carolingian dynasty. According to Plantard, the truth about Dagobert II's rightful heir was purposely hidden by later Frankish and French kings, but the line survived as did knowledge of it. More than that, the parchments 'proved' that Plantard himself was a descendant of Dagobert II, and hence possibly the rightful heir to the throne of France.[341]

In their conspiracist best-seller *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail* (1982), Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh, and Henry Lincoln propagated Plantard's claim of descent from Dagobert II. To this they added the notion that the Merovingians (and thus Plantard) were in turn descendants of Jesus Christ and Mary Magdalene (Baigent, Leigh, and Lincoln 1982, esp. 274-276). The authors base their claim in part on a hagiography in Jacobus de Voragine's *The Golden Legend* (Jacobus 1993, I, 374-383; cf. Baigent, Leigh, and Lincoln 1982, 304, 342) in which we are told that Mary Magdalene was no whore, but "wellborn, descended of royal stock" (Jacobus 1993, I, 375). Jacobus further tells us that

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[341] Rennes-le-Château continues to be the centre of conspiracy theories involving leylines, UFOs, the Knights Templar, and more. Particularly interesting are two books about Rennes-le-Château written by Lionel Fanthorpe, an Anglican priest, science fiction author, and investigator of Fortean phenomena, together with his wife Patricia (1982; 1991). In these two books, the couple connects the "mysteries and secrets" of Rennes-le-Château to motifs in *LR* (they do not refer to *S*). The Fanthorpes consider it "a serious possibility" that Tolkien "may have known more than most about the mysteries of Rennes-le-Château" and hinted at this knowledge in his books (1991, 127). They suggest, for instance, that the reinstatement of Aragorn as the rightful king of Gondor after a long period in which the realm has been ruled by the Stewards could be a hint to the reinstatement of king Dagobert II after the exile forced upon him by his Mayor of the Palace, Grimoald the Elder (Fanthorpe and Fanthorpe 1982, 38-40; 1991, 127). That could very well be, but it would be uncontroversial, for historians agree that Dagobert II was probably exiled and reinstated; historians disagree with conspiracy theorists only regarding the notion that Dagobert II should have had a secret heir. The Fanthorpes also note that Tolkien's detailed description of the magical door through which the fellowship enters the Mines of Moria closely resembles the watermarks in one of Sir Francis Bacon's books and speculate that Tolkien might have been initiated into the use of this enigmatic watermark code (1982, 90; 1991, 92-94). The connection of the watermark code to Rennes-le-Château remains vague, however, the logic being seemingly that all esoteric things are connected and that Bacon, because he used watermark codes, must have known the secrets of Rennes-le-Château as well. The Fanthorpes generally assume that Tolkien and many other fiction authors, including C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, George MacDonald, and especially Victor Hugo, possessed esoteric knowledge that they hinted at in their books (1982, 100-103; 1991, 127-128). What that knowledge exactly is and what the hints are supposed to mean remains unclear.

as a result of the persecution of Christ's followers, Mary Magdalene and many other disciples were captured and put out to sea on a ship without pilot. Their captors intended them to succumb, but by God's will the steer-less ship was guided to Marseilles where the disciples landed and where Mary lived until her death and preached the gospel (Jacobus 1993, I, 376).[342]

Baigent, Leigh, and Lincoln consider Jacobus' legend to be based on fact. They also hold that another legend, which adds that Mary Magdalene was accompanied by Joseph of Arimathea and the Grail, has an historical core (Baigent, Leigh, and Lincoln 1982, 433). To this, they add a motif of their own invention, namely that the Grail was not a cup that held Jesus' blood, but that it really referred to Mary and Jesus' offspring. According to Baigent, Leigh, and Lincoln, this truth about Christ's lineage had been preserved but obscured in the grail mythology which mistook references to a royal bloodline (a *sang réal*) for references to a Holy Grail (a *san greal*).[343] As they explain, the grail bloodline can be qualified as royal, not (just) because of Jesus' alleged divinity or messianic status, but also because both Mary (cf. Jacobus) and Jesus (through Joseph and David, cf. Luke 2:4) were of royal blood. Since Mary was thought to have lived in Southern France, the messianic bloodline could easily be linked to the Merovingians.[344] Baigent, Leigh, and Lincoln further developed their bloodline ideas and linked them to various other conspiracy theories in *The Messianic Legacy* (1986). Dan Brown later popularised the *sang réal* tradition with his novel *The Da Vinci Code* (2003).

12.1.2. Laurence Gardner's *Realm of the Ring Lords* as Tolkien-affixing Conspiracy Genealogy

Laurence Gardner has written three books about the secret bloodline. In the first, *Bloodline of the Holy Grail* (1996), Gardner adopted the notion of a messianic *sang réal* from Baigent and associates, but did not mention Plantard's claims. This was probably because Plantard, in reaction to *The Holy Blood and The Holy Grail*, had publicly professed that his parchments were forgeries (Introvigne 2005). Gardner instead supported Michel Roger Lafosse, another doubtful throne contender who claimed to be the rightful

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[342] Jacobus was a Dominican monk from Varazze, a city close to Genoa, and his legend collection reflects this geographical fact. Marseille is a large and ancient port city not far from Varazze.

[343] The Grail was introduced as a literary motif with Chrétian de Troyes's *Perceval ou Le conte du Graal* (*c.* 1190) and subsequently became a key motif in a cycle of medieval romances. In these romances, written against the backdrop of the crusades and often commissioned by crusader patrons, the Grail became related to the Holy Land and identified as a cup owned by Joseph of Arimathea (Wood 2000, 171).

[344] As Wood points out, Baigent, Leigh, and Lincoln's combination of the Merovingian and messianic motifs was probably also indebted to the anthroposophist Walter Johannes Stein (1928) who had identified the grail guardians as Charlemagne's heirs (Wood 2000, 183).

Jacobite heir to the Kingdom of Scotland.[345] In two later books, *The Genesis of the Grail Kings* (1999) and *Realm of the Ring Lord* (2000/2003), Gardner went beyond the information received from Lafosse, and traced the bloodline back to ancient times. In these books, he claimed to reveal material about the bloodline which had not before been published, but which had been kept safe in the archives of "the Imperial and Royal Dragon Court" (1999, xv). These very pompously sounding archives were in fact Nicholas de Vere's family archives. Gardner thanks "HRH Prince Nicholas de Vere von Drakenberg" for granting him access to these archives (1999, xviii), and de Vere in turn expresses his appreciation of Gardner's work in a foreword. *Realm of the Ring Lords* was first published in 2000 by Multi MediaQuest International with the subtitle *The Myth and Magic of the Grail Quest*, but was reissued in 2003 by Element, an imprint of HarperCollins. HarperCollins, who also publish all Tolkien's works, took advantage of the strongly increased interest in Tolkien which the *LR* movies had generated after the initial publication of *Realm* by marketing the book as the true story behind Tolkien's fiction. Already in the original edition, Gardner had discussed Tolkien in the main text, but now the book was given a new subtitle, *The Ancient Legacy of the Ring and the Grail*, and a new front cover prominently featuring a ring very similar to The One Ring in the movies. Furthermore, the new back cover promised that the book reveals the "magical history of the Ring Lords" which is "alluded to in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*".

In Gardner's take on the *sang réal* the bloodline from Christ via the Merovingians (from the Rennes-le-Château tradition) is related to the Tuatha Dé Dannan. He is not interested in the Tuatha Dé Dannan as conquerors of Ireland, however, but frames them as important bloodline ancestors and pushes their origin back to ancient Mesopotamia. The bloodline is ultimately claimed to originate with the "Ring Lords" who from their homeland in Scythia descended into Sumer where they were worshipped as gods.[346] Gardner variously refers to the bloodline as the Grail bloodline (cf. the *sang réal*

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[345] Lafosse, who styles himself HRH Prince Michael of Albany, also claims to be the president of the European Council of Princes. It was the cooperation with Lafosse which earned Gardner the dubious titles of Jacobite Historiographer Royal of the Royal House of Stewart (of which Lafosse claims to be the head) and Presidential Attaché to the European Council of Princes (of which Lafosse claims to be the president). Historians dismiss Lafosse's claims. The European Council of Princes, if the organisation exists at all, has no formal power.

[346] The location of the origin of the Dragon/Grail bloodline in the East seems to be inspired by theosophical speculations about the Aryan root race (cf. Trompf 2006, 282-285; Ellwood 1986, 87-102) and by Ludwig E. Iselin (1909) and Emma Jung and Marie Louise von Franz' (1960) theory that the grail myth could be traced back via the Persians to Genghis Khan (cf. Wood 2000, 184). Another possible source of inspiration is C. Scott Littleton's thesis that the legends about the Holy Grail and the Knights of the Round Table have their origin among the Sarmatians, a Scythian people, and that they were brought to Britain by a group of Sarmatian auxiliaries, led by Lucius Artorius Castor, who settled in Britain in the second century (Littleton and Thomas 1978; Littleton and Malcor 1994). In any case, Gardner places the origins of the bloodline in Scythia, though he explicitly dismisses Littleton's idea that there should be a connection between Artorius and Arthur (2003, 92-93).

tradition), the Elven bloodline (cf. the Tuatha motif), and the Dragon bloodline (cf. de Vere's notion of a Royal Dragon Court). Gardner's merging of traditions into one genealogical synthesis is based on the synonymisation of peoples, on the selective and creative use of sources, and on imagined etymological connections – obviously the Scots must descend from the Scythians, for what else can explain the similar names?

Gardner's bloodline begins with the Anunnaki. The Anunnaki were worshipped as gods in ancient Sumer, but Gardner asserts that they were in reality "the remnants of an advanced earthly [rather than heavenly] race" (2003, 26). Gardner further identifies the Anunnaki with our familiar Tuatha Dé Dannan, but he renders their name "Tuadhe d'Anu". This is significant, because Gardner thus transforms the people of the European goddess Danu into the people of the male Mesopotamian god Anu (2003, 31). With a further move of synonymisation, he considers Elohim to be the Hebrew word for the Anunnaki/Tuadhe tribe (Gardner 2003, 25).[347] Since Elohim is claimed to mean "the Shining Ones", and since the elves share both this epithet and the first two letters of their name with the Elohim, Gardner sees reason to believe that the elves of the Anglo-Saxon tradition (and by implication the Celtic fairies as well) and the Elohim refer to the same actual people (2003, 25).[348] These synonymisations are further strengthened by the adoption of Margaret Murray's (1921) identification of the elves/fairies with the Picts (or Picts-*sidhe* or pixies; Gardner 2003, 32, 76).[349] Gardner considers the Picts (or at least their kings) to be descendants of those of the Tuadhe d'Anu who conquered Ireland as told in *The Book of Invasions* (cf. section 10.2.1 above). All in all we have the following chain of synonymisations: Anunnaki = Tuadhe d'Anu = Elohim = Elves = Picts.[350]

Gardner claims to reconstruct the true story about the Tuadhe d'Anu behind the Christianised version in *The Book of Invasions* (2003, 77). This 'reconstruction' involves taking the Tuatha, together with the peoples with whom they are synonymised, and domesticating them in the light of contemporary bloodline speculations. Most importantly, Gardner reinterprets the Tuatha's source of distinctiveness by investing the term *sídhe* (which he renders 'Sidhé') with a new meaning. Rather than meaning hollow hill, *sídhe* originally, claims Gardner, referred to a special magical power, "a transcendent intellect" which was called "the Web of the Wise" (2003, 32). This resemantisation of the concept *sídhe* implies also a resemantisation of the Tuatha who, according to Gardner,

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[347] In the Hebrew Bible, the term Elohim is used to refer both to pagan gods, to the one God of Israel, and to earthly rulers.

[348] It is actually the *sídhe* in Celtic folklore rather than the Anglo-Saxon *álfar* (Elves) who are traditionally referred to as the Shining Ones, but that does not concern Gardner who considers the folklore on *sídhe*, fairies, and elves to refer to the same actual human race.

[349] The Pictish connection is important to back up Lafosse's claim to throne of Scotland (Gardner 1996) and to inscribe the British de Vere family into the bloodline (Gardner 1999; 2003).

[350] Gardner's complicated genealogy also includes Christ, Vlad Dracula, Robin Hood, and many other historical and legendary figures of renown.

together with all other members of the bloodline shared the *sídhe* power which Gardner supposes to be situated in the mitochondrial DNA (2003, 14, 29, 51). Besides granting magical powers, the special *sídhe*-DNA gives members of the bloodline a very long lifespan. These effects were most visible long ago, before the blood was diluted through marriages with families outside the *sang réal*. Gardner explains the fact that the Tuatha were sometimes referred to as the *sídhe* as a mistaken meronymy, i.e. that the race became known by the name of the power which made them special (2003, 32).

By attributing magical powers to the bloodline, Gardner goes an important step further than Baigent, Leigh, and Lincoln for whom the bloodline is merely royal. Gardner's addition also makes the members of the bloodline more similar to Tolkien's Quendi. Like Gardner's Tuatha d'Anu, Tolkien's Quendi possess magical powers, a long life span, and the ability to interbreed with normal humans (cf. section 9.2.1 above).

According to Gardner, the similarity between Tolkien's fictional Quendi and the 'real' Elven/Grail/Dragon bloodline is not coincidental. On the contrary, Gardner believes that Tolkien intended his Quendi to hint at the true bloodline in two ways. First and most importantly, Gardner points out that Tolkien's Quendi do not resemble the diminutive fairies of folklore, but the 'real' Tuadhe d'Anu, being physical beings of human stature, but with innate magical powers and a long lifespan (Gardner 2003, 32). Such a similarity, runs the argument, can only mean that Tolkien knew about the bloodline and cautiously, but consciously referred to it, i.e. in the binocular mode.[351] Secondly, Gardner finds it striking that Tolkien has estimated that the events of *LR* took place around 4,000 BC, roughly at the time when Gardner's Anunnaki enter the scene (2003, 6). It is true that Tolkien in a letter playfully made such an estimate (*Letters* 283), but that should be read in the context of his feigned history ploy (cf. section 7.3.1 above and section 15.1 below). Gardner refers to David Day, an author of popular books on Tolkien's mythological sources who discusses this letter, but fails to acknowledge that also Day writes tongue-in-cheek.[352]

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[351] Though I cannot demonstrate it, it is of course possible that the similarity between Gardner's bloodline and Tolkien's Quendi is due to Gardner being inspired by Tolkien, possibly via de Vere. Just as likely, Gardner and Tolkien were simply inspired by the same stock of mythological sources.

[352] Day wrote that "Tolkien estimates [that] our own historic time was some six thousand years after the Third Age. […] So, like those who attempt to date the creation of the world back through the texts of the Bible, we may now reckon the time of Tolkien's War of the Ring at something between 4000 and 5000 BC; while the creation of his world of Arda must be placed at 41,000 BC" (1994, 13; 2003, 14). Possibly inspired by Gardner, also other Tolkien religionists refer to this passage of Day's to back up a more or less historical reading of Tolkien's literary mythology.

12.1.3. Nicholas de Vere's *The Dragon Legacy* as Tolkien-affixing Conspiracy Genealogy

The collaboration between Gardner and de Vere seems to have gone awry. Gardner, who thanked de Vere in his 1999-book, does not mention him with a single word in the 2003-book though he still refers to material from de Vere's 'archives'. De Vere, on his side, went solo and published *The Dragon Legacy* (2004). 'Revealing' new and exclusive information from the "family records", de Vere made even grander claims than Gardner, especially about himself. De Vere claimed to belong to a "senior" lineage of the Dragon bloodline (2004, 34) and to be the head of The Imperial and Royal Dragon Court of the Dragon Sovereignty, an organisation allegedly founded in 1408 (2004, 23). Together with "H.E. Count" Michael Hunter, de Vere later published a sequel, *The Dragon Cede* (De Vere and Hunter 2011), which tracks the "Fairy Bloodlines of Houses Vere, Weir and Collison" in great detail and includes additional essays by Hunter and other Dragons together with Tracy R. Twyman's interview with de Vere, entitled "My Kingdom is not of this World" (de Vere 2011).

A portion of de Vere's first book, *The Dragon Legacy*, was originally self-published on the Internet under the title *From Transylvania to Tunbridge Wells*. Both books were later published in printed form with The Book Tree, a minor American publisher of "metaphysical, spiritual, and controversial books", according to its homepage.[353] The books appear completely unedited, have no bibliography, and the genealogical charts in *The Dragon Legacy* are of such poor quality that they are barely readable (this last problem does not mare *The Dragon Cede*). In all these respects, de Vere's books are strikingly different from Gardner's. The content is intriguing, however, because de Vere himself claimed to belong to the bloodline and thus speaks in this book from an insider position that is more radical than Gardner's. Furthermore, and perhaps to trump Gardner, de Vere claims that some of his knowledge has been achieved "from the application of the Derkesthai phenomenon" (2004, 4), i.e. the special magical (and divinatory) faculty that members of the Dragon bloodline possess and which Gardner referred to as the Sidhé or transcendent intellect.[354]

De Vere's Dragon bloodline is constructed in much the same way as Gardner's lineage, but de Vere goes beyond Gardner in four ways. First, he pushes the beginning of the bloodline further back to a postulated Derkesthai culture blossoming from 10,000 BC onwards. As de Vere-disciple Tracy R. Twyman puts it in her foreword,

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[353] See http://thebooktree.com/ [280214].

[354] De Vere and his followers refer to the bloodline as the Dragon bloodline, but contrary to self-identified Dragons in the Otherkin community, they do not claim to possess a dragon soul or anything of that sort. The Dragon bloodline bears its name because it is ultimately traced back to Tiamat, the Dragon Queen, of whom de Vere claims that she was a queen of the Dragon race who unfairly became mythologised as a chaos monster in Mesopotamian mythology.

> [d]e Vere paint[s] a picture of the beginnings of the Grail bloodline in an antediluvian civilization, with a super-human, red-haired race of Grail kings that conquered and ruled over the primitive hordes of the ancient world, with tribes on each continent. They were overseers, "navigators", directing the affairs of the world with the Solomonic wisdom inherent in their blood. They watched over a perfect caste-ordered society, in which all people worked and lived within their proper station, creating a harmonious, inter-dependent and respectful relationship between the classes. They created all of the traditions, customs and institutions upon which civilization depends, and of which our current traditions, customs and institutions are pathetic bastardizations (Twyman 2004, 8).

Second, de Vere develops the notion that members of the bloodline possess an innate magical faculty. Like Gardner, de Vere biologises this faculty and claims that only Dragons with "the right blood serum [and] the right connections in their cerebral lobes" can work magic (2004, 25). Contrary to Gardner, however, who seems to believe that the blood of contemporary Dragons is so diluted that little of this power remains (just as the lifespan of Dragons today is no longer extraordinarily long), de Vere insists that Dragons, at least those of the purer or senior lineages such as his own, still possess substantial magical capacities (cf. Twyman 2004, 8).[355] By making a deft distinction between the inclusive category of individuals with some measure of Dragon blood – a category to which ten per cent of the European population allegedly belongs[356] – and the exclusive category of senior lineages with serious magical abilities, de Vere offers his followers an identity of superiority compared to normal people while effectively monopolising charisma within his movement.

Third, de Vere makes it clear that the Dragons originally constituted a non-human species, though they were evidently able to procreate with humans. Gardner had referred to the Anunnaki as "the King tribe" (2003, 32), suggesting that they were a special, but still human tribe. De Vere adds to this account that the King tribe originated through the "hybridisation" of ordinary humans and an entirely non-human species "that scientists now assert preceded the human genetic bottleneck by about thirty thousand years" (2011, 56). As de Vere himself points out, this non-human component of the Dragon bloodline explains why the elves of legend are reported to have special physical features. It also makes his account more similar to Tolkien's notion of the Line of Lúthien (cf. section 9.2.1)

Finally, de Vere went beyond Gardner in that he had political ambitions of realising the 'natural' caste-ordered and monarchic Derkesthai society with himself as

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[355] De Vere believes that the so-called witches of the Middle Ages belonged to the bloodline and therefore possessed real magical powers. He is therefore particularly dismissive of Gerald Gardner's "inauthentic witchcraft" that allows the initiation of non-Dragons (De Vere 2004, 25, 29-32).

[356] De Vere told Twyman that much in an interview in 2004 for the conspiracy theory magazine *Paranoia* and also claimed that scholars from Oxford University had established this fact (De Vere 2011, 66).

king. De Vere claimed that a first step in this political process had been taken when Drakenberg (which he also refers to as Lothlórien), the Nation State of the Dragon Peoples, had been officially recognised by one Western government in 1997 (he conveniently avoided to tell which one) (2004, 323).[357]

If the self-identified Elves of the previous chapter raised subcultural capital by casting the Elven race as superior, ancient, and bestowed with the mission to educate humanity, de Vere takes this effort to the second power by claiming to possess the legitimate authority and innate magical powers of the Elven/Dragon Bloodline. The self-identified Elves recognise themselves in de Vere's claims that the Elves/Dragons guard the ancient wisdom and possess innate magical abilities, but most distance themselves from de Vere's dreams of the righteous hegemony of a superior race. Nevertheless, de Vere's political vision appeals to a portion of the Pagan right-wing, and some Tolkien religionists are clearly fascinated. For example, Lomelindo, who was a member of Ilsaluntë Valion when I talked to him in 2009, claimed to descend from the Merovingians himself, professed to be a monarchist on his Facebook profile, and made claims about his family ancestry that were almost *verbatim* loans from de Vere's book. Lomion/Adam Hayden, a former member of Tië eldaliéva, is now involved in the Imperial and Royal Dragon Court, a rival to de Vere's organisation of the same name.[358]

In a chapter entitled "Myth or Reality? The World of J.R.R. Tolkien", de Vere relates Tolkien's narratives to his theories. He does so in much greater detail than Gardner, drawing extensively on *S* where Gardner uses only *LR*. De Vere's strategy is similar to Gardner's, however, and consists mostly of identifying concepts in Tolkien's literary mythology which are similar to concepts in other lore, and of ascribing significance to these similarities. For instance, de Vere points out that Tolkien's Ainur resemble the Anunnaki both in name and function; that the Valar might be related to Vala, a Vedic demon slain by Indra; and that the term Maiar resembles both Maja, a Spanish female line of nobility and royalty, *magus* (magician), and *mana*, a term which de Vere understands as the "spirit of the god carried in the blood" (2004, 215-217). De Vere does not think it a coincidence that the most powerful Valar, the Aratar, are eight in number as are the Anunnaki,[359] nor that the very name Aratar is similar to the Hindu concept Avatar. Also the Quendi are sought connected to the Anunnaki with whom they suppo-

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[357] De Vere's theory thus inverts the standard conspiracy model. Political conspiracy theories are usually concerned with an elite group that controls (or attempts to control) the world unrightfully and should therefore be revealed and disposed of. De Vere twists this scenario by postulating instead the existence of a persecuted elite group with a *right to rule*. There is still a conspiracy, namely one suppressing this natural right, but the desired outcome of revealing the conspiracy is not a simple abolishment of an undue state-of-affairs, but the substitution of an illegitimate hegemony for a rightful one.

[358] Se http://imperialandroyaldragoncourt.ning.com/ [280214].

[359] The number of the Anunnaki varies in different Mesopotamian myths; that there are exactly eight Anunnaki is de Vere's interpretation. Laurence Gardner claims that the Anunnaki were nine in number, as this fits his numerological speculations better (2003, 51-53).

sedly share the epithet "People of the Stars". It is apparent to de Vere that the Edain, the purest race of men, must have come from Biblical Eden, and that Tolkien's Avallónë is a rendering of Avalon.

It is beyond doubt that Tolkien's Avallónë is based on Avalon, and de Vere may indeed have encountered other real loans of Tolkien's as well. It is no secret that Tolkien was inspired by mythology, but de Vere draws a bold conclusion from his findings. He states: "Tolkien, in his epic works, with their plethora of borrowed names and borrowed linguistics and their elder and younger races, is obviously writing about the family [=the Dragon bloodline]" (De Vere 2004, 217). That is to say that according to de Vere, Tolkien did not only draw on the world's mythologies, he probably knew about the Dragon bloodline and borrowed from secret "Dragon lore" as well. De Vere believes that the true Middle-earth lay around the Caspian Sea and that the Third Age of Middle-earth corresponds with the Derkesthai golden age around 10,000 BC (2004, 324). He is cautious enough to state that Tolkien cannot be used as a "scholarly resource" on the history of the Dragon people, but bold enough to contend that Tolkien's work "uses aspects of lore that exist in human history" (De Vere 2004, 325).

12.2. Why Refer to Tolkien? Tolkien's Literary Mythology as a Source of Legitimisation in Conspiracy Genealogy

Laurence Gardner and Nicholas de Vere do not consider Tolkien's literary mythology to reveal the historical facts about the bloodline in a straightforward, literal-affirmative sense. Even so, they invoke Tolkien as a fellow esotericist and ally and ascribe a derived factuality of the binocular-affirmative sort to his works. In particular, they suggest that Tolkien's human-like Elves were intended to indirectly reveal the truth *that* a special bloodline exists. In other words, Gardner and de Vere claim to expose the historical truth behind Tolkien's Elven race, a truth which they furthermore claim that Tolkien knew of, though he for some reason chose not to unveil it in full.

In previous chapters we have encountered claims about Tolkien's alleged esoteric knowledge that are similar to those put forward by Gardner and de Vere. The Tribunal of the Sidhe claims that Tolkien knew about the kin folk and wrote their history in mythic form. Many self-identified Elves similarly assert that Tolkien intentionally conveyed the real truth about an elder race, though he overlaid this truth with a fictional varnish. Gardner and de Vere's claims about Tolkien as an esoteric historian are thus not unique, but the context in which these claims are put forward differs from the context in which similar claims are made by self-identified Changelings and Elves. The spirituality and identity of the Tribunal members and the self-identified Elves is clearly inspired by Tolkien's narratives, a fact which they *have to* justify by asserting that Tolkien's text is in some way more than fiction. Gardner and de Vere, by contrast, construct their bloodline without using Tolkien – de Vere claims, for instance, to descend from Anu and Robin

Hood (2004, 389, 419), but not from Aragorn and do not *need* to affix Tolkien material to their bloodline speculation. Yet they do so and even consider it a form of proof when they are able to point out similarities between their own ideas and Tolkien's narratives. The question therefore arises: What do Gardner and de Vere (attempt to) gain from using Tolkien's work as a source of legitimisation? How can they legitimise their speculations with reference to a fictional text when the religious use of the very same text is usually itself considered to be in need of justification?

The answer must be sought in the massive prestige and authority which Tolkien's literary mythology and Tolkien himself enjoy throughout the cultic milieu – also far beyond the spiritual Tolkien milieu *sensu stricto*. It is useful to consider in turn the authority enjoyed by Tolkien's narratives and by Tolkien himself as author and scholar, though of course the two aspects are connected and reinforce each other in practice.

In the cultic milieu in general, Tolkien's literary mythology occupies a special position fiction and myth, not the least because of especially *S*'s architextual and hypertextual relation to conventional mythology (cf. section 9.3 above). Even outside the spiritual Tolkien milieu proper, Neo-Pagans (cf. ch. 8), theosophists, Jungians, and others (cf. section 0.2.2) consider Tolkien's narratives to be "mythopoeic fiction" and approach them either in the mythopoeic mode, as narratives in which archetypal powers reveal themselves, or in the binocular mode, as rewritings of more fundamental myths. Gardner and de Vere adopt the binocular approach and read Tolkien's narratives as fictional palimpsests, thus following a reputable custom within the cultic milieu. Contrary to the Neo-Pagans, however, but similar to many self-identified Elves, they take Tolkien's literary mythology be to a palimpsest of original sources which in turn must be read historically or euhemeristically rather than mytho-cosmologically or mythopoeically.[360] Concretely, Gardner expresses his view that Tolkien's narratives that "*The Lord of the Rings* constitutes a modern rendering of the world's greatest mythological tradition and should rightly be placed with the classics of the genre, from Homer to Malory" (2003, 315). This is so, because for Gardner, the term mythology does not stand in opposition to historiography. On the contrary, Gardner considers the works of both Homer and Malory to be "qualified lore of the most ancient kind" (2003, 315) which preserve a core of historical truth about the 'original' "Ring of Power and Divine Justice" held by Anu in ancient Mesopotamia (2003, 314). Since *LR*, according to Gardner, emerged from "research, linguistic study and general enthusiasm for all things related to the Ring [i.e. Anu's]", Tolkien's works, while themselves fictional palimpsests, contain within them a derived factuality. It is the status of Tolkien's narratives as derived mythology which makes it possible to enlist them as a source of legitimisation by Gardner and de Vere.

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[360] This illustrates that a binocular reading of Tolkien's literary mythology can be combined with readings of the alleged source in any of the four referential reading modes, mytho-historical, mytho-cosmological, mythopoeic, and euhemeristic.

If the prestige of Tolkien's mythology is partly derived from its sources, another part is tied to Tolkien himself as author and, most importantly, as scholar. Tolkien's authority as professor in Oxford adds legitimacy to his fiction, and Gardner and de Vere take advantage of this. By citing Tolkien's writings, even his fictional ones, they seek to rub off some of his authority as a scholar of mythology and philology onto their own claims about myth and etymology. Rather than a random add-on or simple marketing trick, Gardner and de Vere's references to Tolkien must therefore be seen as part of their strategic staging of themselves as scholars.[361] The fact that neither Gardner nor de Vere refers to the *LR* movies, demonstrates that they were interested in enlisting the prestige already held by Tolkien's writings, not in selling books to people who were being introduced to Tolkien's world through the movies.[362]

Gardner and de Vere cannot backup their claims with references to conventional scholarship, for such scholarship does not support their claims. They are therefore forced to refer instead to 'stigmatised' scholarship (cf. section 11.3.2), such as Murray's and Graves', which supports the claim that an Elven bloodline exists. Gardner and de Vere also cite Tolkien's narratives because they, even though they are fictional, have two advantages as legimatory sources compared to stigmatised scholarship. These advantages have to do with Tolkien's person. One advantage is that Tolkien was a respected scholar and still is, while the theories of Murray and Gardner are rejected by mainstream scholarship. While references to Murray will be considered authoritative within the cultic milieu, references to Tolkien are likely to be more edible for readers who are not already convinced, prior to reading Gardner or de Vere, that a special bloodline exists. Another advantage is that presenting Tolkien's narratives as suppressed knowledge in the form of parable gives great interpretive freedom. Based on the fact that Tolkien was an expert on mythology, languages, and all ancient things, one can easily assume that if a secret bloodline exists, Tolkien must have known about it though he did not dare reveal the truth openly and risk his job and academic standing. Fortunately for Gardner and de Vere, Tolkien nowhere makes the alleged sub-text explicit (because there never was one), and they are therefore free to construct claims about Tolkien's esoteric message, claims that are conveniently unfalsifiable. Again, when trying to persuade those who are not already convinced, it is more attractive to claim that Tolkien's narratives have a secret message than to cite non-fictional and falsifiable claims such as Murray's. Furthermore, Tolkien is dead and cannot object to the esoteric charisma which is ascribed to him. And according to good conspiracy logic any dismissals of Tolkien's esoteric convictions on

[361] Gardner, and to a lesser extent de Vere, consciously stage themselves as scholars through the use of genealogical charts and references. Gardner's books also include footnotes and a bibliography.

[362] The 2003-reissue of *Realm of the Ring Lords* by HarperCollins seems to have been designed to profit from the Tolkien-craze generated by the movies (cf. the section 12.1.2), but that was not Gardner's original intention.

behalf of the Tolkien estate or official biographers can be taken as further proof that the establishment is attempting to silence the truth.

In this chapter and the two preceding ones we have seen that an important religious affordance of Tolkien's literary mythology is the attractive identity provided by his Elves, the Quendi. We know from the Elf Queen's Daughters and Laurence Gardner that identification with Tolkien's Elves is possible on the basis of *LR* alone; but the Silver Elves, the Tribunal of the Sidhe, and Nicholas de Vere's writings have demonstrated that individuals who maintain their Elven identity over time typically draw on *S* to do so. In the previous chapters we have also seen that elements from the narrative religion of *S*, especially concerning the Valar, are sometimes integrated into the religious beliefs and practices of self-identified Elves and other Tolkien religionists.

It is still too early to evaluate the four hypotheses on *S*-based religion which I formulated at the end of chapter 9 (i.e. introduction of Valar-directed rituals; substitution of the binocular approach to Tolkien's literary mythology for a mytho-cosmological or mytho-historical approach; increased identification with the Elves; and emergence of a Christian wing of Tolkien spirituality). Before we can do so, we must complete the survey of *S*-based Tolkien religion with an analysis of how contemporary magicians have incorporated elements from Tolkien's literary mythology into their ritual practice.