
Character Biography

Amrod and Amras

By Dawn Felagund

Amrod and Amras are the youngest sons of Fëanor. As twins, one is never mentioned without the other over the course of *The Silmarillion*, and they play only a small role in the published book. However, J.R.R. Tolkien envisioned other--often conflicting or sinister--roles for the twins over the course of his development of *The Silmarillion*.

Along with their older brothers, Amrod and Amras followed their father Fëanor in taking the oath of the Fëanorians and fleeing to Beleriand in pursuit of Morgoth and the stolen Silmarils. After the rescue of their eldest brother Maedhros from Morgoth's torment, the eastern lands were divided among the sons of Fëanor, and Amrod and Amras jointly ruled the southernmost realm, holding the lands east of Doriath and west of Ossiriand. The twins had few followers, and those people who did follow them tended to be widely scattered, but their realm was regarded as wild and beautiful, and others of the Noldor would journey great distances to visit it. Likewise, the twins enjoyed their realm and became known as great hunters in Middle-earth.

While the sons of Fëanor tended to be involved with most of the political and military doings of the First Age, Amrod and Amras only rarely came north during the Siege of Angband. With their brothers, they fought in the Battle of Unnumbered Tears, and like their brothers, both emerged alive, though wounded. With Caranthir, they managed to keep the southern part of their realm free from evil after Morgoth's victory. They participated in both the Doriath and Sirion kinslayings as well, and at Sirion--a battle where some of the followers of Fëanor rebelled and fought against their own people--both twins were killed.

While the twins' functions in the final version are almost negligible, some of the *History of Middle-earth* material tracing the evolution of *The Silmarillion* suggests that J.R.R. Tolkien had more extensive roles in mind for them. In both the *Annals of Beleriand* (HoMe 4) and the *Later Annals of Beleriand* (HoMe 5), the twins are portrayed as the most aggressive of the four remaining sons of Fëanor at the attacks at Sirion. Maedhros and Maglor, by contrast, give only "reluctant aid," with Maedhros going so far as to forswear his oath prior to the attack; the attack is spurred by the twins, who pay for their aggression with death.

Further development of the twins' characters takes an even more sinister turn as J.R.R. Tolkien turned his attention to etymology and history of the names of the sons of Fëanor. Presented in *The Shibboleth of Fëanor* in Volume 12, this version of the twins' tale begins at their birth, when their mother Nerdanel gave them their mother names. At first, since they were twins, she gave them the same name: *Ambarussa*. Fëanor, however, asked that Nerdanel give each of them their own name. She chose to call one *Umbarto*, which meant "Fated," claiming that time would tell who should most appropriately bear it. Fëanor, displeased with the ominous implications, changed the name of the youngest to *Ambarto*. Still, Nerdanel claimed that Fëanor's ploy could not alter their destiny. One brother would remain "Fated," and time would decide which.

According *The Shibboleth of Fëanor*, neither twin would to use the name *Ambarto*. The twins called each other *Ambarussa*, and based on notes in *The Shibboleth*, it is a safe assumption

that the rest of the family did as well. In this version of the tale, the elder twin's hair darkened and he became closer with his father while, presumably, the younger remained closer with his mother.

After the rebellion of the Noldor, before they began their march north along the coast of Aman, Nerdanel approached Fëanor and begged him to leave her the twins--or one of them--claiming that one would never set foot in Middle-earth. Fëanor refused her request, and the two parted in bitterness. After the kinslaying, the youngest twin Ambarto was the most dismayed by his father's actions at Alqualondë and harbored the secret thought to sail home to Aman and his mother. For this purpose--though claiming reason of comfort--he slept aboard the ships on the night that Fëanor burned them, a fact that was unknown to all save his brother Ambarussa. When morning came, only six of the seven sons of Fëanor could be found, and Ambarussa went pale, asking Fëanor, "Did you not then rouse Ambarussa my brother (whom you called Ambarto)?" and at Fëanor's answer that he'd burned that ship first, proclaimed his father fell and fey.

This dark story never appeared in the published *Silmarillion*, and the twins have only minimal roles in the published material. Christopher Tolkien further suggests in the *Maeglin* section of Volume XI that J.R.R. Tolkien may have considered having both twins to die in the burning at Losgar. It may have been his indecision over what roles the twins would play in the story that resulted in their infrequent appearances in *The Silmarillion* and myriad roles in the early drafts.

About the Author

Dawn Felagund is the founder and owner of the Silmarillion Writers' Guild and has authored more than thirty stories based on J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Silmarillion*, some of which have been translated and published in fan magazines around the world. These days, she directs her fannish energies towards research projects and developing the SWG into a fun and valuable group for *Silmarillion* fans. Dawn can be emailed at DawnFelagund@gmail.com.