
Character Biography

Elros Tar-Minyatur

By Oshun

Elros is the brother of Elrond (1), son of Eärendil the Mariner and Elwing the White. The particulars of the story in the published *Silmarillion* of the early life of the two brothers are minimal. They dwell at Sirion with Elwing, while Eärendil makes numerous sea voyages into the West. When the remaining sons of Fëanor march upon Sirion, hoping to regain the Silmaril, which Elwing holds, she casts herself into the sea, taking the Silmaril with her. Maglor and Maedhros then take Elrond and Elros captive (2). The account of their capture is that “Maglor took pity upon Elros and Elrond, and he cherished them, and love grew after between them” (3). The implication from that short description is that they are reared for a considerable period of time in the company of Maglor and Maedhros in a nurturing environment. Love takes time to grow and develop.

An alternative version of their early life is that the twins were abandoned in a cave behind a waterfall and found there unharmed. This one seems to imply that they were not long in the custody of Maglor and Maedhros. In a letter, which also examines the root of their names, Tolkien details that second scenario:

Elrond, Elros. *rondō was a prim[itive] Elvish word for 'cavern'. Cf. Nargothrond (fortified cavern by the R. Narog), Aglarond, etc. *rossē meant 'dew, spray (of fall or fountain)'. Elrond and Elros, children of Eärendil (sea-lover) and Elwing (Elf-foam), were so called, because they were carried off by the sons of Fëanor, in the last act of the feud between the high-elven houses of the Noldorin princes concerning the Silmarils; the Silmaril rescued from Morgoth by Beren and Lúthien, and given to King Thingol Lúthien's father, had descended to Elwing dtr. of Dior, son of Lúthien. The infants were not slain, but left like 'babes in the wood', in a cave with a fall of water over the entrance. There they were found: Elrond within the cave, and Elros dabbling in the water. (4)

In *The Silmarillion* the name of Elros is said to mean *Star Foam* (5).

When, at the end of the First Age, the Valar declare their decision that the two brothers, commonly referred to as the Peredhil or half-elven (6), must chose to live out their lives as Elf or Man, it is Elros who chooses to assume mortality.

The Valar indeed may not withdraw the gift of death, which comes to Men from Ilúvatar, but in the matter of the Half-elven Ilúvatar gave to them the judgement; and they judged that to the sons of Eärendil should be given choice of their own destiny. And Elrond chose to remain with the Firstborn, and to him the life of the Firstborn was granted. (7)

Elros ascended the throne as the first King of Númenor when he was but 90 years of age, young by the reckoning of Elven-kind. He built the City of Armenelos there and established a dynasty.

Thereafter he was known in the Scroll of the King by the name of Tar-Minyatur; for it was the custom of the King to take their titles in the forms of the Quenya or High-elven tongue, that being the noblest tongue of the world, and this custom endured until the days of Ar-Adûnakhôr (Tar-Herunúmen). (8)

Folkloric-tale heroes seem nearly always to possess characteristic weapons and/or heirlooms. Tolkien does not depart from this familiar trope in the case of Elros. In Tolkien's *Unfinished Tales*, we find a listing of those. In addition to "Aranrúth, the sword of Elu Thingol of Doriath in Beleriand, that had descended to Elros from Elwing his mother," (9) he is said to have inherited the Ring of Barahir, Tuor's axe, and the Bow of Bregor of the House of Bëor (10).

Only the Ring of Barahir father of Beren One-hand survived the Downfall; for it was given by Tar-Elendil to his daughter Silmariën and was preserved in the House of the Lords of Andunië, of whom the last was Elendil the Faithful who fled from the wreck of Númenor to Middle-earth. (11)

The provenance of the Ring of Barahir, fascinating and too long to cover in this biography, features in the histories of Finrod Felagund, Beren and Lúthien, and finally that of Arwen and Aragorn. The story of Barahir's ring is emblematic of the ways in which the tales of the sons of Eärendil and Elwing link the events of the First Age to the resolution of the story of the Eldar in Middle-earth in *The Lord of the Rings*. "In them alone the line of the heroic chieftains of the Edain in the First Age was preserved; and after the fall of Gil-galad the lineage of the High Elven Kings was also in Middle-earth only presented by their descendants" (12).

Elros also is said to have been the longest-lived of any of Tolkien's characters among the race of Men.

"Elros Tar-Minyatur ruled the Númenóreans for four hundred years and ten. For to the Númenóreans long life had been granted, and they remained unwearied for thrice the span of mortal Men in Middle-earth; but to Eärendil's son the longest life of any Man was given . . ." (13)

And further on the subject of long life:

"But to Elros, who chose to be a king of Men, still a great span of years was allotted, many times that of the Men of Middle-earth; and all his line, the kings and lords of the royal house, had long life even according to the measure of the Númenóreans. But Elros lived five hundred years, and ruled the Númenóreans four hundred years and ten." (14)

The importance of Elros in the continuing story of Elves and Men throughout Tolkien's legendarium is described not only in the account of events recorded in the published *Silmarillion*, but almost more significantly in *The Lord of the Rings*. The heritage of Elros manifests itself in the portrayal of various central characters of *The Lord of the Rings*.

Much is made of consideration of the bloodline of Elros in the discussions of the rulers of Númenor and their choice of partners. This ancestry carries with it physical characteristics, both in appearance and in its contribution to the length of life beyond the measure of ordinary men. Tolkien's favored coloration, that of grey eyes and dark hair, given to so many of his heroes, Elf

and Man, is also apparently passed through the blood of Elros, although not exclusively. In the tale of “Aldarion and Erendis” it is written that “though not of the royal line of Elros, Erendis was dark-haired and of slender grace, with the clear grey eyes . . .” (15). That tale and others of Númenor reference the past practice of Númenórean royalty to attempt to preserve the bloodline of Elros.

In *The Lord of the Rings* we are given several examples of the signs of that heritage in Denethor, Aragorn, and Faramir, in particular. In *The Return of the King*, Gandalf speaks of this relating to Denethor and Faramir:

He is not as other men of this time . . . by some chance the blood of Westnesse (16) runs nearly true in him; as it does in his other son, Faramir, and yet did not in Boromir whom he loved best. He has long sight. He can perceive, if he bends his will thither, much of what is passing in the minds of men, even of those that dwell far off. It is difficult to deceive him, and dangerous to try. (17)

In this case the reference may be to some preternatural ability to read the thoughts of others. Whether it refers to Tolkien’s concept of mind-to-mind communication, or *Ósanwe-kenta*, (18) or to some other magical/more-than-human characteristic, perhaps reaching back into a bloodline linked to Melian the Maia, is not explained.

There is also further reference to Faramir’s link to that lineage in his dreams of the great wave. Again, the author presents us with a paranormal ability dating back to Númenor and the bloodline of Eros: that of holding memories of events which the character has never himself experienced.

'It reminds me of Númenor,' said Faramir, and wondered to hear himself speak.

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'Yes,' said Faramir, 'of the land of Westnesse that foundered and of the great dark wave climbing over the green lands and above the hills, and coming on, darkness unescapable. I often dream of it.' (19)

Again possible characteristics relating to this blood link to the line of Elros are raised relating to Aragorn. There is, of course, the healing powers of Aragorn, and the entire discussion of the “hands of the King are hands of healing” (20) and the implication that this is somewhere related to that same heritage and that he might possess “some forgotten power of Westnesse” (21) shown in his ability to bring both Faramir and Éowyn back to consciousness. Of course, Aragorn also has the physical traits: tall, dark, youthful into old age, and long-lived.

These threads leading into *Lord of the Rings* seem to reinforce the interconnectedness of the entire history of Elves and Men to Tolkien’s storytelling. Accounts of the kingship of Elros in Númenor do not seem to indicate much more than that he was a wise ruler, a builder, respectful of the Valar and cherished his ties to Elven-kind. Elros is far from one of the grand principle characters of great deeds and obvious courage in *The Silmarillion*. However, in his case, his lineage and the legacy he left in Númenor and its links to Tolkien’s later work make him a central figure in Tolkien’s legendarium nonetheless.

And from these brethren alone has come among Men the blood of the Firstborn and a strain of the spirits divine that were before Arda; for they were the sons of Elwing, Dior's daughter, Lúthien's son, child of Thingol and Melian; and Eärendil their father was the son of Idril Celebrindal, Turgon's daughter of Gondolin. ([22](#))

Works Cited

1. See SWG character biography of [Elrond](#).
2. *The Silmarillion*, "Of the Voyage of Eärendil and the War of Wrath."
3. Ibid.
4. *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*, #211.
5. *The Silmarillion*, "Index of Names."
6. See also SWG character biography of [Elwing](#) for the lineage of the Peredhil.
7. *The Silmarillion*, *Akallabêth*.
8. *Unfinished Tales*, "The Line of Elros: Kings Of Númenor."
9. *Unfinished Tales*, "Description of The Island of Númenor," footnote 2.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. *The Lord of the Rings, The Return of the King*, Appendix A, I (i).
13. *Unfinished Tales*, "The Line of Elros: Kings Of Númenor."
14. *The Silmarillion*, *Akallabêth*.
15. *Unfinished Tales*, "Aldarion and Erendis."
16. *Blood of Westernesse* is a term that Tolkien uses to refer to the Men of Númenor, their descendants, and particularly the Dúnedain. Tolkien says that the word Westernesse is ". . . derived from rare Middle English . . . where the meaning is vague, but may be taken to mean 'Western lands'" (*The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*, #276.)
17. *The Lord of the Rings, Return of the King*, "Minas Tirith."
18. "Ósanwe-kenta: Enquiry into the Communication of Thought," J. R. R. Tolkien, *Vinyar Tengwar* (No. 39).
19. *The Lord of the Rings, Return of the King*, "The Steward and the King."
20. *The Lord of the Rings, Return of the King*, "The Houses of Healing."
21. Ibid.
22. *The Silmarillion*, "Of the Voyage of Eärendil and the War of Wrath."

About the Author

Oshun's *Silmarillion*-based stories may be found on the [SWG archive](#).