
Character Biography Erellont

By Oshun

Tolkien's legendarium is filled with memorable characters of epic proportions, nameless characters whose role in his history must have been noteworthy (more often than not women), and named characters like the subject of this biography, Erellont, who are mentioned once in passing, but who have left the reader with a haunting desire to know more about them and the untold denouement of their story. The manner in which these stories have been cobbled together from Tolkien's unfinished manuscripts at times leaves many questions. Christopher Tolkien noted that "[s]ince the ceaseless 'making' of his world extended from my father's youth into his old age,"¹ some stories have been expanded from a germ of an early concept dating to Tolkien's youth while others are added to augment a detail dropped late into the narrative of *The Lord of the Rings*. Erellont appears once in an early narrative and finally in a late one.²

Erellont played a significant role in one of the biggest stories recounted in *The Silmarillion* and carried forward into *The Lord of the Rings*—the story of how Eärendil the Mariner approaches the forbidden land of the gods and survives to tell the tale. Few would remember or recognize the name *Erellont*. In the "Index of Names" to *The Silmarillion*, he is identified simply as, "One of the three mariners who accompanied Eärendil on his voyages."

After the destruction of Gondolin by Morgoth's forces and of the realm of Dior Eluchil at Menegroth by the Fëanorians, the surviving half-Elven heirs to those two kingdoms, Elwing and Eärendil, met and married at the Havens of Sirion:

Bright Eärendil was then lord of the people that dwelt nigh to Sirion's mouths; and he took to wife Elwing the fair, and she bore to him Elrond and Elros, who are called the Half-elven. Yet Eärendil could not rest, and his voyages about the shores of the Hither Lands eased not his unquiet. Two purposes grew in his heart, blended as one in longing for the wide Sea: he sought to sail thereon, seeking after Tuor and Idril who returned not; and he thought to find perhaps the last shore, and bring ere he died the message of Elves and Men to the Valar in the West, that should move their hearts to pity for the sorrows of Middle-earth.³

It was at the Mouths of Sirion⁴ where young Eärendil met Círdan. The ancient Elven mariner befriended him and taught him about ships and the sea, the art of shipbuilding, and sailing. With his aid, Eärendil was able to build his most famous ship, *Vingilot*. After many voyages, Eärendil finally undertook to find a way to sail to the uttermost West. It was during his absence that the settlement at the Havens of Sirion was attacked by the sons of Fëanor in their failed attempt to recover the Silmaril held by Elwing. When Elwing leapt into the sea holding the Silmaril, she turned into a bird and, led by Ulmo, flew until she encountered Eärendil upon his ship. They believed that their sons were lost and there was nothing left for them in Middle-earth, but Eärendil was driven by his desire to reach Valinor and entreat with the Valar to lend their aid to the Men and Elves of Middle-earth. On that fateful voyage, Eärendil was accompanied by a crew of three mariners and Elwing:

Then Eärendil, first of living Men, landed on the immortal shores; and he spoke there to Elwing and to those that were with him, and they were three mariners who had sailed all the seas beside him: Falathar, Erellont, and Aerandir were their names. And Eärendil said to them: 'Here none but myself shall set foot, lest you fall under the wrath of the Valar. But that peril I will take on myself alone, for the sake of the Two Kindreds.'⁵

Elwing, however, refused to be separated from her husband, fearing it would be forever, and plunged into the surf after him. He was unable to convince her to stay behind, although he was filled with sorrow at the idea of her following him into mortal peril "for he feared the anger of the Lords of the West upon any of Middle-earth that should dare to pass the leaguer of Aman. And there they bade farewell to the companions of their voyage, and were taken from them forever."⁶

That is the last we hear of Erellont or his companions in *The Silmarillion*. There is little enough to debate about a character mentioned so briefly. But given the nature of literary fandom, there is always something. First, it would be an incurious aficionado of Tolkien's more obscure works indeed who would not want to know the ultimate fate of Eärendil's long-time companions. Were they able to find a way back across the sea to Middle-earth? Michael Martinez opines on this subject at some length noting that

[a]lthough Tolkien does not say what became of the three mariners, he does say (in the original 1937 manuscript for "Quenta Silmarillion", published in *The Lost Road and Other Writings*, Volume V of *The History of Middle-earth*) that they were placed in a new boat and sent away eastward. This much of the story Christopher Tolkien carried forward into *The Silmarillion*.⁷

It is the opinion of Martinez that since they carried no personal guilt for Eärendil's violation of the boundaries of the Undying Lands, they would have been allowed by the Valar to return safely to Middle-earth. One might argue that, if this were true, any bard or historian worth his salt would have preserved this tale and passed it on with great fanfare. But it is of the nature of the tales recounted in *The Silmarillion* that not all stories are told in their entirety much less to every reader's satisfaction.

A more fruitful area to discuss might be the second one that is sometimes raised: were these companions of Eärendil Elves or Men? We are nowhere told whether Erellont is of the Eldar or the Edain, or, if of the Eldar, whether he is Noldorin, Sindarin, or might even be one of Círdan's Falathrim, the latter not being a totally unlikely presumption. Near the end of the First Age, the Havens of Sirion were populated by a mixed group of peoples, including Elven refugees from both Doriath and Gondolin,⁸ and those who survived the dispersion of the Edain in the aftermath of the Battle of Unnumbered Tears, largely women and children in the latter case.⁹ It is not impossible that some of these survivors of the three Houses of the Edain, although they were raised as forest dwellers, could have been trained, like Eärendil himself, by the Falathrim, and become a source of sailors from whose ranks he would seek to man his ships. We know from the story of Tuor that although he developed a fascination for the sea he had never seen it with his own eyes when he arrived at Nevrast before going to Gondolin.¹⁰ That did not stop him in his later years in Middle-earth to learn to sail and to build a ship.

Search as one might, there is no definitive answer to the "Elves or Men?" question. Some readers have noted their Elvish names as a clue to identity. They might have been either—a survivor, for example, of the remnants of the House of Haleth or a comrade or tutor from the ranks of Círdan's Falathrim. Perhaps they aided the young Eärendil in acquiring his skills of

shipbuilding and navigation. What we do know is that Erellont the sefarer and his two companions are recorded in the history Middle-earth as the unwavering companions of brave Eärendil's most daring exploit.

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Works Cited

1. *History of Middle-earth, Volume XII: The Peoples of Middle-earth, The Prologue and Appendices to The Lord of the Rings.*
 2. First, in *The Lost Road*, "The Conclusion of the Quenta Silmarillion," and, lastly, in *The Silmarillion*, "Of the Voyage of Eärendil and the War of Wrath."
 3. *The Silmarillion*, "Of the Voyage of Eärendil and the War of Wrath."
 4. The site of this Elven port is called alternately the Havens of Sirion or the Mouths of Sirion. The expression "mouth" in reference to a river is the place where it enters a lake, larger river, or the ocean; in the above case this is where the delta of the Sirion and other tributaries meet the sea.
 5. *The Silmarillion*, "Of the Voyage of Eärendil and the War of Wrath."
 6. *The Silmarillion*, "Of the Voyage of Eärendil and the War of Wrath."
 7. Michael Martinez, "[Where did the Valar send Falathar, Erellont, and Aerandir?](#)" *Middle-earth and J.R.R. Tolkien Blog*, January 27, 2014, accessed June 1, 2017.
 8. *The Silmarillion*, "Of Tuor and the Fall of Gondolin."
 9. *Unfinished Tales*, "The Drúedain."
 10. *The Silmarillion*, "Of Tuor and the Fall of Gondolin."
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About the Author

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