# Character Biography
## Míriel Þerindë

**By Oshun**

Míriel Þerindë is one of the most significant women characters in *The Silmarillion*. Her importance is not limited to marrying Finwë, the first King of the Noldor, and giving birth to the incomparable Fëanor. What makes Míriel memorable among Tolkien's female characters is that she not only managed to determine her fate against the wishes of the powerful man in her life and even the initial preferences of the Valar, but that her choices profoundly affected the destiny of her people throughout the history of Arda. One might be able to say that of Lúthien as well; however, one might also hypothesize that the effects of Míriel's decisions were more shattering than those of Lúthien and arguably of greater impact. Tolkien writes that

> [i]n the Elvish legends there is record of a strange case of an Elf (Míriel mother of Fëanor) that tried to die, **which had disastrous results, leading to the 'Fall' of the High-elves.** [Emphasis added.] The Elves were not subject to disease, but they could be 'slain': that is their bodies could be destroyed, or mutilated so as to be unfit to sustain life. But this did not lead naturally to 'death': they were rehabilitated and reborn and eventually recovered memory of all their past: they remained 'identical'. But Míriel wished to abandon being, and refused rebirth.(1)

Among Tolkien's women characters whose roles have been reduced in number of references and words, and consequently relative importance, by editorial choice in the published *Silmarillion,* the case of Míriel Þerindë is perhaps the most dramatic. In a review of Douglas Charles Kane's recently published *Arda Reconstructed,* a comparison of the content of the published *Silmarillion* to its sources, Dawn Felagund makes the assertion that

> Other roles were eviscerated, shoving female characters into the background when, according to Kane's research, it seemed that JRRT intended them to maintain more prominent roles, often illustrative of some of the philosophical ideas that the "Silmarillion" was meant to include.
>
> Míriel Serindë is one such character. With the total elimination of "The Story of Finwë and Míriel," not only is Míriel moved to the margins of the story, but the philosophical and cultural concepts that she was meant to illustrate are lost as well. (2)

This biography includes consultation of those neglected texts and attempts to piece together a fuller picture of Míriel. Nonetheless, it is difficult not to be sympathetic with Christopher Tolkien and Guy Gavriel Kay in their choice to omit long passages of philosophical discussions surrounding the dissolution of the marriage of Finwë and Míriel. Those texts at their center elaborate points which Tolkien was in the active process of reassessing. (See further comment on this below. Also, see Tolkien's short article "Myths Transformed" (3) for an explanation of the various parts of his mythology that he found problematic and in need of revision, including but not limited to the question of Elven death and reincarnation.) Still the elimination of that narrative


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from the published *Silmarillion* undermines the importance of Míriel's refusal to accept the reunification of her fëa to her body.

Another valuable source of information on Míriel is *The Shibboleth of Fëanor*. Yet, one also might question from a storytelling perspective whether or not the lengthy exposition of the differences of opinion among the Noldor on the continued use or abandonment of the letter Þ in favor of the letter S is a real page-turner. Linguists might be more excited about that discussion than the average reader of fantasy literature, or even a Tolkien enthusiast for that matter. The contribution of the linguistic dispute to the growing divisions within the Noldor is, however, of great consequence if one relates it to the dramatic events which follow the extension of those quarrels. And the basis of Fëanor's resentment of his step-mother and brothers upon the Valar's decision to deny Míriel the possibility of ever returning to a normal life leads directly in a causal manner to everything that comes after it in the epic tale of the Noldor.

In defense of including the linguistic debate centered around Fëanor's partisanship of his mother's personal adherence to the usage of the abandoned thorn (Þ) and the fact that it was the initial consonant of her mother-name, it is useful to consider the importance of the created languages overall in the appreciation of Tolkien's work. In the second issue of *Tolkien Studies,* in a roundup review of various publications relating to Tolkien's languages, John Garth wrote,

> For Tolkien, the word came before the world. Yet his claim that he created Middle-earth to house his invented languages has served mainly to raise skeptical eyebrows. The on-going publication of his writings on the languages and scripts of his sub-created world must remedy this. (4)

Míriel as a person epitomizes many aspects of the best and the worst characteristics of the Noldor. The *Shibboleth of Fëanor* gives a visual picture of Míriel, which includes insight into her temperament as well.

> She was a Ñoldorin Elda of slender and graceful form, and of gentle disposition, though as was later discovered in matters far more grave, she could show an ultimate obstinacy that counsel or command would only make more obdurate. (5)

Míriel's description is further elaborated with particular attention to her skills.

> She had a beautiful voice and a delicate and clean enunciation, though she spoke swiftly and took pride in this skill. Her chief talent, however, was a marvellous dexterity of hand. This she employed in embroidery, which though achieved in what even the Eldar thought a speed of haste was finer and more intricate than any that had before been seen. She was therefore called Þerinde (Needlewoman) - a name which she had indeed already been given as a 'mother-name'. (6)

Míriel is often interpreted by artists with the typical dark hair of the Noldor. Yet another description survives of Míriel in the version of the *Quenta Silmarillion* revised in the middle to late 1950s, sometime after the publication of *The Lord of the Rings,* and called by Christopher Tolkien *The Later Quenta Silmarillion*.


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> Silver was her hair and dark were her eyes, but her hands were more skilled to fineness than any hands even of the Noldor. By her was the craft of needles devised; and were but one fragment of the broideries of Míriel to be seen in Middle-earth it would be held dearer than a king's realm, for the richness of her devices and the fire of their colours were as manifold and as bright as the glory of leaf and flower and wing in the fields of Yavanna. (7)

Another recorded name for Míriel, "*Byrde Míriel* (Old English *byrde,* 'broidcress')," (8) may found in *The Annals of Aman* and is nearly identical in meaning. Christopher Tolkien comments, however, upon its unusual form, the use of Old English, in his notes to *The Later Quenta Silmarillion* (9).

Readers often speculate whether Míriel was born in Aman rather than in Middle-earth. The only available text which implies that Míriel was *not* born in Middle-earth but after the Noldor had come to Valinor and settled there is found in the following sentence in *The Shibboleth of Fëanor.*

> The change Þ > s must therefore have been a conscious and deliberate change agreed to and accepted by a majority of the Ñoldor, however initiated, after the separation of their dwellings from the Vanyar. It must have occurred after the birth of Míriel, but (probably) before the birth of Fëanor. (10)

This seems to imply that Míriel was indeed born after Finwë arrived with his people in Valinor, although it does not say so explicitly. However, the parsing of mildly ambiguous phrases found in unfinished texts to determine factual details is an activity which necessarily assumes that grammatical nuances found in those unfinalized drafts and notes is intentional and conclusive.

On the other side of the question, one may read the implication that Míriel was indeed born or awakened in Middle-earth in the phrasing of certain arguments among the Valar at the hearing held to determine whether or not to sever the marriage bond between Finwë and Míriel. Yavanna spoke of the question of Arda marred in analyzing the attitude of Míriel, saying

> Therefore none of those who awoke in Middle-earth, and there dwelt before they came hither, have come here wholly free. The failing of the strength of the body of Míriel may then be ascribed, with some reason, to the evil of Arda Marred, and her death be a thing unnatural. (11)

This would seem to include Míriel among those who "came hither" from Middle-earth.

The published *Silmarillion* does include the information that Finwë and Míriel first came together after the passage of the Noldor into Aman. "The love of Finwë and Míriel was great and glad, for it began in the Blessed Realm in the Days of Bliss" (12). Despite that gladness of the early days of their love, the marriage of Finwë and Míriel was doomed and its dissolution is at the heart of the future troubles within the Noldor. The birth of their only son Fëanor, indisputably the greatest of the Noldor and called by the Vala Aulë his mentor "the greatest of the Eldar," (13) resulted in Míriel's unwillingness to have other children, in fact, destroying her will to continue living. At the birth of Fëanor, she said, "Never again shall I bear child; for strength that would have nourished the life of many has gone forth into Fëanor" (14).

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One might speculate without intersecting much controversy that Finwë wants children badly when he marries Míriel. And yet, as an artist and craftswoman, Míriel may not be as keen as her husband to begin the arduous process of childbearing and childrearing. One might believe that there is no doubt in Míriel's mind when she marries Finwë that he will eventually want heirs. Finwë survives the long trek from Cuiviénen to the coast and across the sea to Aman. He has observed untimely deaths and disappearances among the ranks of the Noldor on that long journey. On the other hand, if Míriel is considerably younger and/or born in the undying lands of Aman, she might be less attuned to Finwë's urgency to reproduce. A modern interpretation and one which puts aside the manner of characterizing those who inhabit epic tales with restraint and formality and a lack of recognizable human emotions and reactions, Míriel might have had a particularly difficult pregnancy, labor, and delivery. Realizing she must look forward to doing this again in the not too distant future and the knowledge of that expectation on the part of Finwë might have driven her around the bend.

Tolkien's article *Of the Law and Customs Among the Eldar* (15) implies that the physical strength and vitality of an Elven woman is sorely taxed by the requirements of bearing children.

> [I]n the bearing of children, greater share and strength of their being, in mind and body, goes forth than in the making of mortal children. For these reasons it came to pass that the Eldar brought forth few children . . . (16)

There are discrepancies among the sources over the question of whether Fëanor actually knew his mother Míriel. In *Of the Laws and Customs Among the Eldar,* we are told that he never saw her.

> But the name of insight which his mother Míriel gave to him in the hour of birth was *Fëanáro* 'Spirit of Fire'; and by this name he became known to all, and he is so called in all the histories. (It is said that he also took this name as his chosen name, in honour of his mother, **whom he never saw**.) (17) [Emphasis added.]

Christopher Tolkien opines in a footnote to *The Shibboleth of Fëanor* that

> Footnote 7: [It had been said several times in the later *Quenta Silmarillion* texts that Fëanáro was a 'name of insight' given to him by Míriel at his birth; moreover in the story of Míriel when it first appeared her spirit passed to Mandos soon after Fëanor was born, and it is expressly said in *Laws and Customs among the Eldar* that he never saw his mother (X.217). The story has now been altogether changed in this aspect: Míriel named him with this name 'in recognition of his impetuous character'; 'while she lived she did much with gentle counsel to soften and restrain him'; and subsequently 'her weariness she had endured until he was full grown, but she could endure it no longer'. After Míriel's 'death' or departure 'for a while he also had kept vigil by his mother's body, but soon he became wholly absorbed again in his own works and devices' (p. 335).] (18)

This concept that Míriel's prescient naming of her famous son is not sufficient proof that she attended him in his early childhood, learning about his personal characteristics and talents. In the section "Note on Mother-names" of *The Shibboleth of Fëanor* which discusses Elvish mother names indicates that a mother may intuit these things even before birth.

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> The mother-name was given later, often some years later, by the mother; but sometimes it was given soon after birth. For the mothers of the Eldar were gifted with deep insight into their children's characters and abilities, and many had also the gift of prophetic foresight. (19)

More telling in determining whether Fëanor knew his mother or not is the citation to which the above footnote was appended.

> Fëanor loved his mother dearly, though except in obstinacy their characters were widely different. He was not gentle. He was proud and hot-tempered, and opposition to his will he met not with the quiet steadfastness of his mother but with fierce resentment. He was restless in mind and body, though like Míriel he could become wholly absorbed in works of the finest skill of hand; but he left many things unfinished. Fëanáro was his mother-name, which Míriel gave him in recognition of his impetuous character (it meant 'spirit of fire'). While she lived she did much with gentle counsel to soften and restrain him. (20)

Later in *The Shibboleth of Fëanor* it is noted that "Her weariness she had endured until he was full grown, but she could endure it no longer" (21).

Perhaps the most frustrating and challenging part of composing a narrative of the life of Míriel Þerindë is the importance of her story to a whole series of physical and metaphysical questions relating to the nature of Elves and the concept of Elven reincarnation. These are questions which Tolkien had not considered to his satisfaction, or pulled into a state of internal consistency even at the time of his death. Two significant sources for information about Míriel include the notes to the *Athrabeth Finrod Ah Andreth* (22) and its Appendix "The Converse of Manwë and Eru" and later conceptions of Elvish reincarnation (23). To neglect these sources simply because this is not the place to try to categorize and speculate upon the numerous changes, contradictions and considerations regarding Elven reincarnation sprinkled liberally throughout Tolkien's unpublished texts, however, robs us of the larger part of the available details about Míriel herself.

In referring to the notes entitled ‘The Statute of Finwë and Míriel’ (24), Christopher Tolkien expresses the opinion that the importance of the work itself is that it is

> . . . comprehensive (if sometimes obscure, and tantalising in its obscurity) declaration of his thought at that time on fundamental aspects of the nature of the Quendi, distinguishing them from Men: the power of the incarnate *fëa* (spirit) in relation to the body; the ‘consuming’ of the body by the *fëa*; the destiny of Elvish spirits, ordained by Eru, ‘to dwell in Arda for all the life of Arda’; the meaning of death for such beings, and of existence after death; the nature of Elvish re-birth; and the consequences of the Marring of Arda by Melkor. (25)

Looking backward one might wish that more about Míriel had been included in the published *Silmarillion,* the only text that the majority of Tolkien readers who wish to know more about the history of the Elves will ever consult.


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**The Debate Among the Valar on the Case of Finwë and Míriel**

In *The Earliest Version of the Story of Finwë and Míriel* (26) and the details used in the published *Silmarillion,* the story of Míriel is short and unembellished. However, the most complex and fascinating version is to be found at the end *Of the Laws and Customs among the Eldar* (27) in a section called, "Of the Severance of Marriage." (This passage of several thousand words contains information about the expressed desires, personality and fate of Míriel. It is a truly a significant amount of material to withhold from the published *Silmarillion*.) Therein one finds a genuine debate among the Valar on the specific question of the advisability of permitting the dissolution of the marriage of Finwë and Míriel. It contains significant arguments and differences of opinion on the nature and effects of the marring of Arda and also upon the will of Eru relating to the Eldar.

Not least interesting among the positions raised is that of placement of blame, whether Finwë or Míriel ought to have behaved differently and, if unable to do so, why not. The Valar also discuss the possible results for good or ill of the proposed decisions.

Much as the Valar disagree and consider profoundly upon the fate of Míriel, Tolkien himself was of more than mind about how to tell the story. The following are two versions that he wrote which are collected in the *Morgoth's Ring* account in the body of text that follows *Of the Laws and Customs among the Eldar*:

> [It is recorded by the Eldar that the Valar found this matter of Finwë strange, and debated much concerning it. For Finwë they could not accuse of any guilt, and the Statute that had been made for Finwë and Míriel was just and reasonable. Yet it was clear that many evils would have been avoided, [if either Míriel had been less faint, or Finwë more patient >] if it had not been made, or at least had not been used. *This passage was later replaced as follows*:] It is recorded by the Eldar that the Valar debated long the case of Finwë and Míriel, after the Statute was made, but not yet declared. For they perceived that this was a grave matter, and a portent, in that Míriel had died even in Aman, and had brought sorrow to the Blessed Realm, things which they before had believed could not come to pass. Also, though the Statute seemed just, some feared that it would not heal the death of grief, but perpetuate it. (28)

Comparing the two passages above gives one a partial insight into some of the problems Tolkien might have had in settling upon the right questions and the appropriate answers when summarizing the debate among the Valar on the question of Finwë and Míriel. He first had to determine his own view of the making and marring of Arda and the nature of its inhabitants (something which he was still considering and re-considering at the time of his death).

Why and how did Míriel come to die? How might that death be connected to the Valarin concept of Arda Marred? What did the introduction of death into the Undying Lands of Aman mean for the Eldar and their presumptive guardians the Valar? Is her death a mystery and/or portent of things to come? The questions of the Valar touch upon but do not resolve other questions. In what way does the clearly human physiology of the Elves accommodate quasi-immortality? What effect does their physiology have upon Elvish behavior, emotion, and motivation? (It would indeed be difficult for the Valar, whom Tolkien never presents as all-knowing, to understand the concept of existence in the form of a fragile human body, since their own physical incarnations can be put on and cast off like a suit of clothes.) How does or should the existence of the spirit of an Elf within this corporeal form affect the social organization and culture of the Eldar?

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Throw all of those questions into a pot and add Tolkien's continuing alterations of his theories relating to Elven re-birth and/or reincarnation and one has a controversial stew on one's hands. Even for an editor such a Christopher Tolkien, who purports to understand better than anyone the thinking processes of his father, this is a hot potato. Sliding over the details entirely leaves many readers wanting to know more about Míriel's story and yet picking and choosing among the contradictory information that Tolkien left in his unfinished and mutable drafts is problematic at best.

There does seems to be a consensus among the Valar in the text that, due to the immortal nature of the spirit of the Elves, when one Elf bound in marriage to another dies their partner cannot take a second spouse as long as the possibility exists for the reincarnation of the first. In the tale of the debate on these questions, all of the Valar are in agreement upon another matter as well, which is that they cannot truly comprehend the solution to the mystery of Eru's Children, as they call the quasi-immortal Elves they seek to guide and protect. In the debate itself there are differing reactions and proposals.

Aulë seeks to see only the best in the Noldor and draws the most optimistic conclusions from the birth of Fëanor saying that

> This child [Fëanor] is the greatest in gifts that hath arisen or shall arise among the Eldar. But the Eldar are the first Children of Eru, and belong to him directly. Therefore the greatness of the child must proceed from his will directly, and be intended for the good of the Eldar and of all Arda. What then of the cost of the birth? Must it not be thought that the greatness and the cost come not from Arda, Marred or Unmarred, but from beyond Arda? (29)

The implications in Aulë's remarks are that he already is acquainted with the young Fëanor. Aulë seeks to play an interventionist role in the lives and fates of his favored Eldar. Tolkien later adds to this text a line revelatory of Aulë's perspective: "Thus Aulë spake being unwilling to believe that any taint of the Shadow lay upon Feänor, or upon any of the Noldor. He had been the most eager to summon them to Valinor" (30). Christopher Tolkien notes that: "It is not told elsewhere that Aulë was the most eager among the Valar that the Elves should be summoned to Valinor" (31).

Ulmo, who raises different questions, like Aulë, is enamored with Eru's children. But, unlike Aulë, he agrees that this death in Aman results from the marring of Arda and yet proposes the minimum of interference with their actions. He also notes that in some way the fates of the Eldar are part of the will of Eru.

> 'For Eru is Lord of All, and moveth all the devices of his creatures, even the malice of the Marrer, in his final purposes, but he doth not of his prime motion impose grief upon them. But the death of Míriel has brought sorrow to Aman. / The coming of Feänáro must proceed certainly from the will of Eru; but I hold that the marring of his birth comes of the Shadow, and is a portent of evils to come. For the greatest are the most potent also for evil. Have a care, my brethren, thinking not that the Shadow is gone for ever, though it is beaten down. Doth it not dwell even now in Aman, though you deem the bonds to be unbreakable?' (32)


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The most simplistic summary might be that Aulë proposes innocence and mercy in relation to Míriel and Finwë coupled with assistance. Ulmo recognizes the introduction of evil by Melkor the Marrer but also advocates mercy, while proposing a non-interventionist policy. His remarks all but explicitly hold his fellow Valar responsible for any ill fate related to their need to intervene into the lives of the Firstborn.

> But the *fëa* of Míriel hath not been left in peace, and by importuning its will hath been hardened; and in that resolve it must remain without change while Arda lasteth, if the Statute is declared. Thus the impatience of Finwë will close the door of life upon the *fëa* of his spouse. This is the greater fault. For it is more unnatural that one of the Eldar should remain for ever as *fëa* without body than that one should remain alive wedded but bereaved. A trial was imposed upon Finwë (not by Míriel only), and he hath asked for justice, and relief.' (33)

The Statute he refers to is the judgment that if one spouse is to take another, then other must remain a houseless spirit.

Yavanna accepts the presence of the shadow upon Eru's children left by the marring of Arda without making a distinct proposal of her own. Manwë opines that justice is not always served by mercy. And Niënna proposes that justice ought to be tempered in this case by pity. And Vairë further asserts a particular knowledge of Míriel.

> 'The *fëa* of Míriel is with me. I know it well, for it is small. But it is strong; proud and obdurate. It is of that sort who having said: *this I will do,* make their words a doom irrevocable unto themselves. She will not return to life, or to Finwë, even if he waiteth until the ageing of the world.' (34)

She calls the other Valar to account and reminds them they cannot presume to fully understand the position of either Finwë or Míriel.

> 'When one of the Queens of the Valar, Varda or Yavanna, or even I, departeth for ever from Arda, and leaveth her spouse, will he or nill he, then let that spouse judge Finwë, if he will, remembering that Finwë cannot follow Míriel without doing wrong to his nature, nor without forsaking the duty and bond of his fatherhood.' (35)

Vairë later offers a compromise: that Míriel could be permitted to return to her body at some point before the end of Arda, but that she not be allowed to walk among the Eldar or have contact with them, for do so would cause strife and unhappiness among her people and most particularly Finwë and Míriel.

Námo closes the debate with a pronouncement of his view of the role of the Valar and a definition of justice within the context of their argument. It states that it is their "task to deal with Arda Marred, and to declare what is just within it" (36). He argues that they may give advice, but cannot compel.

> 'Healing by final Hope, as Manwë hath spoken of it, is a law which one can give to oneself only; of others justice alone can be demanded. A ruler who discerning justice refuseth to it the sanction of law, demanding abnegation of rights and self-sacrifice, will


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> not drive his subjects to these virtues, virtuous only if free, but by unnaturally making justice unlawful, will drive them rather to rebellion against all law. Not by such means will Arda be healed.' (37)

Námo affirms that he believes the statute is just and should be proclaimed and ends his remarks with a prophecy.

> 'Hearken now, O Valar! To me foretelling is granted no less than doom, and I will proclaim now to you things both near and far. Behold! Indis the fair shall be made glad and fruitful, who might else have been solitary. For not in death only hath the Shadow entered into Aman with the coming of the Children destined to suffer; there are other sorrows, even if they be less. Long she hath loved Finwë, in patience and without bitterness. Aulë nameth Fëanor the greatest of the Eldar, and in potency that is true. But I say unto you that the children of Indis shall also be great, and the Tale of Arda more glorious because of their coming. And from them shall spring things so fair that no tears shall dim their beauty; in whose being the Valar, and the Kindreds both of Elves and of Men that are to come shall all have part, and in whose deeds they shall rejoice. So that, long hence when all that here is, and seemeth yet fair and impregnable, shall nonetheless have faded and passed away, the Light of Aman shall not wholly cease among the free peoples of Arda until the End.' (38)

According to the narrative, Finwë continues to be unable to cope with his grief because "the Noldor were in the youth of their days and dwelt in the bliss of the Noontide of Aman, but were still few in number, and he desired to bring forth many children" (39). He approaches Manwë once more hoping to find a solution to the impasse he has reached with Míriel.

> At their parting (for a little while as he deemed) Finwë was sad, for it seemed a thing unhappy that the mother should depart and miss the beginning at least of the childhood days of her son. ‘Unhappy it is indeed,’ said Míriel, ‘and I would weep if I were not so weary. But hold me blameless in this, and in aught that may come after. Rest now I must. Farewell, dear lord.’ No clearer than this did she speak, but in her heart she yearned not only for sleep and rest, but for release from the labour of living. She went then to Lorien and laid her down to sleep beneath a silver tree, but though she seemed to sleep indeed her spirit departed from her body and passed in silence to the halls of Mandos; and the maidens of Estë tended her fair body so that it remained unwithered, yet she did not return. (40)

Finwë, devastated, continues to visit Míriel and sees no change. He also continues to complain to Manwë about how he wants more children. And Manwë at last takes pity upon him and explains the result of the judgment of the Valar upon the case of his marriage to Finwë.

> If Míriel, thy wife, will not return and releases thee, your union is dissolved, and thou hast leave to take another wife.’
>
> It is said that Míriel answered Mandos, saying: ‘I came hither to escape from the body, and I do not desire ever to return to it. My life is gone out into Fëanáro, my son. This gift I have given to him whom I loved, and I can give no more. Beyond Arda this may be healed, but not within it.’ (41)


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There is no further reference to Míriel in the published *Silmarillion.* The *fëa* of Míriel is not allowed to return to her body for all of the Ages of Arda and Finwë marries Indis. Readers are familiar with the story of the great Fëanor and the tragic consequences caused by the dissolution of his parents' marriage and, one could argue, the loss of a mother's wise guidance. We also know the stories of Indis's illustrious children and grandchildren. This, however, is not the end of Míriel's story as it is recounted in *Morgoth's Ring.*

**Míriel's Life Beyond the Published *Silmarillion***

After Finwë is murdered by Melkor when the fallen Vala comes to Formenos to steal the Silmarils, Finwë goes to Míriel in the halls of Mandos and is able to speak with her. He tells her of everything that has come to pass since her withdrawal from life. She meets him gladly and listens, also expressing regret for her errors in abandoning him and their child.

> Míriel was glad of the meeting, and her sadness was lightened; and the will in which she had been set was released.
>
> And when she learned of Finwë all that had befallen since her departure (for she had given no heed to it, nor asked tidings, until then) she was greatly moved; and she said to Finwë in her thought: 'I erred in leaving thee and our son, or at the least in not soon returning after brief repose; for had I done so he might have grown wiser. (42)

Míriel claims not to resent Indis or her sons either, but she says something which also moved Finwë to great pity.

> Would that I might set all the Tale of our people and of thee and thy children in a tapestry of many colours, as a memorial brighter than memory! For though I am cut off now from the world, and I accept that Doom as just, I would still watch and record all that befalls those dear to me, and their offspring also. [*Added:* I feel again the call of my body and its skills.]' (43)

Finwë then goes to the Valar and offers to "abide with Mandos for ever" (44) so that Míriel's *fëa* may be reunited with her body. By this point, of course, Indis, who refused to accompany Finwë into exile in Formenos, is no longer with him. He convinces the Valar that she would prefer as well to return to Valmar and her own people, leaving behind the fractious Noldor who have brought her such grief. After some discussion, Finwë's request is granted.

> Therefore she [Miriel] went to the doors of the House of Vairë and prayed to be admitted; and this prayer was granted, although in that House none of the Living dwelt nor have others ever entered it in the body. But Míriel was accepted by Vaire and became her chief handmaid; and all tidings of the Noldor down the years from their beginning were brought to her, and she wove them in webs historial, so fair and skilled that they seemed to live, imperishable, shining with a light of many hues fairer than are known in Middle-earth. This labour Finwë is at times permitted to look upon. And still she is at work, though her name has been changed. For now she is named *Fíriel* which to the Eldar signifies 'She that died', and also 'She that sighed'. As fair as the webs of *Fíriel* is praise that is given seldom even to works of the Eldar. (45)


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8. *Morgoth's Ring, The Annals of Aman,* §78.
9. *Morgoth's Ring, The Later Quenta Silmarillion, The Second Phase,* "§46b Byrde Míriel (in the footnote to the text): cf. AAm §78 (p. 92), where Fëanor's mother (in a replacement entry) is given, rather oddly, the Old English 'surname' Byrde, not Serende, in the text itself and without reference to Ælfwine."
10. *The Peoples of Middle-earth, Shibboleth of Fëanor.*
11. *Morgoth's Ring, The Later Quenta Silmarillion,* "Of the Laws and Customs among the Eldar Pertaining to Marriage and Other Matters Related Thereto: Together with the Statute of Finwë and Míriel and the Debate of the Valar at Its Making," hereinafter referred to as *Of the Laws and Customs Among the Eldar.*
12. *The Silmarillion,* "Of Fëanor and the Unchaining of Melkor."
13. *Morgoth's Ring, Of the Laws and Customs Among the Eldar,* "Of the Severance of Marriage."
14. *The Silmarillion,* "Of Fëanor and the Unchaining of Melkor."
15. *Morgoth's Ring, Of the Laws and Customs Among the Eldar.*
16. Ibid.
17. *Morgoth's Ring, Of the Laws and Customs Among the Eldar,* "Of Naming."
18. *The Peoples of Middle-earth, Shibboleth of Fëanor,* Christopher Tolkien's footnote 7.
19. *The Peoples of Middle-earth, Shibboleth of Fëanor,* "Note on Mother-names."
20. *The Peoples of Middle-earth, Shibboleth of Fëanor.*
21. Ibid.
22. *Morgoth's Ring, Athrabeth Finrod Ah Andreth.*
23. *Morgoth's Ring, Athrabeth Finrod Ah Andreth,* Appendix, "'The Converse of Manwë and Eru' and later conceptions of Elvish reincarnation."
24. *Morgoth's Ring, Of the Laws and Customs Among the Eldar,* "The Statute of Finwë and Míriel."
25. *Morgoth's Ring, Of the Laws and Customs Among the Eldar,* introductory notes by Christopher Tolkien.
26. *Morgoth's Ring, The Later Quenta Silmarillion,* "The Earliest Version of the Story of Finwë and Míriel."
27. *Morgoth's Ring, Of the Laws and Customs Among the Eldar.*
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid.
31. *Morgoth's Ring, Of the Laws and Customs Among the Eldar,* footnote 10.
32. *Morgoth's Ring, Of the Laws and Customs Among the Eldar.*
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid.


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37. Ibid.
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid.
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid.
43. Ibid.
44. Ibid.
45. Ibid.

**About the Author**

Oshun's *Silmarillion*-based stories may be found on the SWG archive.


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