
Character Biography

Irmo/Lórien

By Oshun

Irmo, also referred to as Lórien (actually the name of his dwelling place), is one of the two Valar brothers who are called the Fëanturi. The appellation Fëanturi (the root of which is *fëa* or spirit) refers to their role as masters of the spirits of the children of Eru, distinguishing them from the Valar who deal in more concrete matters. Námo, the elder of the brothers, is often referred to as well by the name of his place of abode, Mandos. The descriptions of Irmo vary little from Tolkien's earliest mentions of him up through and including the portrait which is given in the published *Silmarillion* where he is described as the master of visions and dreams.

In *The Book of Lost Tales*, Irmo is first referred to as Fántur of Dreams who is also called Lórien Olofántur. Some ten years later in notes dating to 1930, later published in *The Shaping of Middle-earth*, Olofántur is described again, in more detail, as the "maker of visions and of dreams" whose "gardens in the land of the Gods were the fairest of all places in the world and filled with many spirits of beauty and power." In near-identical language to the other texts, we again may read of Irmo under the name of Olofántur in *The Lost Road and Other Writings* and *Morgoth's Ring*, with the sole addition of his wife Estë. Finally, in *The Silmarillion*, "Valaquenta," Olofántur takes the name Irmo.

His gardens in Lórien are said to be "the fairest of all places in the world, filled with many spirits." Aptly, the spouse of Irmo is Estë the gentle. She is named as the healer of hurts and of weariness, whose special gift is rest. Together the two of them provided in Valinor a refuge in the groves and gardens of Lórien where not only the Eldar but also the Valar themselves could take advantage of the relief provided for those suffering from the burden of Arda. The implication is made that in the fair gardens of Lórien, Irmo will provide the Eldar with guiding visions and dreams while his wife will grant solace and heal physical ills.

Some References to Lórien Throughout Tolkien's Canon

After Miriel Serindë used up all of her spiritual and physical reserves in bearing and giving birth to the great Fëanor and wished only for "release from the labours of living" she was delivered into the care of Irmo in Lórien.

Two of the Maiar most familiar to readers of Tolkien also dwelt in Lórien. The Maia Melian, before she came to Middle-earth to fall in love with Elwë Singollo (Elu Thingol) and give birth to Lúthien, lived in Lórien "tending the trees that flower in the gardens of Irmo." Then, Olórin, "the wisest of the Maiar," (better known in his incarnation of Mithrandir/Gandalf) dwelt in Lórien and from there brought to the hearts of Elves and Men "fair visions" and "promptings of wisdom."

Finally, while still under the ban of the Noldor that prohibited her from returning to Valinor, Galadriel attempted to create a land of peace and beauty in Lothlórien modeled upon her memories of the Lórien of Irmo and Estë. In *Lord of the Rings*, the Lórien of Galadriel and Celeborn takes on, east of the sea, the same characteristics of serenity and sanctuary for which Irmo's Lórien was noted.

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About the Author

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