

= Orion (mythology) =

In Greek mythology , Orion (Ancient Greek : ????? or ????? , Latin : Orion) was a giant huntsman whom Zeus placed among the stars as the constellation of Orion .

Ancient sources tell several different stories about Orion ; there are two major versions of his birth and several versions of his death . The most important recorded episodes are his birth somewhere in Boeotia , his visit to Chios where he met Merope and was blinded by her father , Oenopion , the recovery of his sight at Lemnos , his hunting with Artemis on Crete , his death by the bow of Artemis or the sting of the giant scorpion which became Scorpio , and his elevation to the heavens . Most ancient sources omit some of these episodes and several tell only one . These various incidents may originally have been independent , unrelated stories and it is impossible to tell whether omissions are simple brevity or represent a real disagreement .

In Greek literature he first appears as a great hunter in Homer 's epic the Odyssey , where Odysseus sees his shade in the underworld . The bare bones of his story are told by the Hellenistic and Roman collectors of myths , but there is no extant literary version of his adventures comparable , for example , to that of Jason in Apollonius of Rhodes ' Argonautica or Euripides ' Medea ; the entry in Ovid 's Fasti for May 11 is a poem on the birth of Orion , but that is one version of a single story . The surviving fragments of legend have provided a fertile field for speculation about Greek prehistory and myth .

Orion served several roles in ancient Greek culture . The story of the adventures of Orion , the hunter , is the one on which we have the most evidence (and even on that not very much) ; he is also the personification of the constellation of the same name ; he was venerated as a hero , in the Greek sense , in the region of Boeotia ; and there is one etiological passage which says that Orion was responsible for the present shape of the Strait of Sicily .

= = Legends = =

= = = Homer and Hesiod = = =

Orion is mentioned in the oldest surviving works of Greek literature , which probably date back to the 7th or 8th century BC , but which are the products of an oral tradition with origins several centuries earlier . In Homer 's Iliad Orion is described as a constellation , and the star Sirius is mentioned as his dog . In the Odyssey , Odysseus sees him hunting in the underworld with a bronze club , a great slayer of animals ; he is also mentioned as a constellation , as the lover of the Goddess Dawn , as slain by Artemis , and as the most handsome of the earthborn . In the Works and Days of Hesiod , Orion is also a constellation , one whose rising and setting with the sun is used to reckon the year .

The legend of Orion was first told in full in a lost work by Hesiod , probably the Astronomia ; simple references to Hesiod will refer to this , unless otherwise stated . This version is known through the work of a Hellenistic author on the constellations ; he gives a fairly long summary of Hesiod 's discourse on Orion . According to this version , Orion was likely the son of the sea @-@ god Poseidon and Euryale , daughter of Minos , King of Crete . Orion could walk on the waves because of his father ; he walked to the island of Chios where he got drunk and attacked Merope , daughter of Oenopion , the ruler there . In vengeance , Oenopion blinded Orion and drove him away . Orion stumbled to Lemnos where Hephaestus ? the lame smith @-@ god ? had his forge . Hephaestus told his servant , Cedalion , to guide Orion to the uttermost East where Helios , the Sun , healed him ; Orion carried Cedalion around on his shoulders . Orion returned to Chios to punish Oenopion , but the king hid away underground and escaped Orion 's wrath . Orion 's next journey took him to Crete where he hunted with the goddess Artemis and her mother Leto , and in the course of the hunt , threatened to kill every beast on Earth . Mother Earth objected and sent a giant scorpion to kill Orion . The creature succeeded , and after his death , the goddesses asked Zeus to place Orion among the constellations . Zeus consented and , as a memorial to the hero 's death , added the Scorpion to

the heavens as well .

= = = Other sources = = =

Although Orion has a few lines in both Homeric poems and in the Works and Days , most of the stories about him are recorded in incidental allusions and in fairly obscure later writings . No great poet standardized the legend . The ancient sources for Orion 's legend are mostly notes in the margins of ancient poets (scholia) or compilations by later scholars , the equivalent of modern reference works or encyclopedias ; even the legend from Hesiod 's Astronomy survives only in one such compilation . In several cases , including the summary of the Astronomy , although the surviving work bears the name of a famous scholar , such as Apollodorus of Athens , Eratosthenes , or Gaius Julius Hyginus , what survives is either an ancient forgery or an abridgement of the original compilation by a later writer of dubious competence ; editors of these texts suggest that they may have borne the names of great scholars because they were abridgments , or even pupil 's notes , based on the works of the scholars .

The margin of the Empress Eudocia 's copy of the Iliad has a note summarizing a Hellenistic poet who tells a different story of Orion 's birth . Here the gods Zeus , Hermes and Poseidon come to visit Hyrieus of Tanagra , who roasts a whole bull for them . When they offer him a favor , he asks for the birth of sons . The gods take the bull 's hide and ejaculate or urinate into it and bury it in the earth , then tell him to dig it up ten months later . When he does , he finds Orion ; this explains why Orion is earthborn .

A second full telling (even shorter than the summary of Hesiod) is in a Roman @-@ era collection of myths ; the account of Orion is based largely on the mythologist and poet Pherecydes of Leros . Here Orion is described as earthborn and enormous in stature . This version also mentions Poseidon and Euryale as his parents . It adds a first marriage to Side before his marriage to Merope . All that is known about Side is that Hera threw her into Hades for rivalling her in beauty . It also gives a different version of Orion 's death than the Iliad : Eos , the Dawn , fell in love with Orion and took him to Delos where Artemis killed him .

Another narrative on the constellations , three paragraphs long , is from a Latin writer whose brief notes have come down to us under the name of Hyginus . It begins with the oxbite story of Orion 's birth , which this source ascribes to Callimachus and Aristomachus , and sets the location at Thebes or Chios . Hyginus has two versions . In one of them he omits Poseidon ; a modern critic suggests this is the original version .

The same source tells two stories of the death of Orion . The first says that because of his " living joined in too great a friendship " with Oenopion , he boasted to Artemis and Leto that he could kill anything which came from Earth . Earth objected and created the Scorpion . In the second story , Apollo objected to his sister Artemis 's love for Orion , and , seeing Orion swimming with just his head visible , challenged her to shoot at that mark , which she hit , killing him . He connects Orion with several constellations , not just Scorpio . Orion chased Pleione , the mother of the Pleiades , for seven years , until Zeus intervened and raised all of them to the stars . In Works and Days , Orion chases the Pleiades themselves . Canis Minor and Canis Major are his dogs , the one in front is called Procyon . They chase Lepus , the hare , although Hyginus says some critics thought this too base a prey for the noble Orion and have him pursuing Taurus , the bull , instead . A Renaissance mythographer adds other names for Orion 's dogs : Leucomelaena , Maera , Dromis , Cisseta , Lampuris , Lycoctonus , Ptoophagus , Arctophonus .

= = = Variants = = =

There are numerous variants in other authors . Most of these are incidental references in poems and scholiasts . The Roman poet Vergil shows Orion as a giant wading through the Aegean Sea with the waves breaking against his shoulders ; rather than , as the mythographers have it , walking on the water . There are several references to Hyrieus as the father of Orion that connect him to various places in Boeotia , including Hyria ; this may well be the original story (although not the first

attested) , since Hyrieus is presumably the eponym of Hyria . He is also called Oeneus , although he is not the Calydonian Oeneus . Other ancient scholia say , as Hesiod does , that Orion was the son of Poseidon and his mother was a daughter of Minos ; but they call the daughter Brylle or Hyeles . There are two versions where Artemis killed Orion , either with her arrows or by producing the Scorpion . In the second variant , Orion died of the Scorpion 's sting as he does in Hesiod . Although Orion does not defeat the Scorpion in any version , several variants have it die from its wounds . Artemis is given various motives . One is that Orion boasted of his beast @-@ killing and challenged her to a contest with the discus . Another is that he assaulted either Artemis or the Hyperborean maiden Opis in her band of huntresses . Aratus 's brief description , in his *Astronomy* , conflates the elements of the myth : according to Aratus , Orion attacks Artemis while hunting on Chios , and the Scorpion kills him there . Nicander , in his *Theriaca* , has the scorpion of ordinary size and hiding under a small (*oligos*) stone . Most versions of the story that continue after Orion 's death tell of the gods raising Orion and the Scorpion to the stars , but even here a variant exists : Ancient poets differed greatly as to who Aesculapius brought back from the dead ; the Argive epic poet Telesarchus is quoted as saying in a scholion that Aesculapius resurrected Orion . Other ancient authorities are quoted anonymously that Aesculapius healed Orion after he was blinded by Oenopion .

The story of Orion and Oenopion also varies . One source refers to Merope as the wife of Oenopion and not his daughter . Another refers to Merope as the daughter of Minos and not of Oenopion . The longest version (a page in the Loeb) is from a collection of melodramatic plots drawn up by an Alexandrian poet for the Roman Cornelius Gallus to make into Latin verse . It describes Orion as slaying the wild beasts of Chios and looting the other inhabitants to make a bride @-@ price for Oenopion 's daughter , who is called Aëro or Leiro . Oenopion does not want to marry her to someone like Orion , and eventually Orion , in frustration , breaks into her bedchamber and rapes her . The text implies that Oenopion blinds him on the spot .

Lucian includes a picture with Orion in a rhetorical description of an ideal building , in which Orion is walking into the rising sun with Lemnos nearby , Cedalion on his shoulder . He recovers his sight there with Hephaestus still watching in the background .

The next picture deals with the ancient story of Orion . He is blind , and on his shoulder carries Cedalion , who directs the sightless eyes towards the East . The rising Sun heals his infirmity ; and there stands Hephaestus on Lemnos , watching the cure .

Latin sources add that Oenopion was the son of Dionysus . Dionysus sent satyrs to put Orion into a deep sleep so he could be blinded . One source tells the same story but converts Oenopion into Minos of Crete . It adds that an oracle told Orion that his sight could be restored by walking eastward and that he found his way by hearing the Cyclops ' hammer , placing a Cyclops as a guide on his shoulder ; it does not mention Cabeiri or Lemnos ? this is presumably the story of Cedalion recast . Both Hephaestus and the Cyclopes were said to make thunderbolts ; they are combined in other sources . One scholion , on a Latin poem , explains that Hephaestus gave Orion a horse .

Giovanni Boccaccio cites a lost Latin writer for the story that Orion and Candiope were son and daughter of Oenopion , king of Sicily . While the virgin huntsman Orion was sleeping in a cave , Venus seduced him ; as he left the cave , he saw his sister shining as she crossed in front of it . He ravished her ; when his father heard of this , he banished Orion . Orion consulted an oracle , which told him that if he went east , he would regain the glory of kingship . Orion , Candiope , and their son Hippologus sailed to Thrace , " a province eastward from Sicily " . There he conquered the inhabitants , and became known as the son of Neptune . His son begat the Dryas mentioned in Statius .

= = Cult and popular appreciation = =

In Ancient Greece , Orion had a hero cult in the region of Boeotia . The number of places associated with his birth suggest that it was widespread . Hyria , the most frequently mentioned , was in the territory of Tanagra . A feast of Orion was held at Tanagra as late as the Roman Empire . They had a tomb of Orion most likely at the foot of Mount Cerycius (now Mount Tanagra) . Maurice

Bowra argues that Orion was a national hero of the Boeotians , much as Castor and Pollux were for the Dorians . He bases this claim on the Athenian epigram on the Battle of Coronea in which a hero gave the Boeotian army an oracle , then fought on their side and defeated the Athenians .

The Boeotian school of epic poetry was chiefly concerned with the genealogies of the gods and heroes ; later writers elaborated this web . Several other myths are attached to Orion in this way : A papyrus fragment of the Boeotian poet Corinna gives Orion fifty sons (a traditional number) . This included the oracular hero Acraephen , who , she sings , gave a response to Asopus regarding Asopus ' daughters who were abducted by the gods . Corinna sang of Orion conquering and naming all the land of the dawn . Bowra argues that Orion was believed to have delivered oracles as well , probably at a different shrine . Hyginus says that Hylas 's mother was Menodice , daughter of Orion . Another mythographer , Liberalis , tells of Menippe and Metioche , daughters of Orion , who sacrificed themselves for their country 's good and were transformed into comets .

Orion also has etiological connection to the city of Messina in Sicily . Diodorus of Sicily wrote a history of the world up to his own time (the beginning of the reign of Augustus) . He starts with the gods and the heroes . At the end of this part of the work , he tells the story of Orion and two wonder @-@ stories of his mighty earth @-@ works in Sicily . One tells how he aided Zancus , the founder of Zancle (the former name for Messina) , by building the promontory which forms the harbor . The other , which Diodorus ascribes to Hesiod , relates that there was once a broad sea between Sicily and the mainland . Orion built the whole Peloris , the Punta del Faro , and the temple to Poseidon at the tip , after which he settled in Euboea . He was then " numbered among the stars of heaven and thus won for himself immortal remembrance " . The Renaissance historian and mathematician Francesco Maurolico , who came from Messina , identified the remains of a temple of Orion near the present Messina Cathedral . Maurolico also designed an ornate fountain , built by the sculptor Giovanni Angelo Montorsoli in 1547 , in which Orion is a central figure , symbolizing the Emperor Charles V , also a master of the sea and restorer of Messina ; Orion is still a popular symbol of the city .

Images of Orion in classical art are difficult to recognize , and clear examples are rare . There are several ancient Greek images of club @-@ carrying hunters that could represent Orion , but such generic examples could equally represent an archetypal " hunter " , or indeed Heracles . Some claims have been made that other Greek art represents specific aspects of the Orion myth . A tradition of this type has been discerned in 5th century BC Greek pottery ? John Beazley identified a scene of Apollo , Delian palm in hand , revenging Orion for the attempted rape of Artemis , while another scholar has identified a scene of Orion attacking Artemis as she is revenged by a snake (a counterpart to the scorpion) in a funerary group ? supposedly symbolizing the hope that even the criminal Orion could be made immortal , as well as an astronomical scene in which Cephalus is thought to stand in for Orion and his constellation , also reflecting this system of iconography . Also , a tomb frieze in Taranto (ca . 300 BC) may show Orion attacking Opis . But the earliest surviving clear depiction of Orion in classical art is Roman , from the depictions of the Underworld scenes of the Odyssey discovered at the Esquiline Hill (50 ? 40 BC) . Orion is also seen on a 4th @-@ century bas @-@ relief , currently affixed to a wall in the Porto neighborhood of Naples . The constellation Orion rises in November , the end of the sailing season , and was associated with stormy weather , and this characterization extended to the mythical Orion ? the bas @-@ relief may be associated with the sailors of the city .

= = Interpretations = =

= = Renaissance = =

Mythographers have discussed Orion at least since the Renaissance of classical learning ; the Renaissance interpretations were allegorical . In the 14th century , Boccaccio interpreted the oxbite story as representing human conception ; the hide is the womb , Neptune the moisture of semen , Jupiter its heat , and Mercury the female coldness ; he also explained Orion 's death at the hands of

the moon @-@ goddess as the Moon producing winter storms . The 16th @-@ century Italian mythographer Natalis Comes interpreted the whole story of Orion as an allegory of the evolution of a storm cloud : Begotten by air (Zeus) , water (Poseidon) , and the sun (Apollo) , a storm cloud is diffused (Chios , which Comes derives from ??? , " pour out ") , rises though the upper air (Aërope , as Comes spells Merope) , chills (is blinded) , and is turned into rain by the moon (Artemis) . He also explains how Orion walked on the sea : " Since the subtler part of the water which is rarefied rests on the surface , it is said that Orion learned from his father how to walk on water . " Similarly , Orion 's conception made him a symbol of the philosophical child , an allegory of philosophy springing from multiple sources , in the Renaissance as in alchemical works , with some variations . The 16th @-@ century German alchemist Michael Maier lists the fathers as Apollo , Vulcan and Mercury , and the 18th @-@ century French alchemist Antoine @-@ Joseph Pernety gave them as Jupiter , Neptune and Mercury .

= = = Modern = = =

Modern mythographers have seen the story of Orion as a way to access local folk tales and cultic practices directly without the interference of ancient high culture ; several of them have explained Orion , each through his own interpretation of Greek prehistory and of how Greek mythology represents it . There are some points of general agreement between them : for example , that the attack on Opis is an attack on Artemis , for Opis is one of the names of Artemis .

There was a movement in the late nineteenth century to interpret all the Boeotian heroes as merely personifications of the constellations ; there has since come to be wide agreement that the myth of Orion existed before there was a constellation named for him . Homer , for example , mentions Orion , the Hunter , and Orion , the constellation , but never confuses the two . Once Orion was recognized as a constellation , astronomy in turn affected the myth . The story of Side may well be a piece of astronomical mythology . The Greek word side means pomegranate , which bears fruit while Orion , the constellation , can be seen in the night sky . Rose suggests she is connected with Sidae in Boeotia , and that the pomegranate , as a sign of the Underworld , is connected with her descent there .

The 19th @-@ century German classical scholar Erwin Rohde viewed Orion as an example of the Greeks erasing the line between the gods and mankind . That is , if Orion was in the heavens , other mortals could hope to be also .

The Hungarian mythographer Karl Kerényi , one of the founders of the modern study of Greek mythology , wrote about Orion in *Gods of the Greeks* (1951) . Kerényi portrays Orion as a giant of Titanic vigor and criminality , born outside his mother as were Tityos or Dionysus . Kerényi places great stress on the variant in which Merope is the wife of Oenopion . He sees this as the remnant of a lost form of the myth in which Merope was Orion 's mother (converted by later generations to his stepmother and then to the present forms) . Orion 's blinding is therefore parallel to that of Aegyptius and Oedipus .

In *Dionysus* (1976) , Kerényi portrays Orion as a shamanic hunting hero , surviving from Minoan times (hence his association with Crete) . Kerényi derives Hyrieus (and Hyria) from the Cretan dialect word - hyron , meaning " beehive " , which survives only in ancient dictionaries . From this association he turns Orion into a representative of the old mead @-@ drinking cultures , overcome by the wine masters Oenopion and Oeneus . (The Greek for " wine " is oinos .) Fontenrose cites a source stating that Oenopion taught the Chians how to make wine before anybody else knew how .

Joseph Fontenrose wrote *Orion : the Myth of the Hunter and the Huntress* (1981) to show Orion as the type specimen of a variety of grotesque hero . Fontenrose views him as similar to Cúchulainn , that is , stronger , larger , and more potent than ordinary men and the violent lover of the Divine Huntress ; other heroes of the same type are Actaeon , Leucippus (son of Oenomaus) , Cephalus , Teiresias , and Zeus as the lover of Callisto . Fontenrose also sees Eastern parallels in the figures of Aqhat , Attis , Dumuzi , Gilgamesh , Dushyanta , and Prajapati (as pursuer of Ushas) .

In *The Greek Myths* (1955) , Robert Graves views Oenopion as his perennial Year @-@ King , at

the stage where the king pretends to die at the end of his term and appoints a substitute , in this case Orion , who actually dies in his place . His blindness is iconotropy from a picture of Odysseus blinding the Cyclops , mixed with a purely Hellenic solar legend : the Sun @-@ hero is captured and blinded by his enemies at dusk , but escapes and regains his sight at dawn , when all beasts flee him . Graves sees the rest of the myth as a syncretism of diverse stories . These include Gilgamesh and the Scorpion @-@ Men , Set becoming a scorpion to kill Horus and the story of Aqhat and Yatpan from Ras Shamra , as well as a conjectural story of how the priestesses of Artemis Opis killed a visitor to their island of Ortygia . He compares Orion 's birth from the bull 's hide to a West African rainmaking charm and claims that the son of Poseidon should be a rainmaker .

= = Cultural references = =

The ancient Greek and Roman sources which tell more about Orion than his being a gigantic huntsman are mostly both dry and obscure , but poets do write of him : The brief passages in Aratus and Vergil are mentioned above . Pindar celebrates the pancratist Melissus of Thebes " who was not granted the build of an Orion " , but whose strength was still great .

Cicero translated Aratus in his youth ; he made the Orion episode half again longer than it was in the Greek , adding the traditional Latin topos of madness to Aratus 's text . Cicero 's Aratea is one of the oldest Latin poems to come down to us as more than isolated lines ; this episode may have established the technique of including epyllia in non @-@ epic poems .

Orion is used by Horace , who tells of his death at the hands of Diana / Artemis , and by Ovid , in his Fasti for May 11 , the middle day of the Lemuria , when (in Ovid 's time) the constellation Orion set with the sun . Ovid 's episode tells the story of Hyrieus and the three gods , although Ovid is bashful about the climax ; Ovid makes Hyrieus a poor man , which means the sacrifice of an entire ox is more generous . There is also a single mention of Orion in his Art of Love , as a sufferer from unrequited love : " Pale Orion wandered in the forest for Side . "

Statius mentions Orion four times in his Thebaid ; twice as the constellation , a personification of storm , but twice as the ancestor of Dryas of Tanagra , one of the defenders of Thebes . The very late Greek epic poet Nonnus mentions the oxbite story in brief , while listing the Hyrians in his Catalogue of the Boeotian army of Dionysius .

References since antiquity are fairly rare . At the beginning of the 17th century , French sculptor Barthélemy Prieur cast a bronze statue Orion et Cédalion , some time between 1600 and 1611 . This featured Orion with Cédalion on his shoulder , in a depiction of the ancient legend of Orion recovering his sight ; the sculpture is now displayed at the Louvre .

Nicolas Poussin painted Paysage avec Orion aveugle cherchant le soleil (1658) (" Landscape with blind Orion seeking the sun ") , after learning of the description by the 2nd @-@ century Greek author Lucian , of a picture of Orion recovering his sight ; Poussin included a storm @-@ cloud , which both suggests the transient nature of Orion 's blindness , soon to be removed like a cloud exposing the sun , and includes Natalis Comes ' esoteric interpretation of Orion as a storm @-@ cloud . Poussin need not have consulted Lucian directly ; the passage is in the notes of the illustrated French translation of Philostratus ' Imagines which Poussin is known to have consulted . The Austrian Daniel Seiter (active in Turin , Italy) , painted Diane auprès du cadavre d 'Orion (c.1685) (" Diana next to Orion 's corpse ") , pictured above .

In Endymion (1818) , John Keats includes the line " Or blind Orion hungry for the morn " , thought to be inspired by Poussin . William Hazlitt may have introduced Keats to the painting ? he later wrote the essay " On Landscape of Nicholas Poussin " , published in Table Talk , Essays on Men and Manners (1821 @-@ 2) . Richard Henry Horne , writing in the generation after Keats and Hazlitt , penned the three volume epic poem Orion in 1843 . It went into at least ten editions and was reprinted by the Scholartis Press in 1928 .

Science fiction author Ben Bova re @-@ invented Orion as a time @-@ traveling servant of various gods in a series of five novels . In The Blood of Olympus , the final volume of a series , Rick Riordan depicts Orion as one of the giant sons of the Earth Goddess Gaea .

Italian composer Francesco Cavalli wrote the opera , L 'Orione in 1653 . The story is set on the

Greek island of Delos and focuses on Diana 's love for Orion as well as on her rival , Aurora . Diana shoots Orion only after being tricked by Apollo into thinking him a sea monster ? she then laments his death and searches for Orion in the underworld until he is elevated to the heavens . Johann Christian Bach (' the English Bach ') wrote an opera , Orion , or Diana Reveng 'd , first presented at London 's Haymarket Theatre in 1763 . Orion , sung by a castrato , is in love with Candiope , the daughter of Oenopion , King of Arcadia but his arrogance has offended Diana . Diana 's oracle forbids him to marry Candiope and foretells his glory and death . He bids a touching farewell to Candiope and marches off to his destiny . Diana allows him his victory and then kills him , offstage , with her arrow . In another aria , his mother Retrea (Queen of Thebes) , laments his death but ultimately sees his elevation to the heavens . The 2002 opera Galileo Galilei by American composer Philip Glass includes an opera within an opera piece between Orion and Merope . The sunlight , which heals Orion 's blindness , is an allegory of modern science . Philip Glass has also written a shorter work on Orion , as have T?ru Takemitsu , Kaija Saariaho , and John Casken . David Bedford 's late @-@ twentieth @-@ century works are about the constellation rather than the mythical figure ; he is an amateur astronomer .

The twentieth @-@ century French poet René Char found the blind , lustful huntsman , both pursuer and pursued , a central symbol , as James Lawler has explained at some length in his 1978 work René Char : the Myth and the Poem . French novelist Claude Simon likewise found Orion an apt symbol , in this case of the writer , as he explained in his Orion aveugle of 1970 . Marion Perret argues that Orion is a silent link in T. S. Eliot 's The Waste Land (1922) , connecting the lustful Actaeon / Sweeney to the blind Teiresias and , through Sirius , to the Dog " that 's friend to men " .