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Oceanids (Ὠκεανίδες). The 'holy company' of daughters of *Ocean and *Tethys, and sisters of the river-gods. Their number varies, but Apollodorus names seven (Asia, *Styx, Electra, Doris, Eurynome, *Amphitrite, *Metis) and Hesiod forty-one, including, in addition to those mentioned by Apollodorus, *Calypso *Clymene and Philyra. Most of those named mated with gods (Amphitrite with Poseidon, Doris with Nereus for example) and produced important offspring (Athena was born from Metis and Zeus, Philyra mated with Kronos in the form of a horse and produced the centaur Chiron, Clymene was the mother of Prometheus, and also bore Phaethon to Helios the sun-god.). The sons of Ocean were the fresh-water rivers, but some of the daughters were sea-nymphs, others spirits of streams called after a characteristic of their water such as Ocyrrhoe ('swift-flowing') or Xanthe ('brownish-yellow'); Styx, unusually, was a female river deity, personifying the river of Hades. Calypso ruled over the island kingdom of Ogygia (but her parentage as a true Oceanid is disputed). Metis had the ability, common to sea-gods, of being able to change her shape, although she was little more than the personification of wisdom, swallowed by Zeus in order to absorb that wisdom and to contain any threat from the child with whom she was pregnant. Oceanids feature as the chorus in *Prometheus Bound*, a tragedy which is set at the north-eastern edge of the known world, and at a time before Zeus had consolidated his power. The Oceanids were part of the older, pre-Olympian race of gods, who had a role as consorts or mothers of other divinities, but were more often viewed anonymously as belonging to the vastness of the sea, to be placated in times of storm and turbulence. [Aeschylus *PV*; Apollodorus 1.2.2; Apollonius 4.1414-21; Hesiod *Theog* 346-66; Vergil *Georg* 4.341-2]

Oceanus (Ὠκεανός). The god of the encircling stream of Ocean, which was originally thought to hold within its embrace all the lands of a flat round earth and to be the ultimate source of all its seas, rivers, springs and waters. Helios, the sun-god, started the day from its eastern shores and sank into its stream in the west in the evening, to be brought back to the east each night in its current. The *Hesperides had their garden on the western bank, the *Islands of the Blessed were located in its stream there, and on the far side was the realm of the dead, visited by *Odysseus (although in sources other than the Homeric poems this territory was literally the 'underworld', situated beneath the earth in the western lands of Italy or Sicily). The river Ocean originally represented the furthest limits of travel, but later, with the advance of geographical knowledge, the term was applied only to the Atlantic as marking the boundary of the Mediterranean lands. The eponymous god Oceanus is given in Hesiod as one of the Titans, the oldest son of Gaia (earth) and Uranus (sky), who married his sister *Tethys; this early partnership was said to have provided evidence in philosophy that water was the first cause (ἀρχή) in nature. Oceanus fathered all the river-gods and the *Oceanids, and with Tethys cared for *Hera, when she was taken from Rhea after the overthrow of the Titans. Oceanus himself, out of respect for Zeus, did not take part in the battle of the Titans, and so his honours were preserved. He plays a part in *Prometheus Bound* as the father of the chorus of Oceanids and as an ally of Zeus who attempts to dissuade Prometheus from his opposition to the god. [Aeschylus *PV* 298-396; Apollodorus 1.1.3, 2.2; Aristotle *Met* 983b30; Hesiod *Theog* 133, 337-70; Homer *Il* 14.200-4, 21.193-199, *Od* 10.508, 11.13-22; Pindar *Pyth* 4.26, 251]

Ocnus (Ὦκνος). One of the criminals who was said to suffer eternal torment in Hades. His particular punishment was to plait continually a rope of straw which was being consumed by a donkey at the same rate at which it was being plaited. The myth was taken to explain the situation of a hardworking man with an extravagant wife who spent his substance as fast as he

could earn it. 'Plaiting the rope of Ocnus' became proverbial for working on a useless task. [Diodorus 1.97; Pausanias 10.29.1-2; Propertius 4.2.21]

Ocrisia (Ὀκρυσία). A prisoner of war taken at the fall of Corniculum who became the mother of Servius Tullius, the sixth king of Rome. Her mysterious impregnation took place after she saw a phallus arising from the fire in the hearth while she was making an offering to the household gods. She was advised by her mistress Tanaquil, the wife of Tarquinius Priscus, to dress as a bride, and to sit once more before the fire alone, and in this way she was said to have conceived a son by *Vulcan. In less dramatic versions of the story Ocrisia was either already pregnant on her arrival at Rome, or the father of the child was an anonymous member of the household. According to Livy, Ocrisia and Tanaquil became friends and brought the child up together. [Livy 1.39.5-6; Ovid *Fasti* 6.627-34]

Ocyrrhoe (Ὀκυρρόη). **1.** One of the daughters of Oceanus, she mated with *Helios and bore him a son Phasis. Subsequently Phasis killed her after discovering her with a lover, and then leapt into the river Acturus, which was renamed after him. [Hesiod *Theog* 360; Plutarch *Fluv* 5.1] **2.** A daughter of the nymph Chisias and the river Iambrasos. Apollo fell in love with her but the nymph left Samos for Miletus under the protection of Pompilus, a sailor friend of her father, to escape the god's attentions. Apollo however changed Pompilus into a fish and his boat into a rock, and so cleared the way for his rape of the girl. [Athenaeus 7.283e] **3.** The child of the centaur *Chiron and the nymph Charido. This Ocyrrhoe had the gift of prophecy but used it indiscriminately, revealing their destinies both to Chiron and to the child Asclepius, who was being reared by Chiron. To prevent further revelations she was changed into a mare by the gods and re-named Hippo. [Ovid *Met* 2.635-78]

Odius (Ὀδῖος). A herald of the Greek forces during the Trojan War, who with Eurybatus was sent by Agamemnon to escort Phoenix, Ajax and Odysseus on their embassy to *Achilles. his name means 'of the road'. [Homer *Il* 9.170]

Odysseus (Ὀδυσσεύς, Latin 'Ulysses', 'Ulixus'). King of Ithaca and one of the most famous personalities in Greek myth – the much-travelled man of many wiles. He is an important figure in the *Iliad* and the main character in the *Odyssey*, the archetypal adventurer and survivor, who uses his cunning and powers of persuasion to compensate for his comparative lack of physical strength. Although Odysseus did not have the heroic fighting qualities of Achilles or Ajax, his quick-wittedness throughout his long series of adventures has made him a universally popular figure.

Odysseus was the only son of *Laertes, king of Ithaca and Anticleia, daughter of the famous thief *Autolycus. Post-Homeric sources suggest that his mother was in fact pregnant by *Sisyphus on her marriage to Laertes, so that Odysseus was descended from rogues on both sides of his family. Once in his youth Odysseus visited his grandfather Autolycus near Parnassus, and it was while he was on a boar hunt there that he was injured, and received the scar on his leg that led to his recognition by his nurse *Eurycleia on his final return home. In his early years in Ithaca Odysseus took part in many minor skirmishes with neighbouring kingdoms over cattle-rustling, and during one raid in Messenia he met *Iphitus, the son of Eurytus, who gave him the great bow that had belonged to his father. Odysseus so valued this bow that he vowed never to use it in war, and it was kept in Ithaca during the Trojan campaign. When Odysseus came of age Laertes abdicated, and went into retirement in the country. Odysseus was at this time one of the many suitors for the hand of *Helen, daughter of Tyndareus of Sparta; he realised that she would choose *Menelaus, and so he came to an agreement with her father. To avoid trouble from the rejected suitors. Odysseus advised him

to ensure that all the suitors swore an oath to defend whoever was chosen against any harm that might occur as a result of the marriage. The oath was sworn, and in return Tyndareus used his influence with his brother Icarius for his daughter *Penelope to marry Odysseus; another source has Penelope as the prize won in a foot-race organised by her father. The oath sworn by the suitors was soon put into effect after Helen's abduction to Troy by Paris. An expedition was mounted to rescue her by Menelaus' brother *Agamemnon, who summoned all the suitors to raise contingents according to the oath they had sworn and to fight overseas with his Argive forces. Odysseus was living quietly in Ithaca with Penelope and their infant son *Telemachus then, and had no desire to fight in what he realised would be a protracted war. When Menelaus and *Palamedes arrived to recruit him they found the king in the fields pretending to be mad, ploughing with an ox and a horse yoked to the same plough, and sowing the furrows with salt. Palamedes realised that Odysseus was feigning madness to avoid the Trojan expedition so he placed the baby Telemachus before the plough; Odysseus swerved to avoid the child and thus revealed his sanity, and was forced to join the expedition. He never forgave Palamedes for this trick, and took his revenge later in the war.

At Troy Odysseus proved himself an able commander, as well as being quick-witted and a persuasive speaker, so that he soon became one of Agamemnon's most trusted captains. When Odysseus spoke in the assembly his eloquence belied his short stature and he usually had his way, most notably at the end of the war when he persuaded the Greeks to award him the divine armour of *Achilles in preference to the better qualified *Ajax. Indeed Odysseus was responsible for bringing Achilles to Troy in the first place: Achilles had been hidden by his mother Thetis (who knew death awaited him at Troy) at the court of Lycomedes of Scyros where he was disguised as a girl. Odysseus discovered the identity of Achilles in the group of girls by blowing a trumpet and noting the reaction; Achilles' instinctive response gave him away, and he agreed to join the expedition to Troy. When the Greek fleet was becalmed at Aulis, it was Odysseus who was sent with *Diomedes to fetch Agamemnon's daughter *Iphigeneia from Mycenae to Aulis to be sacrificed to appease Artemis; he won the assent of the girl's mother, *Clytemnestra, to take the girl to her father on the pretext that she was to be married to Achilles, the most eligible bachelor in the Greek camp. After the sacrifice the winds began to blow and the fleet was able to sail. During the journey the hero *Philoctetes was bitten by a snake; the stench from his infected wound and his pain were such that Odysseus persuaded Agamemnon to abandon him on the island of Lemnos, but later he had to return when Philoctetes' bow was necessary for a Greek victory. On the arrival of the fleet at Troy Odysseus and Menelaus were sent as ambassadors to request the return of Helen. The mission was a failure, and the two only escaped death through the intervention of *Antenor; in return for his assistance Antenor and his family were spared at the fall of Troy. Odysseus never forgot a good turn or a wrong done to him; at about the same time as he showed his gratitude to Antenor Odysseus had Palamedes stoned to death on a false charge of treachery.

Odysseus was sent with Ajax and Phoenix on another unsuccessful embassy – to negotiate peace between Agamemnon and Achilles after their quarrel, but Achilles was obdurate and refused the recompense offered. Odysseus also often took part in undercover operations during the siege of Troy, often with *Diomedes. The two killed the Trojan spy *Dolon after obtaining information on the enemy troop positions from him; they killed the Thracian king Rhesus and captured his prized horses; and most importantly they captured *Helenus, one of Priam's sons, who had the gift of prophecy. It was from him that they learned about the oracles concerning the fall of Troy, in particular that before the Greeks could take the city three conditions had to be fulfilled: the enlistment of *Neoptolemus the son of Achilles in the Greek forces; the return of the bow and arrows of Heracles, which had been left with Philoctetes on Lemnos, and the theft of the *Palladium from the Trojan citadel. Odysseus was a key figure in all three of these tasks. He persuaded Neoptolemus to come to

Troy, he stole the Palladium (during this foray he was recognised by both Helen and Hecuba, but neither betrayed him) and he brought Philoctetes back to Troy, first trying to do so by treachery, and then according to the instructions of Heracles himself. The most famous example of Odysseus' devious cleverness was his idea of ending the long siege at Troy by means of the *Trojan horse. He supervised the construction of the hollow wooden animal, filled it with the best of the Greek commanders, and ensured that *Sinon tricked the Trojans into taking it into the city. In the night the hidden Greeks climbed out of the horse, opened the city-gates to the rest of the army, and sacked the city. Although Antenor and his family were spared, Odysseus had little compassion for the other Trojans or indeed for any enemy. After the sack of the city it was he who insisted that Hector's young son, *Astyanax be thrown to his death, thus ending the line of Priam, and he was mainly responsible for the sacrifice of *Polyxena on the grave of Achilles. He gained the goodwill of Athena through his defence of her when he demanded the stoning of *Ajax of Locris after Ajax had attempted to rape *Cassandra, the daughter of Priam and Apollo's priestess, who had claimed asylum at Athena's altar. The offended goddess caused Ajax, along with most of the other Greeks, to be destroyed on his return home in a storm off Cape Capherus in Euboea. Odysseus left later than the main fleet and escaped the storm, and from then on came under the special protection of Athena.

So began the long journey home for Odysseus. His first landing was at Ismarus in Thrace where his crew sacked the city, only sparing *Maron, a priest of Apollo, and his wife, who in exchange gave him a large quantity of fine wine. The crew, ignoring Odysseus' warnings, stayed too long with the spoils and were attacked by neighbouring tribes; many of the sailors were killed, the first of many examples on their voyages of a heavy price paid for not heeding Odysseus' advice. The rest of the fleet travelled on to the southern tip of the Peloponnese and were nearly home, when they were swept off course by a strong north wind for nine days, and ended up on the coast of north Africa. Odysseus sent scouts to explore the hinterland, and when they did not return he went in search of them himself and found them in the land of the Lotus-eaters, a peaceful, idle people who used to eat the flowers of the Lotus, which made them permanently apathetic. Odysseus had to bind his men and take them back to the ships by force before he could resume their journey.

The next stop was at the land of the *Cyclopes, usually identified as Sicily. Here was found a tribe of one-eyed giants who were described as not meeting in assemblies, obeying any rule of law, respecting strangers or honouring the ties of guest-friendship. They lived a pastoral life, tending sheep and goats, isolated on their island from outside influences. Odysseus landed and investigated a large cave which was the home of one of the Cyclopes; his crew wanted to take the cheeses and goats which were in the cave and leave, but Odysseus insisted on waiting for the owner's return, confident of an exchange of gifts and suitable hospitality. The giant, called Polyphemus, returned with his flocks at dusk, drove them into the cave, and then sealed the entrance with an enormous rock. The Greeks were terrified, and, when Polyphemus noticed them, Odysseus explained that they were shipwrecked sailors seeking hospitality. The Cyclops scoffed at such a concept, claiming to recognise neither Zeus nor his laws, and then promptly snatched two members of the crew and ate them alive. Next morning, after a breakfast of two more men, Polyphemus went out with his flocks to pasture, and Odysseus worked out a plan of escape. On Polyphemus' return with his sheep that evening, Odysseus offered him some of Maron's good wine, and, unused to wine, the Cyclops fell into a drunken stupor. While he was in this state Odysseus and his men heated a pointed stake in the fire until it was hardened, and thrust it into the Cyclops' one eye. He screamed in agony and his fellow Cyclopes rushed to help him; but when they asked who had injured him he said 'Nobody' (the name Odysseus had tricked him with), so they left him alone. The blinded giant now opened the cave but sat in the doorway as his flocks left, feeling

over them so that he would catch the Greeks if they attempted to escape. Odysseus tied his crew beneath the ewes and himself gripped the belly of a large ram, and so they escaped out of the cave and back to their ships. Odysseus however could not resist shouting taunts at the Cyclops as they were sailing away, this time telling the giant his real name. The Cyclops recalled an oracle which had foretold such a visitor, and called down the curse of his father Poseidon on Odysseus. The blinding of Polyphemus and Odysseus' triumph over him was the cause of Poseidon's anger against Odysseus and many of his subsequent misfortunes.

Odysseus' travels then took him beyond the boundaries of the known world. He sailed to the court of *Aeolus who ruled the winds, and was given a bag containing all the winds enclosed in it except for the west wind which was needed to take him homeward. Unfortunately the crew believed the sack contained treasure and opened it, releasing the storm winds which blew them back to their starting point. Aeolus refused to help them further so they moved next to Telepylus, home of the Laestrygonians, another race of giants. Here all the ships, except that of Odysseus, which he had cautiously left outside the harbour, were crushed by rocks and their crews speared and eaten by this vicious race. Odysseus' ship sailed on to the Isle of Aea. The exhausted crew remained with the ship while Odysseus explored the island. He came upon a house surrounded by woodland, which was the home of *Circe, daughter of Helios and Perse, an enchantress who was expert in drugs and magical herbs, and famed for her ability to change humans into animals. The crew was divided into two and they drew lots to explore. *Eurylochus led his party away, but soon returned alone with his tale of tragedy. The men had arrived at the house which was surrounded by friendly wolves and lions; a beautiful woman had then emerged and offered them hospitality, but, while Eurylochus remained outside, he saw her transform the crew into swine with the touch of her wand. Odysseus left at once on hearing this, and on the way met the messenger god Hermes who gave him the magic plant moly to protect him against Circe's drugs and instructions on how to deal with her. Accordingly, when Circe attempted to drug and transform him, he drew his sword on her, and had her weeping at his feet. They became lovers, Circe swore an oath not to harm him, and returned his crew to their human shape. After a year of dalliance the crew persuaded Odysseus to leave and the goddess agreed to help him, recommending first that he visit the Underworld to seek advice for the journey home from the dead prophet *Teiresias. Odysseus and his crew followed her directions and sailed to the stream of *Ocean where, in the sunless land of the Cimmerians, they offered the sacrifice for the dead. At the spot where the rivers of the underworld meet they dug a pit and offered libations of milk, honey, wine, water and the blood of a black ewe and a ram. As the blood flowed into the trench the ghosts came swarming to drink but Odysseus held them back with his sword, speaking first to Elpenor, the comrade who had died most recently and who now begged for burial. Then he talked with the shade of his mother who had died during his long absence, and then to the prophet Teiresias. Teiresias warned Odysseus that Poseidon was against his return home, and that a long and difficult voyage lay ahead, but eventually he would reach home safely. On his return to Ithaca however he would find his house full of suitors for his wife's hand, and he would have to kill them all. Even then he could not expect a peaceful life, but he must wander again, carrying an oar on his shoulder to a land so far from the sea that the inhabitants would think that the oar was a winnowing fan; but in the end he would meet his death from the sea. Odysseus also spoke to the shades of his comrades who had died at Troy or during their voyage home, including Achilles and Agamemnon, both especially bitter at their fate. He also saw among others the shades of *Minos and the great criminals *Sisyphus and *Tantalus. Elpenor, as he had requested, was given burial rites on the men's return to Aea and the home of Circe.

Circe offered them hospitality once more, and gave them invaluable advice on how to navigate the remaining obstacles on their journey. As she had instructed, when they sailed

past the island of the *Sirens, Odysseus stopped the ears of his crew with wax so that they would not be bewitched by their song, but he told them to tie him to the mast so that he could hear them singing but be unable to reach them, however much he wished it. Circe had also warned him of the whirlpool, *Charybdis, which was in a narrow strait, but to avoid it he had to row against the opposite rock face, where there was the threat of *Scylla, the female monster with a circle of six dogs' heads around her waist. Odysseus decided to risk losing six men to her to avoid Charybdis, which would sink them all. Thrinacia was the ship's next landfall and, although, as warned, the crew had every intention of avoiding the herds of the sun-god Helios that were pastured there, they were marooned for so long that starvation drove them to kill and eat some of the cattle. Zeus was forced to avenge the insult to Helios, and, when the ship was finally able to sail, he sent a storm which destroyed it together with the crew. Only Odysseus survived, clinging to some of the wreckage of the ship until, after drifting for nine days, he was washed up on the isle of Ogygia. This was the home of the Oceanid *Calypso and her nymphs. Calypso fell in love with Odysseus and kept him with her there for seven years, offering him immortality if he would remain with her, but Odysseus longed for home and his wife. Athena finally took pity on him and through Hermes arranged for his release from Calypso. The goddess gave him tools to make a boat and filled it with provisions, and, while Poseidon was out of the way on a visit to the Ethiopians, she started him on his journey. Calypso was said to have borne Odysseus two sons, Nausinous and Nausithous. Odysseus sailed on for seventeen days until he sighted the hills of the island of Phaeacia. Poseidon however had by now returned, and, in his fury at Odysseus' progress, caused a storm which capsized his boat. Odysseus was forced to abandon the boat and leap into the sea, but, with the help of the sea goddess *Leucothea, he survived and was washed up on the coast of Phaeacia. Athena, appearing in a dream to *Nausicaa, the daughter of Alcinous, king of Phaeacia, suggested that Nausicaa with her maids should take the family's fine clothes to the shore to wash them, which they accordingly did. While the girls were playing ball after their work Odysseus was awakened by their cries when the ball went into the water. He suddenly appeared before them, hiding his nakedness with a branch from a tree. Only Nausicaa stood her ground as the others fled, and Odysseus entreated her for help with words of subtle flattery. In her dignified reply she agreed to help him, and gave instructions for him to return to the city and present himself to her mother Arete as a suppliant. Odysseus spent some time at the palace enjoying the Phaeacians' hospitality, and eventually revealed his identity in a long tale of his adventures. The king sent him back to Ithaca in a Phaeacian ship laden with gifts. Odysseus fell into a deep sleep on the journey and was left by the crew on the shores of his homeland, surrounded by his treasure. As the Phaeacians returned home Poseidon punished them for helping his enemy by turning the ship to stone.

When Odysseus awoke he did not realise that he was on Ithaca until the goddess Athena appeared to him in disguise, told him where he was and advised him to hide his treasure in a nearby cave and to lay his plans carefully. His court was full of the suitors who were pressing his wife Penelope for a decision now that her ruse of weaving a shroud by day and unravelling it at night had been discovered. The goddess disguised Odysseus, ageing him and dressing him in rags to ensure his anonymity, and sent him first to the hut of his faithful swineherd *Eumaeus, from whom he learnt about the suitors and the grief and loneliness of his father Laertes. There Odysseus met his son Telemachus on his return from Sparta and revealed himself to him; he gave instructions for Telemachus to return to the palace and clear all the arms from the hall where the suitors feasted. When Odysseus reached the palace he was recognised by his faithful hound Argus who had waited nearly twenty years for his master; the dog wagged his tail with pleasure and then died. Odysseus entered his hall and begged food from the feasting suitors, but received only insults and blows. Penelope then appeared and addressed the suitors, saying that she would soon make her decision, and upbraided them

for ruining her home with their rude manners and lack of respect for Odysseus' property. After further incidents Odysseus and his son stripped the hall of weapons and locked them in the cellars, and later Penelope and her disguised husband talked by the fireside at the end of the day. She told him of her success at keeping the suitors waiting and asked for news of her husband; Odysseus promised that he would indeed return soon. The old nurse *Eurycleia recognised Odysseus as she was washing his feet by the old scar on his leg, and she too was sworn to secrecy. Penelope told Odysseus that she had planned a contest based on a feat her husband had performed: twelve axes would be set up and whoever could shoot an arrow through all the handles with the king's great bow of Odysseus would become her husband; and he encouraged her to arrange this contest.

The next day the suitors began their feasting again and ignored all manner of omens of their fate, even the prophecies of Theoclymenus who had come from Pylos with Telemachus. Penelope announced the contest, brought out the great bow, and Telemachus set up the axes. Meanwhile Odysseus had revealed himself to Eumaeus and the cowherd Philoetius, and, on his instructions, the servants barred the doors into the hall and Penelope was escorted to her rooms. Meanwhile, in the contest outside, none of the suitors was able even to string the bow, but Odysseus strung it and shot the arrow through the axes without rising from his stool. Then together with his son and Eumaeus, and assisted by Athena disguised as Mentor, he systematically destroyed all the suitors, sparing only the bard Phemius and the herald Medon. Eurycleia was told to bring together the unfaithful maidservants who were made to carry out the bodies and clean up the carnage; then they were taken out and all hanged. Penelope, who had been drugged by Athena and slept through these events, could not at first believe Eurycleia's account of her husband's return, and was only truly convinced of his identity when he evaded the trap she set him by asking for their bed to be moved, and he reminded her of how he had constructed this marriage-bed from a living tree, to be immovable. Finally Odysseus revealed himself to his aged father, and the family discussed how they could avoid fighting their neighbours, who would want revenge for the massacre of the suitors. Battle was about to break out again, but Athena, again in the form of Mentor, re-established peace on the instructions of Zeus.

Here the *Odyssey* ends, and the later travels of Odysseus narrated in the cycle of epic poems follow the prophecies of Teiresias to him in the Homeric account of his visit to the world of the dead. So it was told that Odysseus did indeed cross to the mainland from Ithaca, and travelled inland until he found a people who did not recognise his oar, but mistook it for a winnowing fan. There he sacrificed to Poseidon and finally appeased the god, after which he returned to Ithaca to retire in peace with Penelope. In other versions he was said to have continued his travels, marrying the queen of the Threspontians, Callidice, while Penelope was still alive. He only left for home when Callidice died, and he could pass on the succession to their son Polypoetes. Finally Odysseus was said to have been killed by another son of his, *Telegonus, his child by Circe. Telegonus came to look for his father but in a skirmish killed him with his spear without realising who he was. And so Odysseus met his death from the sea as foretold by Teiresias, for the spear of Telegonus was tipped with poison from the stingray. [Apollodorus 3.10.8, *Ep* 4.3-4, 5.4, 6, 8-14, 19-21, 7.3-17, 34-40; Euripides *Cyclops*, *Hecuba* 218-401, *Rhesus*, *Trojan Women*; Homer *Iliad*, *Odyssey*; Hyginus 81, 95-6, 107-8, 125-7; Ovid *Met* 13.1-383, 14.180-319, *Heroides* 1; Epic Cycle: *Cypria* 19, *Telegony*; Sophocles *Ajax*, *Philoctetes*; Vergil *Aen* 2-3]

Oeax (*Oίαξ*). The son of Nauplius and Clymene, and brother to *Palamedes and Nausimedon. When Palamedes was stoned to death by the Greek army Oeax wrote a message to his father on an oar, telling him of the tragedy, in the hope that the sea-faring Nauplius would discover the oar floating on the waves during one of his voyages. According to Hyginus it was the fact

that Oeax told *Clytemnestra that Agamemnon was returning home with a Trojan concubine that induced her to murder her husband. [Apollodorus 2.1.5, 3.2.2; Hyginus 117; Pausanias 1.22.6.]

Oebalus (*Οἴβαλος*). **1.** A king of Sparta, whose father is named either as Cynortas or his son Perieres. Oebalus married *Gorgophone, the daughter of Perseus, after she was widowed and had by her three sons – *Tyndareus, *Hippocoon and *Icarius – and two daughters called Arene and Peirene. [Apollodorus 3.10.3-4; Pausanias 2.21.7.] **2.** The son of Telon and the nymph Sebethis. Telon established a kingdom on Capri but his son found the island too restrictive and took over an extensive territory on the Italian mainland. He became an ally of Turnus in his war against Aeneas; his contingent included the boomerang-throwing fighters from Apella. [Vergil *Aen* 7.733-43]

Oecles (*Οἴκλις*). The son of Antiphates who married *Hypermetra; by her he had several children including Iphianira, Polyboea and *Amphiarus. He accompanied Heracles to Troy and on arrival there was entrusted with the command of his eighteen ships, but Oecles was attacked and killed by Laomedon in the first assault on the fleet. Pausanias locates his tomb in Megalopolis in Arcadia. [Apollodorus 2.6.4; Diodorus 4.32.3; Euripides *Supp* 925-7; Homer *Od* 15.243-4; Pausanias 8.36.6]

Oedipus (*Οἰδίπους*). One of the most widely known individuals in Greek mythology, famous especially because of the two plays of Sophocles based on his tragedy and Freud's interpretation of them. The myth is far more ancient than the period in which Sophocles was writing but it is his version that has shaped the traditional view of Oedipus. All the sources agree that Oedipus was of the royal house of Thebes, through both paternal and maternal lines. His father was *Laius, son of Labdacus, who was descended from Cadmus, and his ancestors in line from Cadmus had always ruled Thebes. His mother was named Epicaste in Homer but later sources refer to her as *Jocasta. She too was of the Theban royal house, of the line of *Pentheus and, like Oedipus, a descendant of the *Spartoi, the men who had sprung from the dragon's teeth sown by Cadmus. An oracle had been given to Laius stating that any son he might have would kill him. In Sophocles the oracle came at the birth of Oedipus, and to the prophecy of parricide was added the horror of the child marrying his mother, but according to Aeschylus and Euripides the oracle came earlier, and Laius was therefore warned not to father any children. Sophocles gives no reason for the curse, which adds to the tragedy of Oedipus, but other sources report that Laius brought the curse on himself through his own actions, for in his youth Laius had been ousted from Thebes by *Amphion and had taken refuge with *Pelops; there he became obsessed with one of Pelops' sons, Chrysippus, and abducted him, perhaps the first recorded instance in Greek mythology of homosexual love between humans – the grim message of the oracle was then understood to be the answer to Pelops' prayer for vengeance. Whatever the reason, Laius and Jocasta ignored the advice and produced a son. To prevent the child growing up and fulfilling the prophecy, his parents exposed him on Mount Cithaeron with his ankles pierced and pinioned together – the swelling from this wound accounted for the name 'Oedipus'. The shepherd who had been entrusted with the task of exposure took pity on the child and gave it to a fellow herdsman, who in turn presented it to his master, the king of Corinth. In a more obscure version the child was set adrift in a basket at sea, but in either case he was brought to the court of Polybus and Merope at Corinth, who, since they were childless, raised him as their own son. When Oedipus was adult, he was one evening taunted with illegitimacy by a drunkard, and in great distress travelled to Delphi to find the truth from the oracle. Without even waiting to hear his question the *Pythia drove him from the shrine with the warning that he would kill

his father and marry his mother. Oedipus vowed never to return to Corinth and, to avoid his supposed parents, he started walking in the opposite direction towards Boeotia. At the narrow junction where the roads from Thebes, Daulis and Delphi meet, he was approached by an old man riding in a carriage with four retainers; the driver ordered Oedipus to step aside to let the carriage pass. Oedipus refused and in the ensuing confrontation the old man struck down at Oedipus (who was on foot) with his staff from the height of the carriage. Oedipus, enraged, killed the driver, the old man and all the retainers except for one who escaped. He then travelled onwards to Thebes where the city was in the power of the *Sphinx, a winged female with a lion's body, who set a riddle to those entering the town and killed them when they could not solve it. The riddle asked: 'what is it that goes on four legs in the morning, on two legs at midday and three in the evening?'. Oedipus gave the solution with the answer of 'man' – who crawls on all-fours in infancy, walks upright in his prime and uses a staff as a third foot in old age; the Sphinx in chagrin at the right answer given threw herself from the city walls. After the death of Laius (which had not been properly investigated because of the trouble with the Sphinx), Creon, then regent, had offered the throne along with the queen to anyone who freed Thebes from the Sphinx; consequently Oedipus became king of Thebes and married, unwittingly, his own mother, Laius' widow Jocasta.

In the book of the dead in the *Odyssey* Odysseus was told that Jocasta (there called Epicaste) was soon aware that she had married her son and hanged herself in shame, while Oedipus continued an unhappy reign in Thebes for many years. But it is the version of events in Sophocles which is the most widely known. In his tragedy Oedipus and Jocasta ruled over Thebes for several years during which they had two sons, *Eteocles and *Polyneices, and two daughters, *Ismene and *Antigone. Then Thebes was visited by plague and famine, and Creon, Jocasta's brother, was sent to Delphi to find a solution. The oracle revealed that the murderer of Laius was living in Thebes and that he was the cause of the pollution. The prophet *Teiresias was also consulted and, when Oedipus accused him of conniving with Creon, he told the king that he, Oedipus himself, was in fact the guilty man – murderer of his father and husband to his mother. In a long process of discovery, set in train by Oedipus' arrogance and determination to know the truth, it came to light that his true parents were not the king and queen of Corinth. The herdsman was found who had rescued him as a baby and who was also the surviving retainer from the attack at the cross-roads near Delphi. After questioning him Oedipus realised that the man he had killed earlier at the cross-roads was indeed his real father Laius, and that the queen whom he had married was his mother. Jocasta had realised the truth earlier and had rushed to their bed-chamber; there, after bitter reflection on the turn of events, she made a noose and hanged herself. When Oedipus discovered her, and realised the full horror of his identity and relationship with her, he put out his eyes with the pin of her brooch. Creon then took over the regency at Thebes, and Oedipus, blind and helpless, went into exile.

There are varying accounts of the remainder of his life, some of which suggest that he stayed in at Thebes, but again the best known is given by Sophocles in his last play, *Oedipus at Colonus*. According to this version Oedipus was cared for by his daughter Antigone after his exile from Thebes, and the two finally came to Colonus, near Athens, where Oedipus was given sanctuary by *Theseus, king of Athens. There had been yet another oracle stating that, wherever Oedipus was buried, his tomb would be a protection against invasion. His sons were now at war over the throne of Thebes, and Polyneices tried to persuade his father to assist him against his brother Eteocles who had refused to hand the city over to him at the end of the year as agreed; Creon also wanted Oedipus to return to Thebes so that that city would have the special powers granted to the site of his death. Oedipus however was determined to stay at Colonus; he cursed his two sons with mutual destruction, and placed himself under the protection of Theseus. Then Oedipus, as he came near to death, was transformed from a

persecuted beggar to a figure of mystical power, following confidently and unaided a repeated summons from the gods and then disappearing without trace. Only Theseus was a witness to the 'terrible wonder' of the final scene; what happened was never revealed, for it was said that Oedipus' tomb would protect Athens from invasion by Thebes as long as the secret was kept. [Aeschylus *Sept* 742-77; Apollodorus 3.5.7-9; Euripides *Phoen* 1-78, 1043-54; Homer *Od* 11.271-280; Hyginus 66-7; Pindar *Ol* 2.35-40; Seneca *Oedipus*, Sophocles *OT, OC*]

Oeneus (*Οἰνεύς*). King of Calydon, son of Porthaon and Euryte, husband to *Althea, who bore him many children, including *Meleager, *Gorge, *Deianira and the unfortunate Toxeus, killed by his father for jumping over a ditch, a crime involving some unknown superstition. Oeneus was famous for his hospitality to gods and men, but even so, because he unwittingly slighted Artemis, the *Calydonian boar was sent to ravage his country, and the hunt for it involved some of the greatest heroes of the time. Earlier than this incident Oeneus' first famous guest had been Dionysus, who was attracted to his queen. Oeneus prudently absented himself from the lovers, and in return was given the first vine to be planted on Greek soil. In another version wine was discovered almost by accident, when the fruit of a strange plant that one of his goats kept eating was crushed and mixed with water as a drink. Other guests entertained by Oeneus included Bellerophon, Alcmaeon and the brothers Agamemnon and Menelaus, who were sheltered at his court when they were very young. Heracles also passed by, and, although he struck down the cup-bearer for some slight offence and accidentally killed him, the incident was overlooked and Heracles was given Deianira to be his wife. Oeneus' son Meleager was the final victor over the Calydonian boar, but eventually lost his life when he killed his mother's brothers; she destroyed him by burning the log on which his life depended and then in remorse committed suicide herself. Oeneus' second wife was *Periboea, who was sent to him by her father in dubious circumstances – perhaps as a gift, or to be killed because she was pregnant, or because Oeneus had seduced her. Whatever the case, Periboea bore him two sons, Olenias and *Tydeus, and through Tydeus Oeneus became the grandfather of *Diomedes. In his old age his nephews drove Oeneus from his kingdom; Diomedes came and killed the usurpers, put Gorge's husband on the throne, and took his grandfather back with him to Argos, where he named the town of Oenoe after him. [Apollodorus 1.7.10-8.6, 2.7.6, 3.7.5, *Ep* 2.15; Homer *Il* 2.641-2, 6.216-9, 9.533-89, 14.117-8; Hyginus 129; Pausanias 2.13.8, 25.2]

Oenomaus (*Οἰνόμαος*). A king of Pisa in Elis with varying names for his relatives: his father is given as either *Ares or Alexion, his mother as the Pleiad *Asterope or Harpinna, daughter of the river-god *Asopus, and his wife *Sterope or Eurate, daughter of *Acrisius. Oenomaus had three sons – *Leucippus, Hippodamus and Dyspontes – and one daughter *Hippodameia. Oenomaus was exceedingly fond of his daughter (one source suggests an incestuous relationship), and he would not relinquish her to a husband; Apollodorus also mentions an oracle which stated that Oenomaus would be killed by his son-in law. Whatever the reason, he challenged each suitor for her hand to a chariot race: the young man took Hippodameia with him in his chariot and was given a lengthy start, but, whether the girl was a distraction or because Oenomaus' horses were a gift from Ares and of divine stock, he overtook and killed them all. They were then decapitated and their heads nailed to the palace walls. *Pelops managed to win Hippodameia by a trick: the lovers bribed Oenomaus' charioteer Myrtilus to replace the axle-pins of Oenomaus' chariot with wax ones, the chariot overturned and he was dragged to his death by his horses. [Apollodorus 3.10.1, *Ep* 2.4-5; Diodorus 4.73; Hyginus 84; Pausanias 5.1.6, 10.6, 17.4; Pindar *Ol* 1.67ff.]

Oenone (*Οἰνώνη*). A water nymph, daughter of the river Cebren, who lived on Mount Ida near Troy. When *Paris was sent from Troy as a youth they met and married before Paris knew of his royal birth. She had earlier been raped by Apollo, but in recompense had been given the arts of prophecy and medicine by the god. When Paris left to claim Helen and return to his birthright as son of Priam, he abandoned Oenone, and she foresaw that he would only return to her in desperate circumstances. He did indeed send for her to tend him when he was mortally wounded by Philoctetes, but she refused to do so. Shortly afterwards however she repented and rushed to Troy, but it was too late, for Paris had already died. In despair she hanged herself or, in another version, threw herself on his funeral pyre. [Apollodorus 3.12.6; Ovid *Her* 5]

Oenopion (*Οἰνοπίων*). A son of Ariadne and Dionysus, god of wine. He ruled the island of Chios, and introduced there the red wine for which the island was famous throughout antiquity. He had several children including Merope, who was wooed and possibly raped by *Orion. To avenge his daughter Oenopion made Orion drunk, blinded him and had him thrown onto the beach where he was abandoned. Orion recovered his sight and returned for revenge, but Oenopion hid in an underground chamber made for him by Hephaestus. [Apollodorus 1.4.3, *Ep* 1.9; Pausanias 7.4.8-9, 5.13]

Oenotrus (*Οἰνωτρος*). One of the fifty sons of *Lycaeon in Arcadia and Cyllene. After the division of his father's lands, he and his brother Peucetius decided to settle in Italy and founded the tribes of the Oenotrians and the Peucetians. He is sometimes mentioned as a Sabine king and perhaps was a brother of King *Italus. [Pausanias 8.3.5]

Oeneus (*Οἰωνός*). The son of Licymnius, half brother to *Alcmena, and so related to Heracles. Oeneus accompanied Heracles on his expedition into the Peloponnese, but was beaten to death by the sons of *Hippocoon because he had thrown a stone to fend off their vicious guard dog. Heracles then led an army against Sparta and avenged Oeneus by killing Hippocoon and his sons. [Diodorus 4.33-4; Pausanias 3.15.3-5]

Oeta (*Οἶτη*). A range of mountains stretching from south Thessaly to Thermopylae; one of its highest peaks was in the territory of the Trachinians. *Heracles, in his final torment, had his funeral pyre built there, and to end his agony immolated himself on it. The mountain peak then became the site of his apotheosis. [Apollodorus 2.7.7; Sophocles *Trach* 1191-9]

Ogygia (*Ὠκυγία*). The island home of the nymph *Calypso, situated in the far west beyond the country of the Phaeacians. [Homer *Od* 5.55-75]

Ogyges or **Ogygus** (*Ὠγύγης* or *Ὠγυγος*). Early Boeotian tradition named him as one of the original kings of the area around Thebes, and he is sometimes said to be the father of *Cadmus and *Phoenix. Local settlements bear the names of his daughters: Alalcomenia, Anlis and Theloxinia. The family ruled before Deucalion's flood, and there was in fact a smaller flood during his reign. One of the seven gates of Thebes was named after him. [Pausanias 1.38.7, 9.5.1, 19.6, 33.5]

Oileus (*Ὀϊλεύς*). A king of Locria and one of the Argonauts, 'sacker of cities' and 'peerless in courage'. He was injured on the expedition by a feather from one of the *Stymphalian birds. He was the father of the lesser Ajax and also of an illegitimate son, Medon, by Rhene. [Apollonius 1.74-6, 2.1036-45; Homer *Il* 2.726-8, 13.694-7; Hyginus 14]

Olympia (Ὀλυμπία). Situated on a fertile plain among rolling hills on the north bank of the river Alpheus in Elis, it was here that every four years the *Olympic games were held. Over the centuries it became one of the great Panhellenic religious centres; within the sacred area known as the Altis stood the impressive temple of Zeus and the ancient one of Hera. The site became one in which to display Greek, and later Roman, wealth and power, with a vast number of dedicated statues and shrines not only of victorious athletes but of statesmen and such notables as Alexander the Great and Aristotle. Pausanias in Books 5 and 6 of his *Description of Greece* describes the site in detail as it stood in AD 175.

Olympic Games (Ὀλύμπια). Athletic contests which were held every four years at *Olympia in Elis. They were said to have been founded by one of the *Dactyls called Heracles, when he arrived in Olympia from Mount Ida in Crete. The original contest was the foot race which he ran with his four younger brothers, and the victor was crowned with olive which had been brought from the land of the *Hyperboreans. *Zeus is also mentioned as a founder of the games as it was in Olympia that he wrestled with his father *Cronus for the throne. After *Deucalion's flood a period of fifty years went by before Clymenus celebrated the games, and his successor *Endymion continued the custom by using the foot-race as a means of deciding the succession between his sons. When *Pelops gained the throne of Pisa he celebrated the games with great magnificence. *Heracles, the son of Amphitryon, held games here when he took Elis, and it was often this Heracles who was said to be the founder of the games. He marked out the boundaries of the Altis, the sacred enclosure dedicated to Zeus, and travelled to the Ister to bring back the olive tree for its shade. The games lapsed once more but were reinstated on the instructions of the Delphic oracle in the reign of *Iphitus, so that peace would come to the cities of Greece.

In historical times the games were recorded from 776 BC as being held every fourth summer, and each Olympic victor's name was recorded. The number of the Olympiad from this time gave the Greeks a chronological record by which other events were measured. Although the establishment of the games did not stop the internecine warfare between the various Greek states, they marked a great Panhellenic festival and celebration, and a truce was observed throughout the Greek world while they were held. The foot race was the most ancient event to which were added other athletic events as well as horse racing in a stadium that held over 40,000 spectators. The gathering at Olympia was also a cultural event and many writers, philosophers and poets gave recitations of their work there. Pindar's *Olympian Odes* celebrate many of the victories.

Olympus (Ὀλυμπος) **1.** There were many mountains of this name in the Greek world including those in Elis, Arcadia and Cilicia, but the most renowned was that on the borders of Macedonia and Thessaly, its snow-capped peak standing over 10,000 feet high. This was originally thought to have been the home of the gods, especially of Zeus, but gradually the location of Olympus became vague, sometimes synonymous with the sky as 'heaven'. In Homer the gods are described as living on the mountain itself, which may be an echo of the importance of peak sanctuaries in early Greek society and the sacredness of the high places. [Homer *Il* 1.493-99; *Od* 6.42-6] **2.** The father (or sometimes the brother) of *Marsyas; he too was a famous musician and buried the flayed corpse of Marsyas after the competition with Apollo and its tragic end. [Apollodorus 1.4.2; Ovid *Met* 6.393].

Omphale (Ὀμφάλη). The daughter of King Iardanus, widow of Tmolus, the king of Lydia, and ruler of that kingdom after his death. Originally the myth seems to have been set in Epirus where she appears to be the eponym of the settlement of Omphalion, but oriental Lydia was a more exotic locale for the story. Omphale was said to have purchased *Heracles when he

allowed himself to be enslaved, and, during his bondage, he performed a number of heroic exploits at the queen's bidding, including destroying the city of the Itones, clearing the area of the bandits called Cercopes, and killing the robber *Syleus. Omphale was so impressed with his heroism that she freed and married him. A less orthodox version was that during his enslavement Heracles and the queen were lovers and spent the time in erotic games and role-changes – Heracles clad in women's robes and spinning wool while Omphale wore the lion's pelt and carried his club. After three years Heracles was allowed to return to Greece, leaving her with a son called Lamus (also known as Agelaus). [Apollodorus 2.6.3, 7.8; Diodorus 4.31.5ff; Ovid *Her* 9.55-133; Sophocles *Trach* 248-57].

Omphalus (Ὀμφαλός). The navel-stone marking the centre of the earth, where the eagles sent from opposite ends of the earth met. It was situated within the inner shrine at *Delphi and was described by Pindar as white and round. Such stones are often found in sanctuaries where they are anointed with oil and go back to a very early stratum of religion. The omphalos at Delphi was said to have been the stone given by *Gaia to *Cronus in place of the infant Zeus, and which he subsequently vomited; it was also said to mark the grave of Dionysus. [Hesiod *Theog* 485-500; Pausanias 10.16.3]

Oneiros (ὄνειρος). The evil dream sent by Zeus in the shape of Nestor to confound Agamemnon – an unusual instance of a dream personified, and directly addressing the dreamer. [Homer *Il* 2.6-36; Pausanias 2.10.2].

Opheltes (Ὀφέλτης). The infant son of *Lycurgus, king of Nemea, and of Amphithea or Eurydice. An oracle had warned the king not to place the child on the ground until he was able to walk. When however the *Seven against Thebes were travelling through the area they asked the child's nurse, Hypsipyle, for directions; she laid the child on a bed of parsley while she showed them the way to a spring. Unfortunately the child was then killed by the snake that protected the spring. The Seven buried him, changing his name to Archemorus ('beginning of doom'), the ill-omen that was a sign of their future defeat. They also founded the Nemean games in honour of the child. [Apollodorus 3.6.3-4]

Ophion (Ὀφίων). An ancient deity married to the Oceanid Eurynome. The couple reigned over Olympus in the beginning but were overthrown by Cronus and Rhea and cast into the waves of Ocean. [Apollonius 1.503-511]

Ophiuchus (Ὀφιοῦχος). *See* Constellation 7 (the 'Serpent-holder').

Opis (Ὀπίς). With Arge one of the two Hyperborean maidens, who accompanied Apollo and Artemis to Delos, and were later honoured and buried in the sacred precinct there. One account tells of *Orion being killed by Artemis for assaulting Opis. She is often thought to be either an older deity supplanted by Artemis or a name for Artemis herself. [Apollodorus 1.4.5, Herodotus 4.33-5].

Ops. The Roman goddess of the fertility of the earth, harvests and 'plenty' in general, perhaps of Sabine origin, and probably to be identified with *Terra. She was sometimes paired with *Saturn as sister and wife, corresponding to the Greek Rhea, wife of Cronus, and also to Cybele, the Great Mother. She was also associated with Consus, the god of the granary, and with Ceres as protector of the harvest. She had a temple in the forum near that of Saturn, with a festival on August 10, and another on December 19 at an altar in the Regia, which visited once a year on this date, and then only by the high priest and the Vestals in a symbolic ritual

of storing the crops for the winter. Her most important temple was on the Capitol, where Caesar transferred the state treasury to her protection as Ops Capitolina. [Hyginus 139; Ovid *Fasti* 6.286, *Met* 9.498; Varro *LL* 5.64]

Opus (Ὀποῦς). The main city of Locris, founded by Opus, the handsome and clever son of Zeus. The city had claims to great antiquity, for it was said that Deucalion and Pyrrha had made it their home after the flood. It was also the home of *Patroclus before his exile as a child to Phthia. [Pindar *OI* 9.48, 58-68]

Orchomenus (Ὀρχομενός). The eponymous hero of two Greek cities. **1.** In Boeotia he was either the father of *Minyas or his son, and connected with the Minyans who occupied the city of Orchomenus. [Pausanias 9.36.6-37.1] **2.** In Arcadia he was named as one of the impious sons of King *Lycaon and founder of the Arcadian towns of Orchomenus and Methydrium. [Apollodorus 3.8.1; Pausanias 8.3.3]

Orcus. The god that ruled over the dead in Roman popular myth, and, like Hades, synonymous with the realm of the dead. He was the Latin version of Pluto or Dis in the Greek pantheon, and was portrayed as a bearded giant. [Cicero *ND* 3.43, Hyginus 139; Lucretius 1.115, 6.762; Vergil *Aen* 6.273, *Georg* 1.277]

Oreads (Ὀρεάδες). As their name suggests they were mountain nymphs and companions of Artemis. *See* Nymphs.

Oreithyia (Ὀρειθυία). A daughter of *Erechtheus and Praxithea, and a princess of Athens, she was abducted by *Boreas while she was dancing on the banks of the Ilissus. He lifted her up and carried her through the air to Sarpedon's rock in Thrace, and there he forced her to marry him. She bore him two daughters Chione and Cleopatra and two sons Zetes and Calais; these boys had wings on their temples and ankles, and joined the Argonauts. [Apollonius 1.211-23, Apollodorus 3.15.2; Plato *Phaedrus* 229b-d]

Orestes (Ὀρέστης). The son of *Agamemnon and *Clytemnestra. As a child, after his mother had murdered his father, he was sent away for his own safety by his sister *Electra to Phocis to the court of Strophius. There he was brought up along with the king's son *Pylades and the two became lifelong friends. When Orestes was of age he went to Delphi to ask the advice of the oracle as to what he should do about his father's murder, since Clytemnestra and her lover *Aegisthus were still ruling over Argos without fear of retribution. Apollo's oracle was harsh and, for once, unequivocal: he must kill his mother and her lover. The dramatic events that then unfolded were a favourite topic of Greek dramatists: Aeschylus in his *Libation Bearers* and both Sophocles and Euripides in their *Electra* plays made use of the myth. The main thread of the story involves the return of Orestes with Pylades to Argos, where they eventually make contact with Electra, with Orestes' footprint and lock of hair as tokens of his identity. Brother and sister plotted to kill Aegisthus as soon as he arrived in the palace but Orestes could not at first bring himself to matricide. He was urged on by both Pylades and by Electra on the grounds that it was the direct command of Apollo, and Electra had suffered a great deal of humiliation at the hands of Aegisthus and Clytemnestra since the death of her father. Orestes eventually did slay his mother, and in Homer that is the end of the matter. Later writers however could not condone the crime of matricide, and, even though it had been sanctioned by Apollo, that did not stop the *Erinyes, summoned by Clytemnestra to avenge her death, from pursuing Orestes all over Greece and driving him to bouts of insanity. He returned to Delphi for assistance but even Apollo could not deflect the Erinyes, who belonged

to an earlier and more powerful order. Orestes was eventually brought to Athens by Hermes, tried for his crime, and finally acquitted on the casting vote of *Athena, who presided over the court, on the grounds that the death of a father was a greater offence than that of a mother. This was the first case tried by the Aeropagus, a court of wise elders founded by the gods on the site of the victory over the *Amazons, and it established at a very early date Athens' emphasis on justice and the due process of the law. This ending is the version in Aeschylus' *Eumenides*, and the one most widely accepted. According to Euripides' *Orestes*, however, it was the Argives who first condemned both Orestes and Electra to death; the pair then attempted to escape and take revenge on their uncle *Menelaus for his harassment of them by kidnapping his daughter *Hermione and threatening *Helen, his wife, but Apollo resolved the situation: Hermione was freed, Helen deified, and Orestes then sent to trial in Athens after a year's exile in Arcadia, in a place that would be called Oresteium from his time there.

Even after Orestes' acquittal at Athens the Erinyes did not cease their persecution of Orestes, and again Apollo issued conditions for purification. He was to go to the land of *Taurus and steal a statue of Artemis, which had fallen to earth there, and bring it back to Attica. Pylades had now married Electra but still remained a faithful friend, and accompanied Orestes on this distant journey. The two reached Taurus on the Black Sea, and discovered that all strangers who landed on those bleak shores were immediately to be sacrificed to Artemis. To the amazement of all concerned, the priestess who was preparing to sacrifice them was revealed as *Iphigeneia, Orestes' sister who had been presumed dead, sacrificed at Aulis, but who had in fact been saved by Artemis and transported to Taurus to act as her priestess there. Iphigeneia arranged the escape of Orestes and Pylades and her own return home by advising the Taurian king Thoas that the statue of the goddess was now polluted by the presence of the matricide Orestes, and had to be purified by immersion in the sea; the Taurians should keep their distance to escape pollution. Under cover of these rites the three sailed away in Orestes' ship with the aid of *Athena, and returned to Greece. On his return Orestes became ruler of Mycenae and also conquered much of Arcadia; eventually, as a grandson of *Tyndareus, he succeeded to the throne of Sparta on the death of *Menelaus.

The last set of myths concerning Orestes involve his relationship with his cousin *Hermione, daughter of Menelaus and Helen. Before he left for Troy Menelaus had promised her to Orestes, then still a boy, but during the later stages of the war he betrothed her to Achilles' son *Neoptolemus, who thus incurred Orestes' hostility. When Neoptolemus travelled to Delphi to demand recompense from Apollo, Orestes either killed him or arranged his death. Orestes then did marry Hermione, by whom he had a son *Tisamenus who succeeded his father as king of Argos and Sparta.

Pausanias records many strange local traditions about Orestes. In Troezen it was claimed that Orestes was cured of his madness by the waters of the Hippocrene spring, and either he, or his descendants, had connections with the island of Lesbos. In Megalopolis in Arcadia he bit off his finger in his madness when pursued by the black Erinyes; they immediately became white and released him from his madness. He was said to have died from the bite of a snake in his Arcadian city of Oresteium, at the age of ninety, after ruling there for nearly seventy years; on his death he was accorded heroic honours. An account in Herodotus showed the importance of relics in hero cult and the protection of the hero's territory. The Spartans, seeking advice from Delphi in their long-running feud with Tegea, were told in an enigmatic response to take the hero's bones back to Sparta. They were discovered in a blacksmith's yard in a coffin containing a ten-foot skeleton. The bones were surreptitiously removed to Sparta and reburied there; ever after the Spartans were always victorious in their disputes with Tegea. [Aeschylus *Choeph*, *Eum*, Apollodorus *Ep* 6.14, 24-28, Euripides *El*, *Or*, *IT*, *Andr*; Herodotus 1.67, Homer *Il* 9.142-3, *Od* 1.40-43, 3.193-8, 304-10, 4.544-7, Hyginus 119, Ovid *Pont* 3.2.43; Pausanias 1.22.6, 28.5, 33.8, 2.16.7; Sophocles *El*]

Orion (Ὠρίων). The son of Euryale and Poseidon, he was famed as a giant huntsman, extremely handsome and of great strength, with the ability to walk on the sea. A strange alternative tale of his birth was told by later writers: Hyreius, king of Thrace had offered hospitality to Zeus, Poseidon and Hermes, and in return they asked him to suggest a guest-gift – Hyreius asked for a child. The gods then urinated on the hide of a sacrificed bull and buried it; from this spot nine months later a child grew and grew until he reached a huge size. He was named Urion after the ritual of his creation but this was later changed to Orion. He first married *Side who was later banished to Hades for boasting that her beauty was greater than that of Hera. Orion then went to the court of *Oenopion in Chios, where he raped the king's daughter Merope. The king in revenge made him drunk with the famous Chian wine and blinded him; Orion then left Chios for Lemnos, walking over the water. Hephaestus had his smithy on Lemnos, and he gave Orion the boy *Cedalion to be his guide; the two travelled east to the land of the rising sun where Orion was cured of his blindness. He then returned to Chios for revenge but Oenopion hid from him in an underground room.

Orion's death forms a major part of the myths about him. He was killed by *Artemis but the reason is not always clear, for he was hunting with her in Crete and on good terms with the goddess when she struck him down. The poet Istrus claimed that *Apollo was jealous of his sister's love for Orion and so tricked her: he saw Orion swimming far from shore, his head appearing as a mere dot, and challenged his sister to hit it with her arrow, which she promptly did. In her grief at being the cause of his death she placed him in the sky as the constellation of Orion. Another explanation of his death was that he had angered the goddess with an attempted rape of her companion Opis at Delos, or that he had Artemis to a game of quoits, but the most favoured one was that he boasted that he could hunt down all the animals on earth, and for his temerity Artemis sent a scorpion which bit him on the head and killed him. The myth seems almost to have been specifically created to account for the constellation: Orion is accompanied by his dog (Canis major) and in pursuit of a hare (Lepus), while the bull (Taurus) and the scorpion (Scorpio) pursue him. [Apollodorus 1.4.3-5; Eratosthenes 32; Horace *Odes* 3.4.70-2; Homer *Od* 5.121-4, 11.572-5; Hyginus 195, *Astr* 2. 34; Ovid *Fasti* 5.535-54] See Constellation 35.

Ornytus (Ὀρνυτός). An Arcadian leader, also known as Teuthis, who led a party of men from the city of Teuthis to join the Greek forces assembling at Aulis for the Trojan expedition. When the winds were unfavourable at Aulis, Ornytus started to take his contingent home, but on the way he was confronted by the goddess Athena in human form who asked him to change his mind. Angry at her intervention, he wounded her in the thigh and continued his journey home; there he was later stricken with a wasting disease, and famine blighted the land. The oracle at Dodona was consulted, and instructions were given for a statue of Athena to be erected, complete with wounded thigh bound in a crimson bandage. [Pausanias 8.28.4]

Orpheus (Ὀρφεύς). The archetype of all poets and musicians, and the eponymous founder of the influential religious cult known as Orphism. He was the son of Oeagrus, a king of Thrace, or in some versions of Apollo himself; his mother is said to have been a Muse – *Calliope, the Muse of epic verse, or perhaps Polymnia. Orpheus played the lyre, composed verse and sang, and his music was so inspired that he charmed all who heard him, tamed wild animals, and could even make trees and stones follow him if he wished. He took part on the expedition of the *Argonauts and used his music in a storm to calm both the frightened crew and the turbulent sea. He introduced the crew to the mysteries at Samothrace and on the voyage home he protected them from the dangerous attraction of the Sirens by singing even more seductively than they did. In one source he even lulled to sleep the serpent which guarded the tree in Colchis from which hung the Golden Fleece .

When he returned to Thrace he married the nymph *Eurydice whom he loved to distraction. Soon after their marriage Aristaeus saw her walking beside a river in Thrace and ran after her. In her panic to escape his advances she stepped on a snake, was bitten and died of the poison. Orpheus was distraught, and decided to go down to the underworld in an attempt to fetch back his wife. He descended by way of Taenarum in Laconia, and so charmed Charon and Cerberus with his music that they allowed him to enter. The spirits of the dead were enchanted by his music, the torments of the great criminals were suspended, and Hades and Persephone, the rulers of the underworld, were so affected that they allowed Eurydice to return with Orpheus, but on condition that he led the way and did not look back until they had both reached the light of day. Orpheus complied with this condition until he was at the very entrance, then he could no longer resist looking back to make sure his wife was there. Even as he looked Eurydice faded into a wraith and returned to Hades; Orpheus was not allowed to go down a second time, but had to return to the upper world. The moment when he looked back and lost his wife became a poignant subject for artists through the centuries.

Orpheus wandered the world lamenting his lost wife, and eventually returned to Thrace. Previously he had always celebrated the rites of Dionysus there with the Thracian maenads but now he shunned the women and their festivities. In retaliation for dishonouring their god (or perhaps for preferring Apollo over Dionysus, or for slighting Aphrodite by taking to the company of boys rather than women) they tore him to pieces and threw his remains into the river Hebrus. The Muses themselves gathered together the parts of his body and buried them in Pieria, and placed his lyre in the heavens where it appears as the constellation Lyra. His head however, severed from his body, was carried out to sea still calling 'Eurydice', and floated to Lesbos where it was buried. A shrine was erected there at Antissa, an oracle established for the 'talking head', and the Lesbians were given the gift of poetry and music.

One of the great inventions attributed to Orpheus was that of religious mysteries. Details of the cult founded in his name, Orphism, are difficult to record precisely, being derived mainly from later evidence – 'gold leaves' with inscribed verses buried in tombs in south Italy, and the so-called 'Derveni papyrus' from near Corinth. There was a literature of Orphic poems involving a complex cosmology of the world derived from an egg, a prescribed 'way of life', including ascetic practices and vegetarianism, and various instructions for achieving a happy life after death. There seems to have been a belief in rebirth of the soul, later said to have been based on the myth of the death and rebirth of *Dionysus Zagreus, and possibly the doctrine of a series of lives from which one could eventually escape by following the Orphic ritual and reciting the correct formulae. Some of this was taken into Pythagoreanism, but much else degenerated into superstition. Orpheus, as one of the few living men to have made the journey to and from the underworld unscathed, was thought to have been an expert on placating the dead. *Musaeus, Eupolmus and Linus were also connected with Orpheus as his followers, and were similarly associated with religious mysteries. [Apollodorus 1.3.2, 9.25; Apollonius 1.23-34; Ovid *Met* 10.1-85, 11.1-84; Pausanias 9.30.4-9; Plato *Rep* 364e-620a; Vergil *Geog* 4.453-527] See Constellation 8.

Orseis (Ὀρσηΐς). A nymph who married *Hellen, and bore him the three sons, Dorus, Xuthus and Aeolus in a generation that established the tribes and dialects of the Hellenes. [Apollodorus 1.7.3]

Orthrus (Ὀρθροῦς) or **Orthus** (Ὀρθοῦς). A two-headed guard-dog, born of Typhon and Echidna and brother to Cerberus and the Hydra of Lerna, he belonged to Geryon and was killed by Heracles, along with his master, when Heracles stole Geryon's cattle for his tenth *Labour. [Apollodorus 2.5.10; Hesiod *Theog* 293, 309]

Ossa (Ὄσσα). A mountain in northern Magnesia. It was one of the three mountains piled one on top of the other by *Otus and Ephialtes in a vain attempt to attack Olympus. [Homer *Od* 11.305-20]

Otreus (Ὀτρεύς). A king of Phrygia who aided the Trojan king Priam in an expedition against the Amazons. When Aphrodite appeared to Anchises she disguised herself as a daughter of Otreus. [Homer *Il* 3.184-9, *Homeric Hymn* 5.111-2]

Otus (Ὦτος). A giant who, with his twin brother Ephialtes, paid the penalty for excessive pride. The brothers, also known as the Aloadae, were the sons of *Poseidon and *Iphimedia, and grew so rapidly that by the age of nine they were fifty feet tall. They had such confidence in their height and strength that they were ready to assault the goddesses Hera and Artemis, and attempted to reach their home in the sky by piling one mountain on top of another – Mount Ossa on Mount Olympus and then Mount Pelion on top of both. 'To pile Pelion on Ossa' consequently became proverbial for the compounding of difficulties in a mighty but impossible undertaking. The twins also announced they would change land to sea and sea to land by dropping mountains into the ocean and flooding the countryside. Then, in their anger with Ares because he had caused the death of *Adonis, they imprisoned him in a bronze cauldron for thirteen months before their step-mother Eriboea betrayed them to *Hermes, who rescued the god. In some versions Zeus struck them down with his lightning bolt, but in another a deer, sent by Artemis, ran between them when they were hunting on the island of *Naxos; they both tried to spear it and killed one another, and by this mutual slaughter fulfilled a prophecy that no other men, nor any gods, could destroy them. Their punishment continued in Hades, where they were bound back to back to a pillar by snakes while a screech owl perched on top of the pillar. In their favour they were credited with the founding of the city of Ascra at the foot of Mount Helicon, and there they were the first to worship the Muses. [Apollodorus 1.7.4; Homer *Il* 5.384-91, *Od* 11.305-20; Hyginus 28; Pausanias 9.22.6, 29.1-2; Pindar *Pyth* 4.88-92]

Owl to Athens (γλαῦκα(ς) εἰς Ἀθήνας). A proverbial expression, like 'coals to Newcastle', for foolishly bringing a product to a place which is already well-stocked with it. [Aristophanes *Birds* 301]

Oxylus (Ὀξύλος). A king of Elis and son of Andraemon or of his grandson Haemon. He was exiled from his native Aetolia for accidentally killing his brother Thermius with a discus, and took refuge in Elis. After a year he was due to return home and on the way encountered the leaders of the *Heraclids who had been told by an oracle that they would meet a three-eyed guide to lead them into the Peloponnese. Oxylus was riding a one-eyed horse at the time, so he was understood to be their appointed guide. As he did not want them to claim Elis he led them via Arcadia, so that by the time they reached Elis most of them had found lands. He then led his Aetolian soldiers against Elis, and, since the armies were evenly matched, the dispute was decided by single combat between an Aetolian slinger, Pyraechmes, and an Elean archer, Degmenus. The Aetolian won, Oxylus gained the throne and became an exemplary ruler. [Apollodorus 2.8.3, Pausanias 5.3.5, 4.1-5]

Oxyntes (Ὀξύντης). A king of Athens and the son of *Demophon. Oxyntes had two sons, Apeidas and *Thymoetes who quarrelled over the throne; the younger, Thymoetes, murdered the rightful heir and took his inheritance. He was the last of the Athenian kings descended from Theseus. [Pausanias 2.18.9]