

## Oedipus

I. Excerpt from Apollodorus. *The Library*. Translated by Sir James George Frazer. Loeb Classical Library Volumes 121 & 122. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1921.

APOLLODORUS or (pseudo-Apollodorus) is the name traditionally given to the author of a Greek work known as *The Library* (or *Bibliotheca*), a compendium of myth sourced from old Greek epic and the plays of the Tragedians. The work was traditionally ascribed to Apollodorus of Alexandria, a Greek scholar who flourished in the 2nd Cent. B.C., but his authorship is now dismissed. The work is generally believed to be a 2nd cent. A.D. compilation.

[3.5.7] After Amphion's death Laius succeeded to the kingdom. And he married a daughter of Menoeceus; some say that she was Jocasta, and some that she was Epicasta. The oracle had warned him not to beget a son, for the son that should be begotten would kill his father; nevertheless, flushed with wine, he had intercourse with his wife. And when the babe was born he pierced the child's ankles with brooches and gave it to a herdsman to expose. But the herdsman exposed it on Cithaeron; and the neatherds of Polybus, king of Corinth, found the infant and brought it to his wife Periboea. She adopted him and passed him off as her own, and after she had healed his ankles she called him Oedipus, giving him that name on account of his swollen feet. When the boy grew up and excelled his fellows in strength, they spitefully twitted him with being supposititious. He inquired of Periboea, but could learn nothing; so he went to Delphi and inquired about his true parents. The god told him not to go to his native land, because he would murder his father and lie with his mother. On hearing that, and believing himself to be the son of his nominal parents, he left Corinth, and riding in a chariot through Phocis he fell in with Laius driving in a chariot in a certain narrow road. And when Polyphontes, the herald of Laius, ordered him to make way and killed one of his horses because he disobeyed and delayed, Oedipus in a rage killed both Polyphontes and Laius, and arrived in Thebes.

[3.5.8] Laius was buried by Damasistratus, king of Plataea; and Creon, son of Menoeceus, succeeded to the kingdom. In his reign a heavy calamity befell Thebes. For Hera sent the Sphinx, whose mother was Echidna and her father Typhon; and she had the face of a woman, the breast and feet and tail of a lion, and the wings of a bird. And having learned a riddle from the Muses, she sat on Mount Phicium, and propounded it to the Thebans. And the riddle was this: -- What is that which has one voice and yet becomes four-footed and two-footed and three-footed? Now the Thebans were in possession of an oracle which declared that they should be rid of the Sphinx whenever they had read her riddle; so they often met and discussed the answer, and when they could not find it the Sphinx used to snatch away one of them and gobble him up. When many had perished, and last of all Creon's son Haemon, Creon made proclamation that to him who should read the riddle he would give both the kingdom and the wife of Laius. On hearing that, Oedipus found the solution, declaring that the riddle of the Sphinx referred to man; for as a babe he is four-footed, going on four limbs, as an adult he is two-footed, and as an old man he gets besides a third support in a staff. So the Sphinx threw herself from the citadel, and Oedipus both succeeded to the kingdom and unwittingly married his mother, and begat sons by her, Polynices and Eteocles, and daughters, Ismene and Antigone. But some say the children were borne to him by Eurygania, daughter of Hyperphas.

[3.5.9] When the secret afterwards came to light, Jocasta hanged herself in a noose, and Oedipus was driven from Thebes, after he had put out his eyes and cursed his sons, who saw him cast out of the city without lifting a hand to help him. And having come with Antigone to Colonus in Attica, where is the precinct of the Eumenides, he sat down there as a suppliant, was kindly received by Theseus, and died not long afterwards.

II. Excerpt from *The Myths of Hyginus*, translated and edited by Mary Grant. University of Kansas Publications in Humanistic Studies, no. 34. Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1960.

GAIUS JULIUS HYGINUS was a Latin writer who flourished in Roman Spain in the C1st AD. Two extant collections of fables were attributed to him: the *Fabulae* (or *Fables*) and *Astronomica* (or *Astronomy*). The poor quality of these works lead most to believe they are either wrongly attributed to this distinguished scholar or are a later abridgement of his works composed by a C2nd grammarian. In spite of the poor writing style and numerous errors, the works do preserve many myths and alternative versions of myths not found elsewhere.

[66] LXVI. LAIUS

The oracle of Apollo warned Laius, son of Labdacus, that he should beware of death at his son's hands, and so when his wife Jocasta bore a son, he ordered him to be exposed. Periboea, wife of King Polybus, found the child as she was washing garments at the shore, and rescued him. With Polybus' consent, since they were childless, they brought him up as their son, and because he had pierced feet they named him Oedipus.

[67] LXVII. OEDIPUS

After Oedipus, son of Laeius and Jocasta, had come to manhood, he was courageous beyond the rest, and through envy his compnaionns taunted him with not being Polybus' son, since Polybus was so mild, and he so assertive. Oedipus felt that the taunt was true. And so he set out for Delphi to inquire [about his parents. In the meantime] it was revealed to Laeius by prodigies that death at his son's hands were near. When he was going to Delphi, Oedipus met him, and when servants bade him give way to the King, he refused. The King urged on his horses, and a wheel grazed Oedipus' foot. Enraged, he dragged his father from the chariot, not knowing who he was, and killed him. After Laius' death, Creon, son of Menoeceus, ruled; in the meantime the Sphinx, offspring of Typhon, was sent into Boeotia, and was laying waste the fields of the Thebans. She proposed a contest to Creon, that if anyone interpreted the riddle which she gave, she would depart, but that she would destroy whoever failed, and under no other circumstances would she leave the country. When the king heard this, he made a proclamation throughout Greece. He promised that he would give the kingdom and his sister Jocasta in marriage to the person solving the riddle of the Sphinx. Many came out of greed for the kingdom, and were devoured by the Sphinx, but Oedipus, son of Laius, came and interpreted the riddle. The Sphinx leaped to her death. Oedipus received his father's kingdom, and Jocasta his mother as wife, unwittingly, and begat on her Eteocles, Polynices, Antigona, and Ismene. Meanwhile barrenness of crops and want fell on Thebes because of the crimes of Oedipus, and Tiresias, questioned as to why Thebes was so harassed, replied that if anyone from the dragon's blood survived and died for his country, he would free Thebes from plague. Then Menoeceus [father of Jocasta] threw himself from the walls. While these things were taking place in Thebes, at Corinth Polybus died, and Oedipus took the news hard, thinking his father had died. But Periboea revealed his adoption,

and Menoetes, too, the old man who had exposed him, recognized him as the son of Laius by the scars on his feet and ankles. When Oedipus heard this and realized he had committed such atrocious crimes, he tore the brooches from his mother's garment and blinded himself, gave the kingdom to his sons for alternate years, and fled from Thebes, his daughter Antigona leading him.