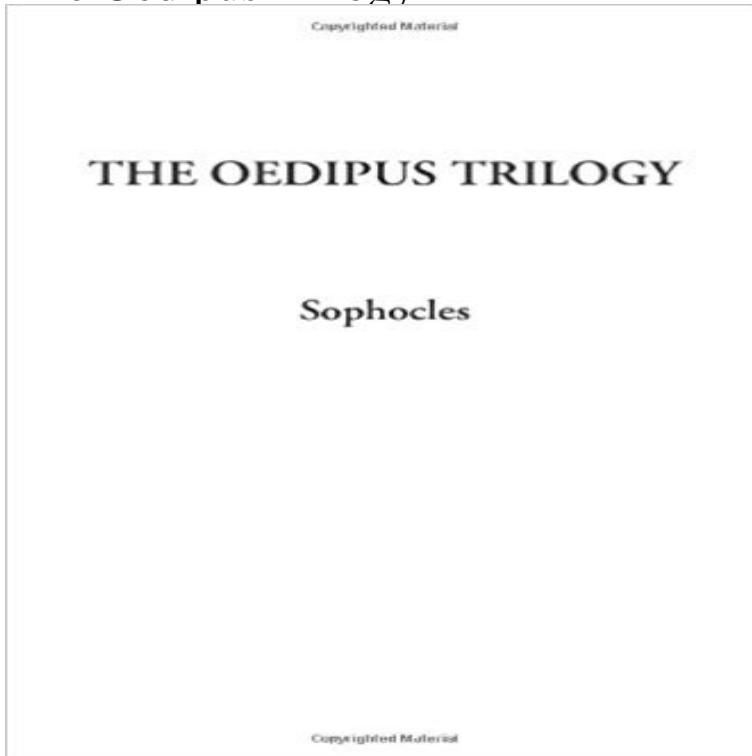


The Oedipus Trilogy



The Oedipus Trilogy by Sophocles Oedipus was a mythical Greek king of Thebes. He fulfilled a prophecy that said he would kill his father and marry his mother, and thus brought disaster on his city and family. This legend has been retold in many versions, and was used by Sigmund Freud to name the Oedipus complex. Oedipus was the son of Laius and Jocasta, king and queen of Thebes. After having been married some time without children, his parents consulted the Oracle of Apollo (God of Sun) at Delphi about their childlessness. The Oracle prophesized that if Jocasta should have a son, the son would kill her husband Laius and marry her. In an attempt to prevent this prophecys fulfillment, when Jocasta indeed bore a son, Laius had his ankles pinned together so that he could not crawl, and gave the boy to a servant to abandon (expose) on the nearby mountain. However, rather than leave the child to die of exposure, as Laius intended, the sympathetic servant passed the baby onto a shepherd from Corinth and then to another shepherd. Oedipus the infant eventually came to the house of Polybus, king of Corinth and his queen, Merope, who adopted him as they were without children of their own. Little Oedipus/Oidipous was named after the swelling from the injuries to his feet and ankles. The word oedema (British English) or edema (American English) is from this same Greek word for swelling: ??????, or oedema. Many years later, Oedipus was told by a drunk that Polybus was not his real father but when he asked his parents, they denied it. Oedipus sought counsel from the same Delphic Oracle. The Oracle didnt tell him the identity of his true parents but instead told him that he was destined to kill his father and marry his mother. In his attempt to avoid the fate predicted by the Oracle, he decided to not return home to Corinth. Since it was near to Delphi, Oedipus decided to go to

Thebes. As Oedipus traveled, he came to Davlia, where three roads crossed each other. Here he encountered a chariot driven by his (unrecognized) birth-father, King Laius. They fought over who had the right to go first and Oedipus killed Laius in self defense, unwittingly fulfilling part of the prophecy. The only witness of the King's death was a slave who fled from a caravan of slaves also traveling on the road at the time. Continuing his journey to Thebes, Oedipus encountered a Sphinx which would stop all those who traveled to Thebes and ask them a riddle. If the travelers were unable to answer correctly, they would be killed and eaten by the Sphinx; if they were successful, they would be able to continue their journey. The riddle was: What walks on four feet in the morning, two in the afternoon and three at night?. Oedipus answered: Man: as an infant, he crawls on all fours; as an adult, he walks on two legs and; in old age, he relies on a walking stick. Oedipus was the first to answer the riddle correctly and, having heard Oedipus answer, the Sphinx was astounded and inexplicably killed itself by throwing itself into the sea, freeing Thebes. Grateful, the people of Thebes appointed Oedipus as their king and gave him the recently widowed Queen Jocasta in marriage. (The people of Thebes believed her husband had been killed while on a search for the answer to the Sphinx's riddle. They had no idea of the killer's real identity.) The marriage of Oedipus and Jocasta fulfilled the rest of the prophecy. Oedipus and Jocasta had four children: two sons, Eteocles and Polynices (see *Seven Against Thebes*), and two daughters, Antigone and Ismene. Many years after the marriage of Oedipus and Jocasta, a plague of infertility struck the city of Thebes; crops no longer grew to harvest and women did not bear children. Oedipus, in his hubris, asserted that he would end the pestilence. He sent Creon, Jocasta's brother, to the Oracle at Delphi, seeking guidance. When Creon returned, Oedipus heard that the murderer of the former King Laius must be found and either...

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