

**The First Woman of Oedipus or the Metamorphoses of the Sphinx in Art.**

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Since the times of S. Freud the art illustrating greek mitology closely relates to psychoanalysis. Freud used myth of Sophocles to illustrate the Oedipus complex, staging ancient symbolism in a modern context. The Sphinx symbolises the revengeful, destructive side of prototypical female. By killing his father, Oedipus acquires his own self, in that way approaching his first woman in life – the Sphinx. By taking a shape of female the Sphinx in art lost its significance as a protector against evil and became a symbol of threat. A woman able to kill/castrate. On his way to Thebes Oedipus encounters the Sphinx who would stop all travelers to ask them a riddle. Oedipus was the first to answer correctly (outran his own father). The artist G. Moreau reflected the symbolic meaning of the duel between Oedipus and Sphinx. But the real riddle is the Sphinx herself, the riddle of the complexity of being Female-Woman-Mother. Her actions stand for a distorted maternalistic urge to treat 'approaching wayfarers' as children, to exercise control and to deal out ruthless punishment. She is the destructive phallic mother. The portrayal of neurotic motherhood continues when the Sphinx, apparently narcissistically wounded by Oedipus' success, throws herself over a cliff. By killing his father and loosing 'the fear of castration' Oedipus has no fear of the Sphinx and symbolically answers her riddle. That is the way of getting closer to his next woman – his mother.