

The Threshold Myth From Sophocles Through Freud To Cocteau: Unveiling the Hidden Meanings

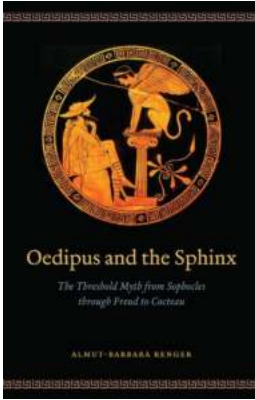
The threshold myth, a narrative motif that symbolizes the transition between two worlds, holds a significant position in literature and mythology. From the works of Sophocles to Sigmund Freud and Jean Cocteau, this enduring concept has captivated the minds of countless artists and thinkers. Its multifaceted nature introduces us to a realm of profound meaning, psychological exploration, and philosophical contemplation. In this article, we explore the depth and evolution of the threshold myth, uncovering the hidden truths behind its rich symbolism.

The Genesis of the Threshold Myth

The origins of the threshold myth can be traced back to ancient Greek drama, where it flourished in the tragic works of Sophocles and other renowned playwrights. The concept found its embodiment in the dramatic device of the threshold or the "liminal space," a physical or metaphorical barrier that separates the familiar from the unknown.

One of the most prominent examples of this myth is found in Sophocles' masterpiece, "Antigone." The play's protagonist, Antigone, faces a moral dilemma as she defies societal norms to give her deceased brother a proper burial. Here, the threshold represents the boundary between family loyalty and civic duty, highlighting the struggle between individual conscience and the demands of the state.

Oedipus and the Sphinx: The Threshold Myth from Sophocles through Freud to Cocteau



by Almut-Barbara Renger (Kindle Edition)

★★★★☆ 4.1 out of 5

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Screen Reader : Supported
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled
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The Psychological Interpretation

The threshold myth's significance extended beyond its literary applications, captivating the imagination of one of the most influential psychologists of all time - Sigmund Freud. Freud explored the concept of the threshold in his groundbreaking work on psychoanalysis, drawing parallels between the mythical threshold and the human subconscious.

In Freudian psychology, the threshold represents the line between the conscious and unconscious mind. Just as the threshold demarcates the border between different worlds in mythology, it reflects the veil that separates our rational thoughts from suppressed desires and instincts. Freud's interpretation of the threshold myth created a framework for analyzing dreams, understanding human behavior, and uncovering the hidden motivations that shape our lives.

The Threshold in Surrealism

The profound influence of the threshold myth extended into the realm of art movements as well, particularly the surrealist movement of the early 20th century. Surrealists sought inspiration from the unconscious mind, delving into the realm of dreams and fantasies. The threshold concept became a recurring motif in their

works, with artists like Salvador Dalí creating dreamlike landscapes that blurred the boundaries between reality and the imagination.

One of the most renowned examples of the threshold myth in modern art is found in Jean Cocteau's film, "Orpheus." Drawing inspiration from the classic myth of Orpheus and Eurydice, Cocteau portrays Orpheus crossing the threshold of death to bring back his beloved Eurydice. The threshold here symbolizes the liminal space between life and death, reality and the afterlife, and love and loss. Cocteau's film serves as a powerful representation of the threshold's inherent duality and the sacrifices one must make while traversing it.

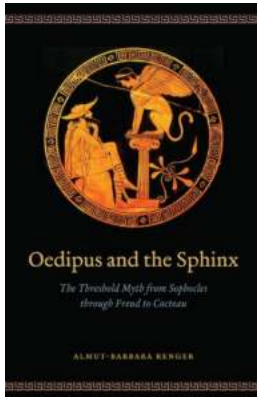
The Threshold Myth: A Universal Metaphor

The enduring popularity and significance of the threshold myth across different periods and artistic disciplines highlight its universal nature as a metaphor. It resonates with audiences throughout history due to its ability to tap into fundamental aspects of the human experience – the fear of the unknown, the struggle for self-discovery, and the transformative power of change.

Whether it be the ancient Greek tragedies, Freudian psychoanalysis, or the surrealism of Cocteau, the threshold myth continues to offer a lens through which we can explore the complexities of human existence. Its visual and symbolic allure compels us to ponder the transformative journeys we embark upon, emphasizing the importance of embracing the unfamiliar and challenging our own personal thresholds.

In , the threshold myth has traversed millennia and disciplines, serving as a powerful symbol that transcends time and cultural boundaries. From Sophocles' tragic plays and Freud's psychological theories to Cocteau's surrealist masterpieces, this symbolic motif has fascinated and inspired generations of

artists and thinkers. By examining the threshold myth, we uncover hidden meanings, exploring the intersection between the conscious and subconscious, the known and unknown, and ultimately gaining deeper insights into our own human condition.



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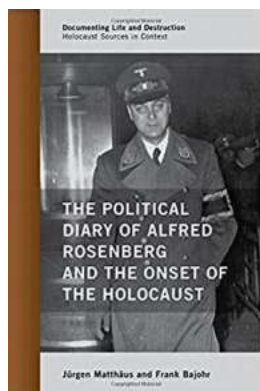
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When Oedipus met the Sphinx on the road to Thebes, he did more than answer a riddle—he spawned a myth that, told and retold, would become one of Western culture’s central narratives about self-understanding. Identifying the story as a threshold myth—in which the hero crosses over into an unknown and dangerous realm where rules and limits are not known—Oedipus and the Sphinx offers a fresh account of this mythic encounter and how it deals with the concepts of liminality and otherness.

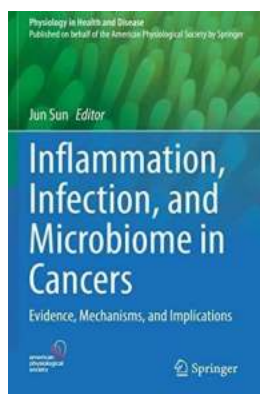
Almut-Barbara Renger assesses the story’s meanings and functions in classical antiquity—from its presence in ancient vase painting to its absence in Sophocles’s tragedy—before arriving at two of its major reworkings in European modernity: the psychoanalytic theory of Sigmund Freud and the poetics of Jean

Cocteau. Through her readings, she highlights the ambiguous status of the Sphinx and reveals Oedipus himself to be a liminal creature, providing key insights into Sophocles's portrayal and establishing a theoretical framework that organizes evaluations of the myth's reception in the twentieth century. Revealing the narrative of Oedipus and the Sphinx to be the very paradigm of a key transition experienced by all of humankind, Renger situates myth between the competing claims of science and art in an engagement that has important implications for current debates in literary studies, psychoanalytic theory, cultural history, and aesthetics.



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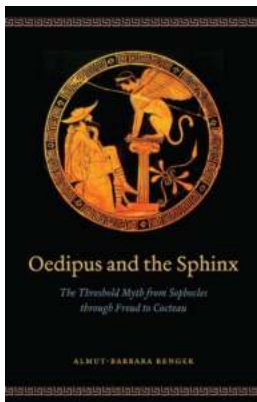
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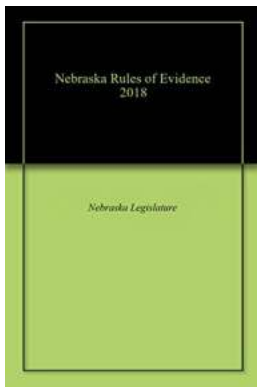
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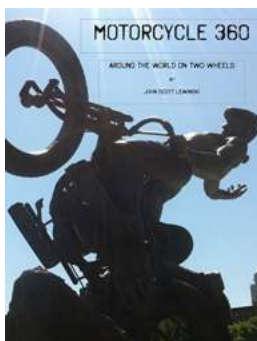
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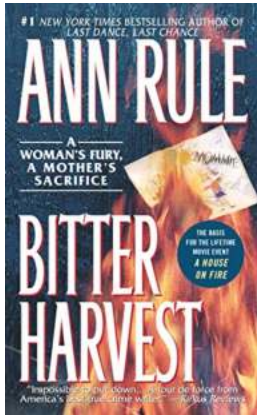
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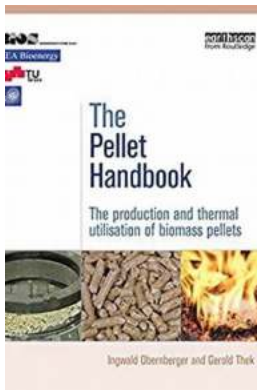
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