

personal english



Character #23

Εκιδνα

In Greek mythology, Echidna was a **half-woman** and **half-snake creature** whose mate was the monster **Typhon**, and who was known primarily for being the **mother of monsters**. Echidna's appearance varies by author, with **Aristophanes** (5th century BC) portraying her as hundred-headed, and **Hesiod** describing her female half as a beautiful nymph who 'dies not nor grows old all her days.' Swiss psychoanalyst **Carl Gustav Jung** (1865-1971) was particularly fascinated with this creature, whose connections with her daughter **Sphinx** he would underline in an attempt to paint a picture of the **mother-imago**, which is castrating as much as it is alluring in connection with the **incest prohibition**. In Jung's own words: *'This double being corresponds to the mother-imago: above, the lovely and attractive human half; below, the horrible animal half, changed into a fear-animal by the incest prohibition. Echidna was born of the All-Mother, **Mother Earth**, Gaia, who conceived her with **Tartarus**, the personification of the underworld. Echidna herself was the mother of all terrors, of the Chimera, Scylla, the Gorgon, of frightful Cerberus, of the Nemean lion, and of the eagle that devoured the liver of Prometheus. [...] One of her sons was **Orthrus**, the dog of the monster Geryon who was slain by Heracles. With this dog, her own son, Echidna incestuously begat the Sphinx.'*



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