



President Nannerl O. Keohane's
Woman's College Celebration Speech
November 9, 2002

It is an exceptional pleasure for me as President of Duke to join in this celebration of the Woman's College. It could not have been done without the enthusiastic support of the Alumni Association and many folks on campus who pitched in to help with arrangements. But most of all, we are indebted to Mary Maddry Strauss, who dreamed up and chaired this 30th anniversary celebration, and her committee members.

We have gathered this weekend to recognize the importance of the Woman's College to the alumnae, to Duke, and to society. It is worth clearing some space in the clutter of everyday life to savor our history, with a whiff of nostalgia along the way. Let's also think about the women of Duke today and in the future; how do their lives compare with yours? what do they dream about and hope for? And what dreams and hopes do we have for them?

The experience of a women's college

In setting the stage for nostalgia, I must acknowledge that I am not an alumna of the Woman's College. As a senior in high school I failed to discover the unique advantages of the arrangement you all saw so clearly. You had the best of both worlds, a true woman's college experience along with all the benefits of a university education -- and the immediate proximity of all those Duke men.

It was a long way from Wellesley into Cambridge -- not to mention Hanover or New Haven. We spent a lot of weekends in genteel boarding houses in other college towns, with landladies who replicated the stern oversight we received back on campus. And when our dates were from Harvard or MIT, we risked life and limb scrambling back out Route 9 to exchange that last hurried kiss before signing in by 1 a.m. Where were the pennies in The Sower's outstretched hand when we needed them?

Nonetheless, I regard myself as one of you. Attending a women's college was crucially formative in my life, in much the same way that your Woman's College experience is important to you. We learned self-confidence, we grew as leaders; we formed strong bonds with other women. It was not all sunshine and laughter, but we had many wonderful moments of friendship and intellectual discovery; and almost every one of us would say that we are stronger because of that unique experience of a woman's education.

As you know well, the Woman's College at Duke was one of the most competitive colleges for women for a long time. Being accepted to the College was more prestigious than being accepted to Trinity. Bob Durden assures me that if a guy walked into a class and saw a bunch of women, he would usually drop out to avoid a C. That's how good you were, and are.

My first official visit to your campus was at the invitation of Jean O'Barr to celebrate Women's Studies in 1989; and when I became president of Duke, one of the first things that struck me was the impact of the Woman's College on this university over the years.

Duke's early serious commitment to educating women, with the ample opportunities for leadership and personal development provided by the dual student governance structure, and the involvement of many talented and loyal alumnae, have set Duke apart from other co-ed institutions. Most of our peers came late to the education of women, getting religion only in the 1970s, and then only because they were losing coveted male recruits to more enlightened institutions. Others that have been technically co-educational since their foundings provided a theoretically equal experience; but until very recently, that experience systematically excluded women from leadership opportunities.

Last year I delivered a talk at Yale, where I went to graduate school, for the tercentennial celebration; in that talk, I compared the ways gender had influenced the evolution of several schools I know well -- Duke, Wellesley, Stanford and Yale. I found the contrasts quite arresting, and I learned a lot in preparing for that speech.

Let me give just one example -- what you might call the iconography on all these campuses. At Wellesley, in the main reading room of the library, hang the portraits of all the presidents. Nothing odd about that, you might say; the same is true for Duke and many other institutions. But the striking thing about Wellesley is that all the portraits are of women, great portraits of self-confident, wise women across a dozen decades. Wellesley has never had a male president, by the way; when the trustees appeared about to name one in 1911, the Wellesley Club of Minneapolis protested that they did not want a man in their "Adamless Eden," and they prevailed.

At Stanford, and God save the mark, at Yale, you would be hard pressed to find a single portrait of a woman in the hallowed halls where such icons are found. At Duke, our own lovely Mary Semans breaks the gauntlet of middle-aged or elderly males in the Gothic Reading Room, and thanks to a project of the Women's Studies program, the East Duke parlors now honor more than a dozen women. But there is clearly more that we should do. Our new Vice President for Student Affairs, Larry Moneta, has made it one of his priorities to push for more art celebrating women across this campus.

We have 9,364 living Woman's College alumnae and another 21,270 women alumnae of Trinity since the merger, and compared with many of our peers, we have a goodly number of buildings named for women—the Doris Duke Center in the Sarah P. Duke Gardens, Baldwin Auditorium, Baker House, Biddle Music Building, the Nanaline Duke research center, Lilly Library, Giles, Wilson, Gilbert-Addoms.

This is one obvious way in which gender matters: an institution's iconography, conception of itself and its history, and the messages that sends about who can wield authority, who matters around this place. We have done a middling job, I would say, of preserving the vision of Woman's College, neither the worst nor the best in the country. Our proud tradition serves us well -- when we draw conscious attention to it, and when our students acknowledge it.

Remembering our history

It began with the three Giles sisters, who persuaded president Craven they could do the academic work their brother had come to Trinity College to do in the 1870s. They graduated in 1878 after a combination of private classes and sitting in on a few regular lectures with the men. Since they had no emulators or companions for many years -- I've often wondered why this was so -- the Giles sisters were, alas, an aberration, though an important one; no one could say, after that, that women could not do the work at Trinity, and the ground was prepared for later growth.

Our early credentials included the admission of women to graduate education in 1892; and as all of us should know, in 1896, Washington Duke tied a string to a \$100,000 gift—the requirement that education be provided for women on equal terms with men. As those of you who study philanthropy would be quick to observe, judicious, well-directed gifts do make a difference. This strong proto-feminist male benefactor made the difference by requiring that women be given a chance to be educated; how appropriate that his statue welcomes people to East Campus. With strong women in his family and his genuine beliefs in equality, he set the course of this institution for a long time to come.

President Kilgo, ahead of his time on feminist matters as he was on race, suggested a women's coordinate college as early as 1902, but nothing came of it at the time. When the Woman's College was formally organized in 1930, a crucial new day dawned. The model was set from the beginning: women students should have academic work that was basically the same as their male classmates, and quite a few of their classes should be on the other campus, to which you should have full rights of access; yet you also had your own space, and your own student government, parallel to that of the men and equal in legitimacy. You also had, as role models, some strong women deans who are the stuff of legend even today.

Compared to what passed for co-education at the time, Duke women in those early days of the College were fortunate; they were nurtured, cared for, assured of their value—yet also, often, treated with condescension. To understand this rather odd mixture, it helps to know something about the battles that were fought on our behalf, and in celebrating the Woman's College, we need to honor those who fought them.

Dean Alice Mary Baldwin was a true heroine, and we owe her a great deal; I envy those of you who knew her. She arrived in 1923 as Trinity College Dean of Women, became the first woman faculty member as a professor of history in 1924, oversaw the creation of Woman's College, and led it with a sure hand through her retirement in 1947. In her fascinating memoir, she reminds us that her chief aims, in the discussions with President Few and others around the creation of the Woman's College, were “to have full opportunities for the women to share in all academic life; to have the advantages of the university libraries, laboratories, faculty, while at the same time giving them the opportunity to develop leadership and college spirit through their own organizations while learning to work with men through membership in some common student organizations.”

She had her work cut out for her as a colleague of a president who, as she notes wryly in her memoir, had five sons and, in her words, “little knowledge of teenage girls.” It was with great difficulty that she prevailed upon President Few to permit the inclusion of showers in the dormitories; he believed women cared only for baths. Few also wanted to put a high iron fence around the entire women's residential quadrangle, to be locked at night; Dean Baldwin persuaded him that such a thing “would only lead to many escapades by both men and women.” She knew us well.

Dean Baldwin had tact and perseverance in equal measure, though she did not always get her way. Those were different and difficult times, and it is a measure of her greatness -- I do not use the word lightly -- that she often helped her students enter law or business or medicine against their parents' wishes—a risky activity at a very young college.

I know some of you remember one of Dean Baldwin's longstanding colleagues—often her co-conspirator against the university administration—the first Woman's College dean of students, Mary Grace Wilson. In 1990 she received the University Medal for Distinguished Meritorious Service,

and the Mary Grace Wilson Professorship of Religion was created in her honor.

Many other women deserve to be named in this celebration; I know that other speakers will do so, and that you will recall them fondly. Our university is still young, and we anticipate with joy and gratitude that some of its chief women pioneers will be among us for quite awhile yet. Anne Firor Scott, Mary Semans, Juanita Kreps and others can give us a wonderful living history.

Women at Duke today

So what is Duke like for the women students of today? There are, of course, plenty of good things we can say about women at Duke in the present. Yet overall, too few elements of the Woman's College experience are still part of the Duke experience.

One element of Duke today that truly does recall the special spirit of the Woman's College is the Women's Center on West Campus, created by several indomitable students, alumnae and faculty members in 1989. Another is the Women's Studies program, launched six years earlier. The Women's Center, directed by Donna Lisker, helps restore, preserve, and connect to what was best about the Woman's College—for the few hundred who find and work with it every year. And Women's Studies, ably led by Robyn Wiegman, is one of the best such programs in the country, continually validating the multifaceted lives and contributions of women across history and around the world.

One thing that has changed for the better is the distribution of women across various disciplines. Twenty-three women earned their B.S. in engineering in the 28 years between 1946 and 1974; at this very moment we have ten times that number of female undergraduates in the engineering pipeline.

Today's engineering school dean is named Kristina Johnson, and the chair of Electrical Engineering is named April Brown. Both these women are brilliant leaders, and there are many others across campus, including Brigid Hogan, the new chair of Cell Biology, the first woman ever to chair a basic sciences department in the Medical Center. During the time of the Woman's College dissolution, there was a fear that no powerful female role models would be available; in fact, there has been visible progress in hiring smart, high-achieving women as deans, faculty members, and administrators—though we still have some distance to go to achieve anything like parity.

As far as leadership opportunities for students are concerned, they are fewer than when men and women each had their own organizations and clubs. There have been quite a few Duke student women in big ticket positions—undergraduate and graduate student government president, Union president, editor of the Chronicle, young trustee. Still, those high-profile positions continue to be filled disproportionately by males.

There are also women who do lots of crucial work behind the scenes; they're the ones that make things happen, though they're not necessarily the ones whose name is on the marquee. This isn't by any means an unusual thing in our own society or any other -- but it bears pondering. In a few campus organizations, including sororities, women get significant leadership experience, and there are many women in leadership positions in less visible organizations across the campus. I'd say the record on this is mixed, but guardedly positive.

All of this is fairly impressionistic. However, we are in the midst of an exciting initiative that is giving us a much better, clearer and more accurate picture of what life is like for women at Duke

today, women across the whole university. The best way to tell you about Duke women of the present generation, and the challenges and successes on campus, is to describe the ongoing work of that initiative.

The Women's Initiative

When I brought together a group of Duke faculty and administrators for the first time last May to begin the work of our newly appointed Women's Steering Committee, I was not prepared for the overwhelming response. There was an eagerness to be part of the work that reinforced my own desire to take up the topic of gender more systematically; I found an atmosphere receptive to discussing even the toughest issues and a willingness to examine the core values of our University. Literally hundreds of women -- and a number of enlightened men -- across the university came forward to offer their enthusiastic help and support. University leaders showed a readiness to turn knowledge into action, jump-starting the collaboration and data-gathering efforts of the Steering Committee's various constituencies.

It has been six years since there was an active group at the administrative level focused on the status of women at Duke. In the interim, we significantly improved our capacity for data collection, analysis and information-sharing with regard to gender. But there has been little sustained attention to issues of gender in those years.

Last winter, I had dozens of long conversations with Duke women, usually one-on-one, mostly over breakfast or lunch. I asked their impressions of the status of women at Duke, and asked their help in raising the profile of this topic. These fascinating and profoundly rewarding conversations taught me much about the lives of women at Duke. They uncovered a deep reservoir of interest and concern about women's issues and about the "absence of conversation" about these issues on campus. There was also a great deal of positive feeling about our ability to make changes, and about the timeliness of this topic.

So last May I created the Women's Steering Committee, to provide guidance for the initiative. The committee, which I chair, includes 16 people, representing all the constituencies on campus. Members have not only a commitment to the cause, but also the ability to make a difference; they are in positions of top responsibility and can make change happen. Our goal is to gather information, asking a carefully considered set of manageable questions, share information with constituencies, make policy proposals and policy decisions, and help with implementation of those changes. Our steering committee is responsible for shepherding, directing and keeping track of multiple efforts across the university, both in groups that we have as a committee created, and in others that spring up because people are eager to make their voice heard.

The work of the committee includes activities relevant to undergraduate students, graduate and professional students, faculty, house staff, post-docs, employees (both monthly and bi-weekly), trustees and alumnae. We try to think broadly about where we want to go as an institution, and how we as a steering committee can ensure that we get there. An executive group represents those constituencies, provides ongoing coordination, and suggests appropriate agenda items for our larger group. Psychology Professor Susan Roth, who by good fortune is spending a year in the provost's office as a special assistant to decipher the mysteries of university administration, chairs that executive committee, and her leadership has been indispensable in making all this happen.

We are alert to important differences among women within constituent groups. For example, separate studies are being done on faculty in Arts and Sciences and the Medical Center, given the

particular challenges and opportunities women face in these venues. Sorority status, racial and ethnic background, sexual orientation and athletic participation are important markers of diversity in the studies with students. Staff people of color are a unique and particularly important group at Duke, and are receiving special attention in our studies.

Work underway

In our initiative, much has already been accomplished, or at least well-launched. We already have a complete set of quantitative data on the effects of gender in Duke Ph. D. programs, including information on composition, completion rates, time to attainment of Ph.D. and job placement. In the majority of disciplines at Duke, women are well represented, with an overall rate of 44%. Percentages of enrolled women range from lows of 26% and 30% in Engineering and the Physical Sciences to highs of 50% in the Biological Sciences, Humanities and Social Sciences. However, in some sub-fields within Physical Sciences and Engineering the proportion of women enrolled in Ph.D. programs appears to be decreasing.

Fortunately, there are no overall gender differences in completion rates, time to attainment of degree, or job placement. We are currently expanding our studies to include Duke's eight professional schools, and to gather further information on the experience of our graduate and professional students as well as their career choices.

The Deans of all our schools are compiling both hard and impressionistic data on women faculty recruiting, departures, promotion, leadership, salary, climate and lifestyle. For our regular rank faculty across the University, the Office of the Provost, in collaboration with the Women's Steering Committee, has undertaken a broad quantitative study that is nearing completion.

Within Arts and Sciences, in the past decade the percentage of women at the rank of Full Professor has doubled in the natural sciences, and more than doubled in the social sciences. In the humanities, there have also been substantial increases at the upper ranks, contributing to a total of 43% of the regular rank faculty in the humanities being women. The natural sciences continue to suffer from a small number of regular rank women faculty, totaling only 17%. Our most recent salary equity studies show no evidence of gender discrimination, although women faculty do suffer a clear disadvantage owing to the relatively small number of women holding named chairs.

One problem that has come to light, confirming the expectations of many observers, is that women take longer to move through the ranks – from Assistant to Associate, and Associate to Full Professor. Interestingly, natural science is the only area where there is no indication of a “disadvantage” for women in time through the ranks. But in general, we have a problem here: we can all speculate about the reasons for it, but we want better, more precise and comprehensive knowledge before we devise strategies to solve it.

Comparing ourselves to our peers, by far our most disturbing – and unexpected – challenge is the relatively low percentage of Assistant Professors who are women. Including all schools except Nursing, there have been few or no gains at Duke in the number of assistant professors over a ten-year period from 1991 to 2001. None of us knew this before we started doing our research, and we need to take aggressive steps to improve this situation.

Of the administrative and support staff and service employees at Duke, 12,581 of 17,917 are female—about 70%. Most of these employees are in our health system -- a very big and important part of the university. Staff women are a large, diverse population. Our Steering Committee staff

work group is creating a profile of the current workforce at Duke, and has convened five separate focus groups.

Our vice president for institutional equity, Sally Dickson, has been having conversations with groups of women of color, mostly bi-weekly staff, from departments throughout the university and health system. These conversations have focused on the participants' experiences and their suggestions for policies and practices that they believe would improve the climate for women at Duke. Human Resources is preparing options for adding maternity benefits for staff – faculty already enjoy them – and for improving our childcare benefits.

In these discussions, and in my conversations last spring, staff women spoke about patterns of patronizing and demeaning treatment by their bosses, including professors, with little recognition of their professional skills or contributions to the enterprise. While staff issues will undoubtedly be complex, we are firmly committed to finding ways to address this fundamental and pervasive issue of disrespect.

And what about alumnae? Three of our administrative committee members will be conducting focus groups with alumnae of different age cohorts in Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, the Triangle, San Francisco, Atlanta, and Washington, DC. If you are called upon to participate, we hope you will say yes.

Today's Duke undergraduates

And what about our undergraduates? Women are today, as they have been for some time, a comfortable 50% of the undergraduate student body, without any specific effort to achieve this result. What are their lives like?

A major effort is underway to collect information on both social and academic climate issues from a large subsection of the undergraduate student body through focus groups, campus-wide forums, and a project website. Emily Grey, the talented chief of staff of Duke Student Government, has made gender issues her top priority; she is heading up a group of a dozen students who call themselves Duke Inquiries in Gender, or DIG. (They even have their own T-shirt that says on the front "Can you DIG it?") Her team has taken charge of lining up the student focus groups, some composed of men but most of them all women.

The overarching question is, "In what ways do gender issues manifest themselves on campus?" A wide variety of student groups (Greek organizations, selective living groups, cultural organizations, international students) have been asked to provide participants, and the response so far has been incredible. Women in the focus groups are so excited they go back and tell all their friends, who call us back and say, "Will you do another one"? Three of our faculty members are also doing an ethnographic study of the climate for women students at Duke.

I personally have been deeply concerned over the past few years about the level of conformity among many of our undergraduate women to harsh norms of dress, eating, smoking and sexual adventuring. Others share this concern, and the issue of conformity is the focus of this undergraduate student task force. They have broken down the problem into individual conformity (e.g., body image, dress, personal behavior and decision making), paired conformity (e.g., dating and relationship patterns, hooking up, sexual violence), and group conformity (e.g., alcohol usage in social situations). They have chosen to focus first on social life and turn to academic life in the second semester; the graduate and professional women are doing this in the opposite order.

We have heard a lot about what one woman calls “effortless perfection”. This student notes that when you come to Duke you’re expected to appear naturally beautiful, fit, a straight A student, a leader in everything; and you’re supposed to make it look like you do all of this without really trying; it just happens. A student reports: “You have to hide all of the work that you do, and you certainly have to hide your failures.” The same attitude, I’m sure, also contributes to problems of self-esteem. Some of this, of course, is what all young adults go through as they’re trying to find their identity, but structures and expectations in place in Duke are channeling many women into a very narrow notion of femininity. We need to amplify the counter-message.

We hear similar tales from the ethnographic focus groups run by faculty members. They have asked the young women – who insist on calling themselves girls – to describe their day-to-day experience of being at Duke, to explicate the rules they live by and the mores that govern them. Students explain that the way to ensure one’s comfort in a strange new collegiate social world is to make it a priority to learn the rules. Suffocatingly complex codes tell them what to wear, how to act, what to eat and drink, which weight machine is for guys and which for girls, how many hours they are “allowed” to study, whom they may have sex with, how they should treat their younger peers.

Many claim they want the freedom to talk about academic and intellectual matters in social realms but that they are constrained or choose not to. At the same time, they are unwilling or unable to take responsibility for bucking the system, changing the environment, demanding something different. Safety is also a big issue, in light of recent incidents of assaults and the worrisome number of date rapes on our campus.

However, not all the focus groups are yielding the same result: some of the organizations, such as Asian-American women, are mystified by the questions about body image and conformity that so quickly ring a bell for other groups. It is clear that we cannot generalize too easily about the experiences of our undergraduates, and that we need to learn from the best aspects of the experiences of some groups to help address the problems raised by others.

Fortunately, the seeds of change are alive and well at Duke today. Women’s athletics teams and the first year FOCUS program, where students live and study together in small groups with close interaction with faculty members, come in for special praise. I have heard about other undergraduate experiences that are similarly liberating—field trips by the Geology Program, the Marine Lab, and the pre-freshman year programs called Project BUILD and Project Wild. One might add certain features of traditionally African-American sororities, who stress leadership and connections with successful alumnae.

Regarding sports, we have moved from having six varsity sports for women in 1971, the year before Title IX, to 13 teams each for men and women today. We offer the same number of athletic scholarships to women as to men (although only 44 of the 235 scholarships are endowed: she who has ears, let her hear). In sports, apparently, Duke women find a much more nurturing, less confining, and safer social group; and they have more supportive, peer-to-peer relationships with their male counterparts.

The enthusiasm of individuals and groups on every corner of campus to participate in this dialogue shows a pent-up demand to be heard, and the genie is out of the bottle. We will find ways to institutionalize that conversation, to make this intervention last. And we want to make sure that in doing this, we involve you, as our accomplished alumnae of the Woman’s College, role models, caring older sisters.

More outrageous ambitions

So, what about the future?

One of the greatest feminist writers, Simone de Beauvoir, said in her powerful treatise, *The Second Sex*: “One is not born, one becomes a woman.” Education is about becoming, about guided transformation. It stands to reason, therefore, that we should give deliberate thought to how female students at Duke become women, and how we can help them become the strongest, most fulfilled women they can possibly be. A university experience is only one portion of a long life for many women; but it is an especially powerful and formative experience, and we can hope to make a difference for women of the future by giving more careful attention to that experience.

So ponder with me for a few minutes the question: “What would a truly co-educational institution look like?” I ask this in full awareness that there never has been such a thing, and that Duke doesn’t yet qualify. We call ourselves co-educational, but the experiences of men and women are not equal, and the differences too often translate into disadvantages for women.

In a truly co-educational institution, the numbers of women in the faculty and the senior administration would be proportional to the number of women in the population – 50/50. These women would have at least equal chances of getting promoted, taking positions of leadership, occupying named chairs. Whatever career a young woman aspired to, she would see impressive role models every day at Duke.

She would be praised not only for her physical attractiveness but for her intellectual achievements and good work, for speaking up and speaking out. It’s not that “women’s rules” would overcome the men’s rules; it’s that all the stale unwritten rules would be discarded on the scrap heap of history.

A truly co-educational institution would recognize that individuals have unique gifts, and not pattern or channel women and men into specific slots, as students, faculty members or employees. We have seen a sea-change in engineering; we saw it in athletics: opportunity leads to interest. However, if it turns out that women and men have some genetic or temperamental differences of interest or ambition – for example, that women in general care more about spending time with their infant children – this would not become the basis for regarding them as less clever, less interesting people, or for assuming that they will never make it to the top of their professions, even when those infant children have children of their own.

Duke men would no longer harbor some of the unthinking prejudices about the intellectual capacities of women that have marred our experiences for so long. The classroom climate would never be “chilly,” in the sense that the contributions of women are downgraded and men dominate the conversations. If women turn out to have distinctive voices in these conversations, those voices would be valued and they would be heard.

Male students would never regard their female classmates as fair game for sexual predation, nor would women students assume that their worth was measured by their ability to attract men. The campus would be a safer place for women, in every sense of the word. Social and extracurricular activities would be conducive to the flourishing of young women, their minds, bodies and careers.

What do all our good examples – varsity athletics teams, the Marine Lab, Project BUILD, Project WILD – have in common? They bring women together in situations that build rather than destroy self-confidence, or women and men together in situations that conduce to seeing each other as

human beings, as fellow students, as friends, not just as potential hookups for sex or rivals for success.

In a truly co-educational institution, all women would have the sense of self-confidence that women athletes enjoy: pride in their abilities and their bodies, comradeship with other women, appreciation of the values of teamwork, and friendship with men who share their commitments and understand their lives. They would enjoy the same unshadowed friendships and intellectual companionship that they report from the FOCUS programs or geology field trips, every day.

Women in a truly co-educational institution would receive good counseling about career opportunities and be urged to go after their ambitions, even as they are given thoughtful advice about the obstacles they are likely to face in a world not yet as woman-friendly as Duke would be. At least not until those Duke graduates, both women and men, go out to change that world as well.

It is exhilarating to envision such a place – and daunting to imagine what it would take to build it. It would not be a world in which gender is irrelevant, or a world without sexual excitement or attraction or romance, but a world in which gender and sex do not spill over to all areas of life and make it impossible for men and women to live together as equals, and for women to flourish as human beings. We all know the anguish hidden in Charlotte Brontë's plea a century and a half ago: "I wish critics would judge me as an author, not as a woman."

In the meantime, gender does matter greatly, more than we have been aware; and we will not bring about a better world unless we recognize that fact and deal with it. Whatever else we may or may not have accomplished so far, the women's initiative has put gender on the table for discussion, analysis and action at Duke. I think a lot more people at Duke today would get the point of one of my favorite poems. It's called "Myth," a fitting title in an arena where myths are very powerful indeed. It's by Muriel Rukeyser, and it goes like this:

Long afterward, Oedipus, old and blinded, walked the roads.
He smelled a familiar smell.
It was the Sphinx.
Oedipus said, "I want to ask you one question.
Why didn't I recognize my mother?"

"You gave the wrong answer," said the Sphinx.
"But that was what made everything possible," said Oedipus.
"No," she said. "When I asked,
'What walks on four legs in the morning, two at noon, and three in the evening?'
You answered, 'Man.' You didn't say anything about woman."

"When you say Man," said Oedipus, "you include women too.
Everyone knows that."
She said: "That's what you think."