



Goddesses in Older Women: Archetypes in Women Over Fifty

Jean Shinoda Bolen

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At some point after fifty, every woman crosses a threshold into the third phase of her life. As she enters this uncharted territory -- one that is generally uncelebrated in popular culture -- she can choose to mourn what has gone before, or she can embrace the juicy crone years. In this celebration of Act 3, Jungian analyst Jean Shinoda Bolen names the powerful new energies and potentials, or archetypes, that come into the psyche at this momentous time, suggesting that women getting older have profound and exciting reasons for welcoming the other side of fifty.

As Bolen has explained in her remarkable body of work, there are goddesses in every woman, deep archetypal sources of wisdom, authenticity and spirituality that, once tapped, energize us and give us a sense of meaning and self-acceptance. The knowledge of which archetypes are active within us at each phase of life--maiden, mother (or matron), and crone--supports us in making choices that are true to who we are instead of conforming to others' ideas of who we should be.

In Bolen's bestselling *Goddesses in Everywoman*, the classic work of the women's spirituality movement, the Greek goddesses personified these archetypes as they affected the first two phases of a woman's adult life. Now she explains that in the third stage, marked physiologically by menopause, there emerges a whole new cast of inner archetypes that a woman can draw on for guidance, creativity, personal integration, and joy. Once we learn to recognize these forces, we can feel empowered and wise, introspective and spiritual, sexually bold and full of mirth. For it is in the "wisewoman" years, when a woman has lived long enough to resolve the tasks of younger and middle adulthood, that she can fully and authentically become who she deeply is.

The generation of women who are approaching or who have reached the crone years is historically unique. Influenced by the women's movement, they have benefited from educational opportunities, women's support networks, and economic resources as excellent preparation for decades of active postmenopausal life. By recognizing the goddess archetypes that emerge in this phase, women of this special generation will be enabled to transform the crone years into the best years of their lives.

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