



## Focus From the Editor *Crone as Refuge*

A fire burns in my heart. Its heat reminds me of my dream in 1989 in which Crone, in the guise of Raven, clawed my shoulders from behind and screeched, “Wake Up! It’s Time!” Raven fanned what had been a smoldering ember into an internal flame. Within a few short weeks I started *Crone Chronicles: A Journal of Conscious Aging*. The *Chronicles*, despite its small circulation, was published for twelve years and seemed to work as a homeopathic remedy within the collective mind. (Back issues are still available, see p.128.)

Now, as we birth the third issue of *Crone: Women Coming of Age*, I feel even more propelled by the need to fully awaken from the deep sleep of our cultural conditioning.

Twenty-one years ago, my concern was foundational: to “activate the Crone archetype.” We aimed to alert individuals, groups of women, and the culture at large to the possibility (and even necessity) of transforming the value we assign to the aging process. Recognizing that the relentless focus on (ever-shifting) scientific knowledge had eclipsed (perennial) wisdom, this imbalance clearly resulted in the 20<sup>th</sup> century fear of death, aging, and old people.

Knowledge is the accumulation of culturally recognized facts and theories but wisdom is a treasury of deep cross-cultural lessons, created and preserved as stories and passed from generation to generation as a spiritual matrix that activates cultural regeneration.

But today, just as we no longer sit around together canning, shelling peas, quilting, tying fish hooks or tending the fire, we also no longer tell each other our stories.

Success, society believes, means “getting ahead,” which consists of projecting into the future while paradoxically pretending that time stops or even runs backward. We don’t want to die, so we do whatever we can to remain (or at least appear to remain) forever young. This flight into perpetual youth feels necessary: it keeps us viable in the work world, and visible when we retire.

Such rejection of eldering was the overwhelming cultural attitude when I started *Crone Chronicles*, epitomized by fearful or even disgusted reactions to the very word “crone.” Today, more than two decades have passed, and the crone movement has coalesced into a resilient and deepening community that honors the crone archetype and all that She represents.

In *CC*, we honored the entire life cycle and identified Crone as the third aspect of the ancient Triple Goddess. Our mission was to explore the fruits of this crowning stage of life. We knew we were attuning to the leading edge of human evolution, and felt pleased (but not surprised) when within a few years the crone movement was joined by “aging to sageing” and “elderling” initiatives. Some of this work crystallized into best-sellers and mega-city lecture tours while others used the energy for more grounded projects. Among the latter are the chapters of Grandmothers for Peace (focusing on transforming war); the Raging Grannies (featured in this issue), and the Red Hat Society (a vibrant celebration of old lady-hood). Even the venerable (and massive) AARP has revamped its image to reflect a deepening understanding of the aging process.

Meanwhile, the practice of daily meditational practices has gained in popularity. In order to balance our frantic lives we are learning to periodically drop our surface concerns and enter — or at least catch tantalizing glimpses of — a timeless state of “calm abiding.”

To get the chattering mind to stop — *just stop! And don't start again until I say so!* — is the most momentous task that I have undertaken and also the most worthwhile. Given time and intent, meditative practices rewire the nervous system. The mind lets go of its fixation on past/future; the heart, sighing in relief, opens to the Now.

Also gathering energy has been the rediscovery of the ancient understanding of all life — every leaf and stone and river and mountain, to even Earth herself, as Gaia — as self-aware. This meme went viral with *Avatar*, the blockbuster film that moved many people to tears of remembrance of their communion with each other and the natural world.

As an astrologer, I expand this immersion in an all-embracing, loving consciousness to the planets in our solar system and beyond. I find that my daily meditative practices dissolve the separate self into an expanding universe with the center everywhere and the circumference nowhere.

In our essence, we are at one with the multiverse. In this state of being, all beings — at whatever scale or dimension — are honored as of intrinsic value and sit in the center tending the sacred fire of this continuously self-organizing, co-creating, co-communing, self-aware body of the Divine.

My own increasing sense of urgency is reflected in solar system alignments now forming that will (this summer) initiate us into even more shocking challenges to our individual and species evolution than the revelations, losses and sufferings of the past few years since Pluto went into Capricorn and the global financial system nearly melted down. (See the essay section of [www.tendrepublish.com](http://www.tendrepublish.com), for details on the astrology of our current era.)

This brings me finally to the subject of this editorial, “Crone as Refuge.” As crones — with tap roots into our own deep wells of experience consciously processed to glean universal meaning — we are ideally positioned to dedicate ourselves to serving as still, calm centers of awareness despite the storms and chaos all around us.

At 67, I am one of the “young old,” still busy in the world. However, within the past few years, I have been less and less distracted by personal dramas. That’s a good thing, since at this point I find myself working on a dizzying array of projects: cultivating an urban farmstead and neighborhood garden, editing and writing for this magazine, co-creating TransitionTown Bloomington, working as an astrologer, and creating and spreading teaching stories through my writing both in print and online.

It all sounds like too much, way too much; and it would be, were it not for the primacy of daily meditative practices (walking, yoga, chi kung and tai chi) in my life and for my recognition of the moment-to-moment opportunity to *Wake up! Right here! Right now!*

More and more, I learn to center in the practice of holding awareness no matter what I am “doing” at the time, whether it be brushing my teeth, walking my dog, writing this essay, or facilitating a Transition meeting. I visualize all my projects as concentric circles out from this sacred center.

Despite a growing capacity for awareness and equanimity, I am not immune to our crazy-making culture. It continues to flow through me, catalyzing the states of anxiety that shudder through us all. Over and over, I still shake myself loose and think *Wake up! It’s time!*

Current events remind me of the days when the U.S. and the Soviet Union were in nuclear standoff. During a peace gathering in 1983, a grizzled old Nevada rancher whispered in my ear: “Whether I live or die doesn’t matter. What matters is that if we do blow ourselves up, I will have done all I could to prevent it.” That’s how I feel now.

As elders, we entered this earth-life in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century so that we would be present in this time of turmoil. Serving as midwives, we can help birth a transformed humanity, showing the way through stillness and stories.

Let us strip ourselves of all external silliness, dive into our deepest selves, and bathe in that overflowing fountain that transforms fear and fury into kindness and compassion. Let us wake up together in the nurturing, light- and dark-drenched expanding field of Love in which all beings, always and forever, are held.

Let us be the (cr)ones we have been waiting for.

