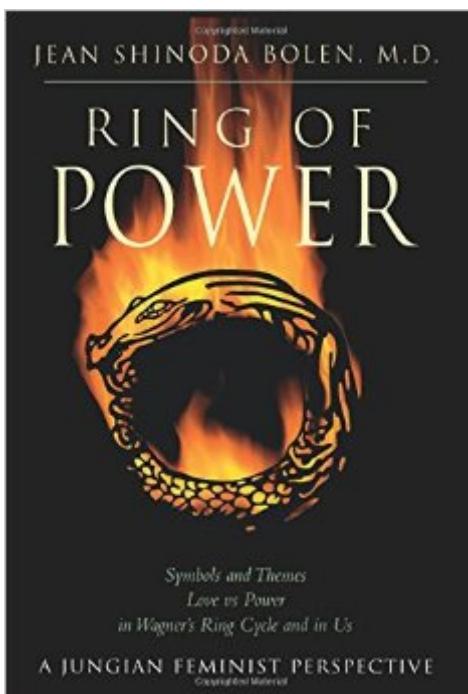


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Ring Of Power: Symbols And Themes Love Vs. Power In Wagner's Ring Cycle And In Us- A Jungian-Feminist Perspective (Jung On The Hudson Book Series)



Synopsis

A vivid grasp of the story and the characters in "The Ring of Niebelung" brings Richard Wagner's mythic four-opera cycle to life. The Ring Cycle has a hold on our imagination like no other operatic work because it is archetypal and has the power of myth as well as music to reverberate in the psyche. Bolen shows how myth illuminates psychology, and more - Ring of Power goes beyond the psychology of the individual, revealing dysfunctional families and patriarchal institutions.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I won't launch into an academic review or a precise of the story. Suffice to say that this is a wonderful book. For 30 - something women, particularly who identify with a patriarchal 'Wotan' figure and his defiant daughter (Brunnhilde) who forsakes wealth and power for love, this is a journey with which you will be familiar. And a wonderfully warm insight into what can be achieved by such women should they take some risks and act from their hearts! Many books have been written on the suppression of the feminine in society but this multi faceted gem allows a glimpse of so many layers of understanding in such an accessible way that it is irresistible. A peek at Carl Jung, an introduction to the genius of Wagner, the insights of the mythologies and the interpretation and storytelling genius of Jean Shinoda Bolen. If nothing else, this book is good value! So much in one package - a rare find these days indeed!

This is a very personal take on Der Ring. She states that she specifically avoided reading other

books about the ring before completing her's so that the analysis would come from her and not be influenced by other sources. The analysis is based upon her training as a Jungian analyst and her experience with patients over the years. On the plus side, we get a direct look at how a modern day Jungian sees the story and the symbols and how she relates them to her particular world view. There are headings like "Siglinde as Victim: The Psychology of Abuse" and "The Authoritarian Father and the Dysfunctional Family". She uses the characters and plot as a jumping off point to discuss particular aspects her brand of psychology. It is fairly stimulating and interesting. However, because she makes no attempt to contextualize the story or to understand what Wagner's intentions were I don't feel the book actually illuminated the Operas for me. It's kind of like having a Catholic priest explaining Buddhist iconography according to Catholic doctrine. No matter how great the analysis is, the original intent behind the work is lost because the artist and his mental world are not considered. Decontextualizing an artistic work might be a valid method of analysis of art, but for me it isn't a very satisfying one. The other drawback to the book is the music isn't examined. Wagner made a point of telling people that half of the message was contained in the music. In summary then, if you would like an interesting read about how a modern Jungian explains Der Ring without reference to Wagner or his time, then this book is for you. If you are looking to understand what Wagner was trying to communicate with Der Ring, then you should look elsewhere.

This was the book I was looking for when I first discovered the Ring, probably 15 years or so ago. It is a book for the Ring lover, feminist, and psychologist alike. Although Jean Bolen writes from a psychological, rather than a musical perspective, her understanding adds immeasurably to the experience of the music. And it also adds to our understanding of the story, and the archetypal levels of meaning that underlie any powerful myth. Jean is a natural storyteller. She brings the story of the Rheingold and the Gods to life and into everyday consciousness. From her feminist, Jungian perspective, she describes how the themes of the Ring, though universal, specifically apply to our lives today. In the Rheingold, she talks about the quest for power and its' psychological cost, in the Valkyrie, she discusses the authoritarian father and the repressed feminine, in Siegfried, the hero as adult-child and in Gotterdammerung, how the truth brings an end to the cycle of destructive power. In two particularly moving chapters, she describes what we can do today to free ourselves from the "ring Cycle" and move beyond Valhalla into a Post-Patriarchal world. I would highly recommend this book as an addition to her previous works, "Goddesses in Everywoman" and "Gods in Everyman", but also as a stand-alone, too. It should appeal to a wider audience, in that it will also include music lovers who may be unfamiliar with Jungian-feminist theory but are looking for a richer understanding

of the Ring. In addition, it should appeal to people-in-general who are searching for truth-in-story and myth and music as a way out of patriarchal consciousness.

For first-timers the gods and demi-gods may, at first, be unfamiliar, but their situations are not, and the reader quickly begins to recognize them as old acquaintances. Bolen's book is a great starting place for someone approaching "The Ring" for the first time. She successfully reveals what Fischer Diskeau called the "domestic tragedy" that underlies all the philosophical layers of Wagner's trilogy. It's very easy to follow her delineation of the all-too-familiar family dynamics of husband/wife; father/son; father/ daughter(and so on), and the opposing dynamics of power and love that manifest themselves in the internal conflicts of this family and to some degree in all families. What she says here can be applied to many other great classics, as well, but most importantly for me, is the reasonable extrapolation that can be made from her book that we are living in a world in which patriarchal dominance has run amok and has us in the same morass in which Wotan finds himself as he struggles to end the mess he has caused because of the excessive wielding of the power of the sword (or spear) and the renunciation of love and compassion. I think Wagner was more prescient than he is given credit for being when he crafted this miraculous vision of (Western) civilization gone wrong, and its demise . No wonder "The Ring" is more popular now than ever before.

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