Series Editor’s Foreword

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Musical rhythm and harmony find their way into the inward places of the soul.

—Plato

We were all reared in the dissonance of patriarchal culture. Dr. Claire Douglas immerses us in matriarchal culture as well. This book utilizes Wise Old Women of the West (similar to Hildegard of Bingen’s Sophia, “the highest and fiery power”) and of the East (such as Tara, who is richly described in the text). By emphasizing both sides (West/East, Fire/Water, Masculine/Feminine, Logos/Eros), Douglas helps us balance, integrate, harmonize, interconnect, and proceed on the Way toward wholeness. We learn how healing is related naturally to the Motherline, attunement, and cherishment.

While reading and editing this well-researched book, which is written in a feminine style that enlivens scholarship, I changed and owned my midwife identity (something Claire Douglas mentions in the Acknowledgments). Once I dreamed that I helped myself give birth to my own baby. Following that dream and a hard labor, I did give birth to a book, Transforming Depression: Healing the Soul through Creativity. In the dedication to my three daughters I write, “My dedication to the feminine is natural since the sui generis Soul, the archetypal feminine, is the only hope for humankind individually and collectively.” I recall Joseph (Jo) Wheelwright, one of my favorite Jungian analysts
and mentors, who is mentioned more than once in Douglas’s book, saying, “I’m one of the very few male feminists around.” That was over thirty years ago, and Jo was clearly way ahead of his time. Now I am ready to declare that I am a feminist and part of the Motherline.

This volume is the fifth in the Carolyn and Ernest Fay Series in Analytical Psychology that concerns a feminine mode of therapy. The first is The Stillness Shall Be the Dancing: Feminine and Masculine in Emerging Balance, by Marion Woodman. The second is Gender and Desire: Uncursing Pandora, by Polly Young-Eisendrath. The third is Memories of Our Lost Hands: Searching for Feminine Spirituality and Creativity, by Sonoko Toyoda. And the fourth is La Curandera: Healing in Two Worlds, by Clarissa Pinkola Estés. My editorial midwifery now seems like synchronicity. Helping Claire Douglas and these other women give birth to these culture-changing works gives me immense satisfaction. Now back to The Old Woman’s Daughter.

Dr. Douglas’s book contains a mixture of scholarship, theory, and autobiographical material as she faces, works through, and creatively writes about her “deviant reality.” She shares healing dreams, confronts her feelings, and mines gold from the shadow that provides fuel for her creative transformation. Douglas is deeply original in the way she combines history, myth, personal story (including poetry), and analytical case examples to create new theory. Her work is an innovative and creative way of generating theory, doing therapy, and being in the world. We see how her inner spiritual change is reflected in her enlightened political views regarding what is happening in the world. Parts of her book remind me of Sue Monk Kidd’s The Dance of the Dissident Daughter, as both include a woman’s journey to the Sacred Feminine. Something I especially like about Douglas’s book is how she applies feminine wisdom to both men and women.

In chapter 2, her description of a lost Vietnam veteran who found himself through worshiping Vajrayogini (a female Buddha) is particularly moving and touching. Also in this chapter Douglas describes being in a mandala dance celebrating the various forms of Tara. This made me think of C. G. Jung’s statement, “Because of the protection it implies, the magic circle or mandala can be a form of mother archetypetype.”

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I feel a kinship with Claire Douglas in chapter 3, entitled “Cherishment: A Different Way of Doing Therapy and Being in the World.” She writes about the healing relationship in therapy as involving loving concern, acceptance, empathy, mutuality, connectedness, human warmth (expressed through attunement or even silence), compassion, and meaning. I appreciate her multifaceted description of the feminine mode of therapy, which involves deep love, tenderness, cherishment, and play. Douglas correctly points out that one must also know the other side, that is, the shadow of all of the aforementioned positive attributes in order truly to be involved in healing, that is, in a process toward wholeness.

In chapter 4, Dr. Douglas’s long analytic case of a troubled man is refreshinglently honest and insightful in its handling of transference and countertransference. It becomes abundantly clear that she is practicing what she is writing about, to the benefit of all concerned (including the reader).

In conclusion, this is a very personal yet universal book. It pulls readers in and interacts with them. Claire Douglas has written an extremely valuable treatise about the Old Woman’s Daughter (the archetypal feminine) and heart wisdom for both men and women. Be prepared to change, as it is a fiercely creative and loving book.