

John Layard's the Lady of the Hare: A Study in the Healing Power of Dreams, Originally Published in London in 1944 and Has Been Recently Reprinted by Shambhala Press

**Reviewed by
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Layard's work is actually two short books -- one about the "The Lady" and the other about "The Hare". In the first "book" entitled "The Dream Analysis", Layard presents the case of "Mrs. Wright". A devout Christian and "hard-working country woman", Mrs. Wright sought therapy for her extremely introverted sixteen year old daughter Margaret. After one unsuccessful session in which Layard was unable to "reach" Margaret, he suggested that the mother come to see him and discuss her own dreams in an attempt to "get at" Margaret's problem. He felt that an examination of Mrs. Wright's dreams might reveal the unconscious family dynamics and the source of Margaret's difficulties. In the book Layard describes twelve analytic sessions and reports 25 dreams and "visions", as well as associations and interpretations of the imaginal material. According to Layard, a turning point in the treatment was marked by the appearance of a dream which Mrs. Wright was sacrificing a hare.

Picking up on the Hare motif of this "crucial" dream, Layard considers the Hare as an archetype in the second section, "The Mythology of the Hare". Exploring the symbolism of the hare, he recounts numerous myths, folk tales and customs that relate to the Hare from India, China, North American Indian, Ancient Egypt, Africa, Europe, and Classical Antiquity.

From an historical perspective, the book is interesting. As the author writes in his introduction, his work is the first Jungian case presentation in which any "serious attempt has been made to record in any detail the analyst's own part in the process as well as the patient's". The book does, however, seem dated in both language and technique and it is easy to criticize the analyst's interpretations as being simplistic, incomplete or narrowly Christian. The simplicity of the case material is both a weakness and a strength. One soon discovers that one has been drawn into the therapeutic process and is very engaged in the interactions between the therapist and analysand. The freshness of the images and the straightforward presentation of the interactions between the analyst and the analysand invite one to imagine other interpretations and therapeutic interventions. To take the Hare dream as an example -- this startling image irresistibly captures the imagination regardless of one's approach to dreams.

The Lady and the Hare raises an important question. What is it in therapy that heals? Clearly there was some change in Mrs. Wright's self-awareness as she reflected on her collective attitudes and "shadow" qualities which had interfered with Margaret's capacity to lead a fuller less restrictive life. Is it healing just to tell our story to an important Other regardless of the insights, interpretations and theoretical stance? Is it healing just to take one's imaginal life seriously? Is it the relationship that heals? Although Layard denied

any "transference", this comment reflects more a lack of understanding of the phenomenon than the actual experience (there is ample evidence in both the dream material and the interactions and dialogues to suggest a strong positive transference). The subtitle of the book suggests Layard's (and Jung's) position. According to the author, there is a curative value in the release of symbolic activity and in a "redirection of attention". By attending to our dreams, we can tap into the natural healing process of the unconscious.

The value of the mythology section lies in the richness of the stories and material about hares/rabbits. If one has a special love for or has ever dreamed about rabbits, this book will have a special appeal. I suspect that any reader will feel compelled to check out the "Hare in the Moon" (the Indian and Chinese equivalent of the "Man in the Moon") after reading Layard's book.

From the rich and complex mythological material that is presented, the author focuses on those examples which support his interpretation of the hare dream as an expression of a spiritual and psychological rebirth experience and the "transformation of an untutored instinct through sacrifice into spiritual value". Unfortunately material which suggests other interpretations -- such as the hare as a symbol of love or lust and its association to Aphrodite, Eros, and the Bacchic ritual cycle in classical antiquity -- are virtually ignored. By overemphasizing the "spiritual" and Christian interpretations, Layard missed deeper levels of transferential dynamics in the analytic process. This dimension of the experience was indeed sacrificed.