

Jack the Ripper and Bluebeard: Psychic Dissociation, Collective Shadow, and Violence in Modernity

Adriana Spaulonci Politi¹

¹Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo – PUC/SP. Núcleo de Estudos Junguianos. São Paulo/SP, Brazil.

Abstract

Este artigo propõe uma interpretação simbólica da figura de Jack, o Estripador, compreendida como representação arquetípica da sombra coletiva no contexto da modernidade vitoriana. A partir da psicologia analítica de Carl Gustav Jung, articulam-se os conceitos de sombra, *anima* e persona à análise do conto de fadas "Barba Azul", entendido como matriz simbólica de uma dinâmica psíquica, marcada pela dissociação entre a consciência e o inconsciente e pela violência dirigida contra o feminino reprimido. O estudo adotou uma abordagem qualitativa, de caráter teórico-interpretativo, fundamentada na hermenêutica simbólica, tomando como *corpus* principal obras de Jung, em diálogo com os desenvolvimentos de Erich Neumann sobre o arquétipo do feminino e com as contribuições de Marie-Louise von Franz acerca da interpretação dos contos de fada. Em articulação com estudos historiográficos sobre a Londres vitoriana, sustenta-se que a persistência cultural de Jack, como mito moderno, não decorre apenas do mistério policial, mas de sua função simbólica como condensador de projeções coletivas relacionadas à repressão moral, à dissociação psíquica e à violência contra o feminino. Conclui-se que a psicologia analítica oferece uma perspectiva para examinar os significados simbólicos associados à violência extrema no imaginário cultural, sem estabelecer uma explicação causal dos crimes.

Descriptors: Jungian psychology; projection; archetype; feminine; violence; fairy tales.

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Resumo

Este artigo propõe uma interpretação simbólica da figura de Jack, o Estripador, compreendida como representação arquetípica da sombra coletiva no contexto da modernidade vitoriana. A partir da psicologia analítica de Carl Gustav Jung, articulam-se os conceitos de sombra, *anima* e persona à análise do conto de fadas "Barba Azul", entendido como matriz simbólica de uma dinâmica psíquica, marcada pela dissociação entre a consciência e o inconsciente e pela violência dirigida contra o feminino reprimido. O estudo adotou uma abordagem qualitativa, de caráter teórico-interpretativo, fundamentada na hermenêutica simbólica, tomando como *corpus* principal obras de Jung, em diálogo com os desenvolvimentos de Erich Neumann sobre o arquétipo do feminino e com as contribuições de Marie-Louise von Franz acerca da interpretação dos contos de fada. Em articulação com estudos historiográficos sobre a Londres vitoriana, sustenta-se que a persistência cultural de Jack, como mito moderno, não decorre apenas do mistério policial, mas de sua função simbólica como condensador de projeções coletivas relacionadas à repressão moral, à dissociação psíquica e à violência contra o feminino. Conclui-se que a psicologia analítica oferece uma perspectiva para examinar os significados simbólicos associados à violência extrema no imaginário cultural, sem estabelecer uma explicação causal dos crimes.

Descritores: psicologia junguiana, projeção, arquétipo, feminino, violência, contos de fada.

Jack, el Destripador y Barba Azul: disociación psíquica, sombra colectiva y violencia en la modernidad

Resumen

Este artículo propone una interpretación simbólica de la figura de Jack, el Destripador, comprendida como representación arquetípica de la sombra colectiva en el contexto de la modernidad victoriana. Con base en la psicología analítica de Carl Gustav Jung, se articulan los conceptos de sombra, *anima* y persona a el análisis de cuento de hadas "Barba Azul", entendido como matriz simbólica de una dinámica psíquica, marcada por la disociación entre la consciencia y el inconsciente y por la violencia

dirigida contra lo femenino reprimido. El estudio adoptó una perspectiva cualitativa, de carácter teórico-interpretativo, fundamentada en la hermenéutica simbólica, tomando como *corpus* principal obras de Jung, en diálogo con las elaboraciones de Erich Neumann sobre el arquetipo de lo femenino y con las contribuciones de Marie-Louise von Franz acerca de la interpretación de los cuentos de hadas. En conjunto con estudios historiográficos sobre la Londres victoriana, se sostiene que la persistencia cultural de Jack, como mito moderno, no resulta solo del misterio policial, sino de su función simbólica como condensador de proyecciones colectivas relacionadas a la represión moral, a la disociación psíquica y a la violencia contra las mujeres. Se concluye que la psicología analítica ofrece una perspectiva para examinar los significados simbólicos asociados a la violencia extrema en el imaginario cultural, sin establecer una explicación causal de los crímenes.

Descriptores: psicología junguiana; proyección; arquetipo; femenino; violencia; cuentos de hadas.

Introduction

The figure of Jack the Ripper occupies a singular place in the history of modernity. Far more than an unidentified criminal from Victorian London, Jack became an enduring image in the cultural imagination, crossing into the fields of history, criminology, literature, and popular culture. The persistence of this figure suggests that his impact is not confined to the factual record of the crimes committed in 1888, but points to a broader symbolic dimension, related to the anxieties, conflicts, and dissociations characteristic of modern society in formation.

Several historiographical studies indicate that the so-called "Autumn of Terror" unfolded within a context marked by profound social, urban, and moral transformation, in which the inadequacy of the police investigations and the active role of the press contributed decisively to the construction of the modern myth of Jack the Ripper (Begg, 2004; Evans & Skinner, 2002). Within this scenario, Victorian London lived under a constant tension between the construction of a social persona grounded in respectability, order, and self-control, and an underlying reality of extreme poverty, social exclusion, and the repression of sexuality. The violence attributed to Jack thus not only produced fear, but came to symbolically condense that which society was unable to recognize as part of itself.

In light of analytical psychology, this persistence can be understood through the concepts of collective shadow and projection. Jung

showed that contents rejected by consciousness tend to return indirectly, often in the form of violent or threatening images, especially when they find no symbolic means of elaboration. On the collective plane, this mechanism assumes amplified proportions, allowing specific figures to concentrate the evil that a culture fails to recognize in itself (Jung, 1951/2013).

This article proposes a reading of Jack the Ripper from this perspective, understanding him not merely as a historical agent, but as a symbolic configuration that emerges from the dissociation between the social persona and the collective shadow of Victorian modernity. To deepen this reading, a dialogue is established between analytical psychology and symbolic narratives, particularly the tale of Bluebeard, understood here as an archetypal expression of violence directed against the feminine, relegated to the forbidden space of the psyche.

By bringing classical Jungian concepts into dialogue with the symbolic analysis of fairy tales and with the historical context of late-nineteenth-century London, this article proposes a reading of extreme violence as the manifestation of unintegrated collective psychic conflicts. The perspective adopted here seeks to situate the figure of Jack the Ripper within his full symbolic depth, understanding him as a condenser of archetypal projections that persist within the collective unconscious of Victorian modernity.

Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative, theoretical-interpretive approach grounded in the epistemological assumptions of Carl Gustav Jung's analytical psychology. The procedure adopted consisted in distinguishing between the historical event and its symbolic inscription within the cultural imagination, deliberately setting aside causal, forensic, or psychopathological explanations. The focus fell on understanding the symbolic meaning that the figure of Jack the Ripper acquired within Victorian modernity, through its articulation with the archetypal structures described by analytical psychology.

The theoretical *corpus* is grounded in the works of Carl Gustav Jung, with particular emphasis on the concepts of shadow, *anima*, persona, and projection, developed in works such as "Aion: Researches into the Phenomenology of the Self" (Jung, 1951/2013), "The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious" (Jung, 1934–1954/2014), and "Civilization in Transition" (Jung, 2013). In dialogue with Jung, this study draws on the contributions of Erich Neumann (1994/2000, 1959/2021), particularly regarding the archetype of the feminine and the polarity of the Great Mother, as well as the studies

of Marie-Louise von Franz (1974/1995, 1970/2022) on fairy tales as symbolic expressions of the collective unconscious.

In the historical field, the study drew on specialized research situating the crimes attributed to Jack the Ripper within the social, urban, and moral context of Victorian London, without reducing the analysis to a search for culprits. Works such as those of Rumbelow (1975/2018) and Begg (2004) provided the necessary background for understanding both the material and institutional conditions of the period and the transformation of the case into a mythic figure, contributing to its consolidation as a collective symbolic phenomenon.

The methodological strategy consisted of a comparative interpretive reading, in which recurring motifs associated with Jack — anonymity, nocturnal activity, violence directed at the female body, and the absence of a fixed identity — were related to the symbolic patterns described by analytical psychology and dramatized in the tale of “Bluebeard” (Perrault, 1697/2013). By means of the method of amplification, this procedure sought to identify archetypal convergences between the historical phenomenon and the symbolic narrative, while respecting the specificity of each field and avoiding causal reductionism.

It should be emphasized that the limits of symbolic interpretation are duly recognized, and that the intention is neither to exhaust the phenomenon under analysis nor to justify the violence, but rather to situate it within its psychic and cultural depth, as an expression of unintegrated collective conflicts.

Theoretical Framework

The Shadow and the Problem of Evil

In analytical psychology, the shadow designates those psychic contents that the ego refuses to recognize as its own, because they are incompatible with the conscious image the subject constructs of himself. These contents, relegated to the unconscious, do not disappear; rather, they remain active in psychic life, exerting a continuous influence on individual and collective conduct whenever they are not recognized and integrated into consciousness.

In “Aion,” Jung (1951/2013) deepens this conception by situating the shadow within the field of ethics and moral responsibility. The confrontation with the shadow is not merely an internal psychological process, but an existential challenge that entails concrete psychic costs. As the author states, “the shadow is a moral

problem that challenges the whole ego-personality, for no one can become conscious of the shadow without considerable moral effort" (Jung, 1951/2013, p. 19, para. 14). The shadow thus ceases to be understood merely as a set of undesirable traits and comes to occupy a central place in the problem of evil.

When left unrecognized, the shadow tends to manifest itself through projections that escape the subject's control. This process does not result from a voluntary decision, but from the autonomy of the unconscious, since projection precedes conscious reflection and can only be recognized by the subject after the fact (Jung, 1951/2013). Projection thus becomes a fundamental mechanism by which rejected contents are displaced outward and perceived as belonging to another.

When such projections go unrecognized as such, their effects become increasingly disruptive to the subject's relation with reality. Jung observes that, under these conditions, "the result of projection is to isolate the subject from his environment, since instead of a real relationship to it there is now only an illusory one" (Jung, 1951/2013, pp. 20–21, § 17), for the other person ceases to be perceived in his or her otherness and comes instead to function as a screen onto which the dark contents of the psyche are inscribed.

On the collective plane, this dynamic assumes amplified proportions. Groups and cultures can organize their identity around the systematic denial of certain aspects of human experience, projecting them onto external figures who come to concentrate the evil that goes unrecognized. The shadow thus ceases to be merely an individual problem and comes to constitute a collective shadow, whose manifestation can take the form of exclusion and violence, particularly in contexts marked by strong moral repression and the excessive idealization of the social persona. This formulation shows how the shadow, once it exceeds the individual plane, can symbolically organize phenomena of violence and exclusion on the collective level. The projection of the collective shadow, however, does not occur indiscriminately. It tends to organize itself around specific archetypal images that offer symbolic support to the rejected contents. Among these images, the archetype of the feminine occupies a central place. Jung shows that whatever is not integrated into masculine consciousness, whether on the individual or the cultural plane, finds in the feminine a privileged field of projection. In this way, the collective shadow manifests itself not only in generic external figures, but is articulated with particular intensity around the *anima* and the dark aspects of the archetype of the feminine.

The *Anima*, the Archetype of the Feminine, and the Great Mother

In analytical psychology, the *anima* corresponds to the archetype that represents the image of the feminine within the unconscious of man. For Jung, it is a mediating figure between consciousness and the unconscious, responsible for affective life, sensitivity, and the capacity for relationship with the inner world. When integrated, the *anima* favors symbolic contact with unconscious contents; when repressed or projected, it tends to manifest autonomously and disruptively, often being experienced as a seductive, threatening, or disorganizing force upon consciousness (Jung, 1934–1954/2014).

This projective dynamic is rooted in the very structure of the relation between the I and the non-I. As Jung states, “since the non-ego is felt as not belonging to the ego and is therefore outside it, the anima-image is usually projected upon women” (Jung, 1934–1954/2014, p. 36, § 58). In this configuration, the feminine ceases to function as a mediating instance between consciousness and the unconscious and comes instead to be experienced as a threatening or disturbing element within psychic life.

Erich Neumann (1959/2021) deepens this understanding by shifting the analysis of the archetype of the feminine toward its dynamic and structural dimension. For Neumann, archetypes should not be understood as fixed images or concrete historical representations, but as inner psychic realities, active and autonomous, which express themselves symbolically through cultural and mythological figures. In emphasizing this dynamic character, Neumann points out that the action of the archetype can dominate the totality of the personality once it is constellated. As the author states,

Each of these states, when it takes possession of the personality as a whole, represents the dynamic effect of an archetype, regardless of whether this effect is accepted or rejected by human consciousness, remains unconscious, or attains consciousness (Neumann, 1959/2021, p. 19).

Within this framework, the archetype of the feminine presents a fundamental polarity, symbolically articulated between the nurturing mother and the Terrible Mother. This ambivalence does not constitute a pathological deformation, but a structural given of archetypal experience. Conflict emerges when consciousness is unable to sustain this symbolic tension and instead dissociates its poles, rejecting the dark aspect of the feminine. Under these circumstances, the destructive dimension of the archetype tends to be projected onto real women, who come to embody, in the

masculine and collective imagination, the figure of threat or degradation.

Beyond this destructive dimension associated with the Terrible Mother, Neumann (1994/2000) points out that the fear of the feminine is not limited to its threatening aspect, but also encompasses the fear of its transformative potential. The author notes that, alongside the fear of the devouring dimension of the archetype, there exists a fear of the *anima* as a force of psychic transformation, capable of destabilizing the conscious organization of the ego and of promoting structural changes in the personality. From this perspective, the rejection of the feminine is directed not only at danger, but at the very possibility of transformation.

Linked to the notion of psychic dissociation, this dynamic helps explain why unintegrated contents tend to be split off from consciousness and projected onto external images, especially when they are associated with processes of psychic change that the ego cannot sustain. Thus, the fear of the transformation wrought by the *anima* contributes to the maintenance of dissociation, intensifying the projection of dark contents onto the feminine and favoring the emergence of symbolic configurations in which destruction and transformation remain indistinguishable.

These images, however, are not confined to individual experience. They recur throughout mythical and cultural narratives, pointing to the persistence of a collective psychic structure in search of symbolic expression. It is precisely within this field of symbolic narratives that this dynamic finds one of its clearest formulations, laying the groundwork for the analysis of the tale of "Bluebeard." (Perrault, 1697/2013).

Persona, Psychic Dissociation, and Social Morality

In analytical psychology, the persona designates the psychic instance responsible for the individual's adaptation to the expectations of the social milieu. It is the "mask" through which the subject presents himself to the world, organizing his identity in conformity with socially recognized values, norms, and roles. Although necessary for life in society, the persona becomes problematic when the subject identifies excessively with its demands, to the detriment of unconscious psychic life (Jung, 1934–1954/2014).

When the persona becomes rigid and one-sided, a dissociation is established between the socially acceptable image and the rejected psychic contents, which then accumulate within the shadow. In such cases, the more elevated and idealized the

conscious image of the subject or of the collective, the more intensely the disavowed aspects tend to manifest themselves autonomously and in disorganized fashion. On the cultural plane, strongly moralistic and normative societies can produce this type of split, creating a pronounced contrast between public respectability and latent violence. This dissociation between the social persona and repressed contents constitutes one of the psychic foundations for the emergence of extreme forms of transgression and violence, which cannot be understood merely as individual deviations, but as symptoms of unintegrated collective conflicts.

Fairy Tales as an Expression of the Collective Unconscious

In analytical psychology, fairy tales occupy a privileged place as a symbolic expression of the contents of the collective unconscious. Because they are not tied to individual authorship or to a specific historical context, these narratives preserve, with particular clarity, the fundamental archetypal patterns of the human psyche. As von Franz (1974/1995) points out, fairy tales present archetypes in their most elemental form, stripped of complex cultural elaboration, which makes them especially well suited to the investigation of the dynamic between consciousness and the unconscious.

In these narratives, structural psychic conflicts — such as the dissociation between persona and shadow, as well as the projection of the dark aspects of the feminine archetype — are dramatized through recurring images that span cultures and epochs. From this perspective, fairy tales should not be interpreted as moralizing narratives or as descriptions of individual deviance, but as symbolic expressions of collective psychic structures, in which fundamental tensions of human experience find symbolic form.

In this sense, fairy tales constitute a privileged body of material for the analysis of cultural phenomena in which violence emerges as an expression of unelaborated collective psychic conflicts. A symbolic reading of these narratives makes it possible to build bridges between archetypal structures and historical events, without reducing one to the other. It is from this perspective that the tale of Bluebeard will be analyzed here, not as a mere illustration, but as the symbolic expression of a psychic dynamic that finds resonance in the modern figure of Jack the Ripper.

Analysis and Discussion

Jack the Ripper and Psychic Dissociation in Victorian Modernity

Understanding Jack the Ripper as an expression of the collective shadow requires careful consideration of the historical and social context in which his crimes took place. Victorian society upheld a self-image strongly marked by ideals of respectability, moral progress, and rationality, while at the same time coexisting with profound social contradictions, extreme inequalities, and systematic exclusion. This structural dissociation between the collective persona and lived reality constitutes the symbolic backdrop against which the figure of Jack is inscribed (Begg, 2004).

Donald Rumbelow (1975/2018) observes that the murders took place during a period of intense social instability in London's *East End*, a region characterized by extreme poverty, precarious housing, unemployment, and weak public institutions. According to the author, the prevailing climate of insecurity and urban disorganization contributed decisively to the symbolic amplification of the crimes, transforming them into a privileged focus of the era's social anxieties.

The authorities' inability to identify and capture the perpetrator aggravated this scenario still further. The succession of unsolved crimes produced a collective sense of impotence and distrust toward the promises of order and control that underpinned the Victorian ideal. The police, a symbol of the modern civilizing project, proved incapable of containing the violence that emerged precisely at the margins of the city, reinforcing the perception that something threatening had escaped the grasp of social consciousness (Rumbelow, 1975/2018).

In light of analytical psychology, this context favors the activation of the collective shadow. When a society sustains an excessively idealized persona, those aspects that contradict this image tend to be repressed and displaced onto marginal spaces. The *East End* can thus be understood symbolically as the territory onto which Victorian society deposited its rejected contents, making the violence not an unexpected rupture, but the symptomatic manifestation of a dissociation that was already firmly in place.

Within this scenario, Jack the Ripper comes to function as a symbolic condenser of this shadow. His figure embodies, in extreme form, that which Victorian society could not recognize within itself, allowing fear, aggression, repressed sexuality, and moral disorder to be projected onto a faceless character who moved through the shadows and attacked socially invisible women. The absence of a

fixed identity, combined with the repetition of the crimes and institutional impotence, favored the symbolic crystallization of the figure, who transcended the status of an empirical criminal and assumed a mythic dimension, embodying the collective shadow of a culture that denies its own contradictions.

Jack is thus progressively displaced from the register of historical fact to the plane of the symbolic image that structures the collective imagination. From the standpoint of analytical psychology, this persistence does not depend on historical factuality, but on the power of the psychic image as an effective reality within the collective imagination. As Jung observes:

Far from being a material world, then, this reality is a psychic world, which allows us to draw only indirect and hypothetical conclusions about the true nature of matter. Only the psychic possesses immediate reality, one that encompasses even "unreal" ideas and thoughts (. . .) Greater than all physical dangers are the tremendous effects of illusory ideas, to which our world-bound consciousness denies any reality whatsoever (Jung, 1933/2013, p. 342, § 747).

In light of this formulation, it becomes possible to understand why the figure of Jack the Ripper remains active within the modern imagination: not as a resolved historical fact, but as a psychic image endowed with symbolic efficacy, capable of condensing fears, moral conflicts, and contents rejected by collective consciousness.

Jung (1951/2013) observes that the more projections interpose themselves between the subject and the external world, the harder it becomes for the I to recognize its own illusions. In such cases, destructiveness is not produced by consciousness, but by an autonomous unconscious factor that organizes the projections and draws the individual into a plot in which he himself ultimately becomes entangled. When such projections cannot be understood merely as an expression of the personal shadow, they come to assume the form of the *anima* or the *animus*, whose autonomy accounts for the persistence and force of these projective dynamics.

Bluebeard as an Archetypal Configuration of Psychic Dissociation

It is precisely within the field of symbolic narratives that this dynamic can be observed with the greatest clarity. Because fairy tales are not tied to individual authorship or to a specific historical context, they preserve, with particular clarity, the archetypal patterns of the

collective unconscious. Within them, the ambivalence of the feminine archetype and the projection of its dark aspects appear condensed in recurring images that span cultures and epochs. Among these narratives, the tale of Bluebeard stands out for expressing, in exemplary fashion, the split between the conscious masculine and the repressed feminine, as well as the violence directed against that which has been relegated to the forbidden space of the psyche.

The tale of Bluebeard can be understood, in light of analytical psychology, as a symbolic dramatization of the dissociation between consciousness and the unconscious, as well as of the cleavage between persona and shadow. The central male figure of the narrative initially presents himself as socially respectable, a man of wealth, *status*, and power, yet he keeps hidden a forbidden space in which murdered female bodies accumulate. This duplicity constitutes the symbolic core of the tale, revealing a profound psychic split that operates beneath the appearance of social normalcy.

From a Jungian standpoint, Bluebeard embodies a rigidly constructed persona, sustained by social conventions and by an image of respectability that masks destructive unconscious contents. Jung (1934–1954/2014) warns that the more one-sided and idealized the persona becomes, the greater the pressure exerted by the repressed contents of the shadow, which then seek expression autonomously and, frequently, violently. In the tale, this violence is symbolically dramatized through the repeated imagery of female murder, which should not be understood as empirical acts, but as archetypal representations of the destruction of the feminine relegated to the forbidden space of the psyche.

The forbidden room occupies a central place in the symbolic economy of the narrative. It is a space segregated from the patterns of consciousness, access to which is forbidden under threat of extreme punishment. From a psychological standpoint, this space can be interpreted as an image of the repressed unconscious, in which unrecognized, unelaborated, and unintegrated contents accumulate. The key handed to the wife symbolizes the possibility of access to this psychic material — that is, the opening toward consciousness of what has been denied.

Feminine curiosity, often interpreted moralistically in superficial readings of the tale, acquires here a quite different meaning. It represents the psychic impulse toward knowledge and the expansion of consciousness. Transgressing the prohibition thus constitutes not a moral failing, but a necessary movement of confrontation with hidden psychic reality. The blood that stains the key, rendering it impossible to clean, signals the irreversibility of the

process of becoming conscious. What has been seen can no longer be denied or forgotten.

The repetition of the female murders suggests a compulsive dynamic characteristic of unintegrated unconscious contents. Each new wife replaces the previous one without any real psychic transformation taking place, revealing the stagnation of the development of masculine consciousness represented by Bluebeard. This repetition corresponds to what Jung describes as the unconscious acting-out of the shadow, in which the subject remains a prisoner of destructive patterns that reiterate themselves for want of symbolic elaboration (Jung, 1934–1954/2014).

From this perspective, Bluebeard should not be interpreted as a particular individual, but as an archetypal configuration that expresses violence directed against the repressed feminine. The murdered wives do not represent empirical subjects, but symbolic images of the *anima* and of the archetype of the feminine. When these images are rejected, they return in the form of threat and destruction. The violence is not directed at the actual woman, but at what she symbolizes within the interior of the dissociated masculine psyche (von Franz, 1970/2022).

This reading helps explain why the tale has crossed centuries and cultures without losing its symbolic force. It does not narrate a specific historical event; it enacts a structural psychic conflict, related to the incapacity to integrate the shadow and the feminine. In dramatizing this dynamic through symbolic language, Bluebeard renders visible an archetypal pattern that, when not symbolically recognized, tends to reappear in literal and devastating form within historical reality.

Jack the Ripper as a Modern Reenactment of Bluebeard

The symbolic reading of the tale of Bluebeard makes it possible to establish a consistent link with the modern figure of Jack the Ripper — not in the sense of a literal equivalence between characters, but as a historical reenactment of one and the same archetypal configuration. In both cases, one observes the presence of a dissociated masculine principle, whose social persona conceals a violent shadow directed against the feminine, relegated to the forbidden space of the psyche.

Like Bluebeard, Jack emerges within a context marked by a profound split between moral appearance and underlying reality. Victorian society constructed a self-image grounded in order, rationality, and respectability, while at the same time coexisting with extreme poverty, social exclusion, and the systematic repression of sexuality. This dissociation between center and margin, between

collective persona and social shadow, created the psychic conditions for violence to erupt autonomously, concentrating precisely on those who occupied symbolically fragile positions.

From an archetypal standpoint, the district of Whitechapel can be understood as a modern equivalent of Bluebeard's forbidden room. It is the social space onto which the city deposits that which it does not wish to recognize as part of itself. Within this marginalized territory, violence ceases to be an exception and comes instead to operate as a symptom. Jack does not invade the moral center of the city; he acts within a space already marked by symbolic exclusion, where the collective shadow finds fertile ground for its manifestation.

The absence of a confirmed identity for Jack intensifies his symbolic function. Whereas Bluebeard possesses a face, a name, and a defined social position, Jack remains without a stable identity, functioning instead as a spectral figure. This indeterminacy favors the process of collective projection, allowing diffuse fears, unconscious fantasies, and social anxieties to be condensed into his image. Historiographical studies indicate that the impossibility of identifying the perpetrator contributed decisively to his transformation into a mythic figure, progressively detached from the empirical event (Rumbelow, 1975/2018).

The repetition of the murders and the ritualized character of the violence reinforce this reading. As in the tale, there is no symbolic elaboration or psychic transformation, only the compulsive reiteration of the same destructive pattern. Each new victim replaces the previous one without producing any structural change, indicating the autonomous activity of the shadow when it remains unintegrated into consciousness. The violence is not directed at specific individuals, but at the feminine as the symbolic bearer of rejected contents.

In this sense, Jack can be understood as the modern manifestation of the very same psychic structure symbolically enacted in Bluebeard. Both express the impossibility of integrating the shadow and the *anima*, resulting in violence directed against that which has been excluded from consciousness. The fundamental difference lies in the register in which this dynamic manifests itself. In the fairy tale, violence appears in symbolic language, allowing for symbolic elaboration and cultural transmission. In Victorian modernity, it erupts literally, bodily, and irreversibly, producing social trauma and collective terror.

This passage from the symbolic to the factual indicates a weakening of culture's symbolic function. When narratives capable of containing and elaborating psychic conflicts cease to operate,

archetypal contents tend to manifest themselves directly within historical reality.

As von Franz (1970/2022) observes, fairy tales fulfill the function of symbolically expressing and transforming fundamental psychic conflicts. When this symbolic function weakens or falls dormant, archetypal contents may return in literal and destructive form within historical reality. In this sense, Jack the Ripper does not create an unprecedented figure of evil, but rather re-enacts, in modern guise, an ancient archetypal dynamic whose symbolic expression was already present in fairy tales.

The connection between Bluebeard and Jack the Ripper thus reveals the persistence of a psychic logic that spans distinct epochs and cultural contexts. By displacing violence from the symbolic plane to the historical plane, Victorian modernity exposed the limits of its own collective consciousness, demonstrating that whatever is not symbolically recognized carries the possibility of returning in increasingly literal and devastating forms.

Conclusion

The analysis developed throughout this article has made it possible to understand Jack the Ripper not merely as a historical criminal confined to the late nineteenth century, but as a symbolic figure emerging from the collective unconscious of Victorian modernity. The articulation between the analytical psychology of Carl Gustav Jung, the symbolic reading of fairy tales, and historical studies of the London context has shown that Jack's persistence in the cultural imagination cannot be explained by the criminal mystery alone, but by his archetypal function.

From the concept of the shadow, it became possible to understand the violence attributed to the Ripper as part of a dynamic of collective projection. The analysis developed indicated that contents rejected by social consciousness can be projected onto particular figures, who come to symbolically concentrate aspects that the collectivity does not recognize as its own. Victorian society, marked by a persona rigidly constructed around respectability, moral self-control, and the repression of sexuality, relegated to the urban underworld everything that contradicted this idealized image. Within this context, the *East End* came to function as a privileged site for the symbolic deposit of the contents rejected by social consciousness.

The centrality of the feminine among the victims made it possible to deepen this reading through the archetype of the *anima* and the Great Mother. As developed by Jung and further elaborated by Neumann (1994/2000, 1959/2021), the archetypal feminine presents

a constitutive polarity that encompasses both nurturing and destructive aspects. When this ambivalence is not symbolically sustained on the individual and cultural planes, the dark pole tends to be projected onto external figures. The violence directed against socially marginalized women can thus be understood as the expression of a profound psychic conflict related to the difficulty of integrating the feminine within the masculine and collective unconscious.

The analysis of the tale of Bluebeard offered a privileged field for the symbolic understanding of this dynamic. As a symbolic narrative, the tale dramatizes the dissociation between persona and shadow, as well as the violence directed against the feminine, relegated to the forbidden space of the psyche. Bluebeard does not represent a historical individual, but an archetypal configuration that expresses, in symbolic language, the compulsive destruction of that which has not been integrated into consciousness. The dialogue established between this narrative and the figure of Jack made it possible to identify the modern reenactment of one and the same psychic structure.

The fundamental difference between Bluebeard and Jack lies in the register in which this dynamic manifests itself. In the fairy tale, violence appears symbolically, allowing for symbolic elaboration and cultural transmission. In Victorian modernity, it erupts literally, bodily, and irreversibly, producing social trauma and collective terror. The incapacity to symbolically sustain psychic conflicts reveals an impoverishment of culture's symbolic function, opening the way for the archetypal to manifest itself immediately and destructively within historical reality.

Jack the Ripper can thus be understood as a modern myth. His cultural persistence indicates that the conflicts between persona, shadow, and the feminine remain active within the collective unconscious. The impossibility of fixing his concrete identity favored the process of projection, allowing him to become the symbolic bearer of broader social anxieties related to urban disorder, moral degradation, and the fragility of the modern civilizing project. Recognizing the symbolic dimension of the figure of Jack the Ripper does not imply justifying the violence, nor explaining it through individual or pathological causes, but rather situating it within a collective psychic dynamic, in which unelaborated contents of the shadow return in extreme form.

Although the present study has focused on the context of Victorian modernity, the psychic dynamic analyzed here is not confined to that historical period. The contemporary persistence of violence against women, frequently marked by patterns of objectification, depersonalization, and brutality, suggests the continuity of

unelaborated conflicts related to the projection of the shadow and to the ongoing difficulty of integrating the feminine on the collective plane. Although this relationship does not constitute the direct object of the present work, it points to the relevance of future research articulating analytical psychology with contemporary phenomena of gender-based violence, thereby broadening the interpretive scope of the dynamics described here.

This symbolic reading not only deepens the cultural understanding of the phenomenon, but also offers analytical psychology an interpretive key for clinical reflection on the collective shadow. By recognizing that certain historical phenomena may reflect unelaborated collective psychic conflicts, the field of understanding is broadened with respect to the projections that traverse both social life and individual experience. In this sense, the article contributes to the Jungian theoretical-clinical debate, underscoring the importance of the symbolic elaboration of the shadow as a condition for psychic integration.

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Curriculum:

Adriana Spaulonci Politi – Master's degree in Clinical Psychology from the Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo – PUC/SP, affiliated with the Núcleo de Estudos Junguianos. Professor and supervisor in the graduate program in Jungian Psychotherapy at Universidade Paulista – UNIP, and in the graduate program in Analytical Psychology – with an emphasis on Mythology, Fairy Tales, and Art – at Instituto Freedom. Advanced training in Mental Health at the Conjunto Hospitalar do Mandaqui, under the Professional Development Program of the Fundação do Desenvolvimento Administrativo – FUNDAP. Analyst member of the Instituto Junguiano de São Paulo, the Associação Junguiana do Brasil, and the International Association for Analytical Psychology – IJUSP/AJB/IAAP. Analyst and clinical supervisor. E-mail: psicologapoliti@gmail.com