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Myth in Edgar Wallace's Prose

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Zásady pro vypracování

Autor se ve své diplomové práci zaměří na dílo Edgara Wallace v kontextu mýtické literatury. V teoretické části nejprve načrtne tradiční obsahové dělení mýtů a prozkoumá jejich formální rysy, zejména ve smyslu výstavby děje, typologizace postav a dalších aspektů. Pro své úvahy využije východisek archetypální, popřípadě i formalistické kritiky (J. Frazer, C. Jung, N. Frye, V. Propp, aj.). Dále na základě odborné literatury načrtne důvody, které autory meziválečného období, ke kterým Wallace patřil, vedly k zaujetí mýtem (James Joyce, atd.) a na způsob, jakým tento formát do své tvorby zakomponovali. Na tomto základě a s pomocí sekundární literatury provede detailní srovnávací analýzu vybraných děl Edgara Wallace. Cílem bude zmapovat míru a podobu jakými tento prozaik mýtu využil ve své narativní technice a jak ho přizpůsobil dobovému kontextu. Soustředit se bude zejména na výstavbu děje a postav, ale možné je i zaměření na další atributy, jako například místo děje a sociální vazby. Práci zakončí kapitola, která z předchozích dílčích zjištění vyvodí obecnější poznatky.

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ANNOTATION

The thesis will focus on the work of Edgar Wallace in the context of mythic literature. The first part introduces theories of myth and its involvement in the work of the modernists. The second section explains the dual nature of myth as truth or falsity and the concept of the displacement of myth to romance. The third section focuses on primitivism as an antidote to an overcivilized society or a form of civilizational decline. The thesis concludes by summarizing all the literary devices Edgar Wallace uses to increase suspense in his work.

KEYWORDS

myth, archetype, romance, primitivism, modernism, suspense, anti-realism

ANOTACE

Diplomová práce se zaměří na dílo Edgara Wallace v kontextu mýtické literatury. První část představuje teorie mýtu a jeho zapojení do tvorby modernistů. Druhá kapitola vysvětluje, duální povahu mýtu jako pravdy či falše a koncept posunu mýtu k romanci. Třetí část se zaměřuje na primitivismus jako protilék na přecivilizovanou společnost nebo formu civilizačního úpadku. Závěr práce shrnuje všechny literární nástroje, které Edgar Wallace používá ke zvýšení napětí ve své tvorbě.

KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA

mýtus, archetyp, romance, primitivismus, modernismus, napětí, anti-realismus

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Field research of cultural anthropologists around the world in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries contributed to the capture of various myths, and ethnographers brought testimonies of indigenous people about ancient times of cultures scarcely known to Europeans. An influential milestone in the return to the mythical times of our ancient ancestors was the publication of James George Frazer's *The Golden Bough* (1890). This 'anthropological bible' triggered an avalanche of interest in this sphere of human culture. This concern has been the initial impetus for the emergence of several new theories in many scientific disciplines. Theories applied to myth arose in the fields of anthropology by Bronislaw Malinowski and Claude Lévi-Strauss, in philosophy by Ernst Cassirer, in religion by Mircea Eliade, and in psychology by Sigmund Freud and C. G. Jung. On the foundations of myth theory, especially Frazer's social anthropology and Jung's psychoanalysis, developed Archetypal literary criticism, which focuses on recurring myths and archetypes in literature. It is set in the 1930s and is associated with the publication of Maud Bodkin's *Archetypal Patterns in Poetry* (1934). The most prominent representatives of this literary criticism are undoubtedly the critic Northrop Frye with his comprehensive work *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957) and Joseph Campbell and his *Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949).

Long before that, however, the scientific interest in myth was transferred to the field of art. In the visual arts, inspiration from the lives and artifacts of indigenous peoples became the basis of Modernist Primitivism. While Paul Gauguin was captivated by the primitive style of life of the indigenous inhabitants of the French colony of Tahiti, Pablo Picasso, for example, transferred the African mask into his works such as *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* (1907). In music, traces of the inspiration of primitivism can be found in the early work of Igor Stravinsky, such as *Le Sacre du printemps* (1912). The literati turned to myth as a wellspring of answers to the complex times brought about by the beginning of the twentieth century. Above all, it was the modernists whose groundbreaking works, such as James Joyce's novel *Ulysses* (1922), referring to episodes of Homer's *Odyssey*, and Thomas Eliot's poem *The Waste Land* (1922), combined with the legends of the Holy Grail and the Fisher King, became to literature what Frazer's *The Golden Bow* was to anthropology. Modernist authors tried to find in myth answers to questions related to the frustration after the First World War. Myth also served them as a literary tool to free themselves from the materialistic descriptiveness of Realism in literature and to turn their attention to the inner world of the human being, to his mind, to his instincts. New literary techniques such as the 'mythic method' or a narrative

mode ‘stream of consciousness’ have emerged, as well as an attraction to a range of myths and legends, from the classical Greek in the case of James Joyce, the Christian in T. S. Eliot, to the exotic and pagan in D. H. Lawrence.

The specific atmosphere of the early twentieth century greatly influenced the work of Edgar Wallace, as well as that of the modernists. Edgar Wallace shared with the modernists not only anti-realist tendencies, a return to myth, and inspiration from primitivism, but above all an interest in new approaches to writing, which Ezra Pound captured in his modernist imperative "Make It New." Wallace, too, found his distinctive style of using myth in his work, namely the building of tension, the simplicity of the characters and the directness of the plot. To update myth and distance himself from realist tendencies in literature, he used the genres of escapist fiction, especially romance, gothic literature or melodrama, and added thematic elements inspired by primitivism, totemism and superstition. He deliberately chose forms, themes and motifs that served to heighten the tension. His return to myth lies in its planned simplicity, even primitiveness. The return to myth is its planned simplicity, even primitiveness, in which it meets the essence of the deepest feelings and basic instincts: love and goodness or evil and hatred are thus depicted even by romance, because only in this mode of simplicity can purity and corruption be distinguished.

In the introductory chapter I will mention the approach of selected modernists to myth and how they used it in their work, and I will not forget to stop at the leading scientists, anthropologists, and linguists who have contributed to the permanent establishment of myth in the scientific world. In the second and third chapters I will analyse three of Wallace's novels in particular, *The Green Archer* (1923), *The Fellowship of the Frog* (1925), and *The Feathered Serpent* (1927) and as a thematic extension I will consider two further novels, *The Black Abbot* (1926), *The Door with Seven Locks* (1926). The second chapter, the chapter on genre, illuminates the dual nature of myth, which can be true or false – hence the title of the chapter ‘spuriously fictitous’. Next, I will focus on the genre of romance and the gothic novel, which is central to Wallace’s work. Myth and romance, as well as a departure from realism and primitivism, are supporting devices in Wallace’s style, which uses them to heighten the tension. The third chapter, the chapter on values, will focus on the primitivism that influenced Wallace thematically. Primitivism is defined as an antidote to overcivilized society or as a form of civilizational regress. Wallace incorporated both of these views, along with his personal African experience, into his work, along with the anthropological-structural components of clans, totemism, and superstition. To analyze the methodological ambiguity of myth, I will use Max Müller's theory of the ‘paronymy’ of words and Ernst Cassirer's theory

of mind and his concept of the binary opposition of the tendency to create myths and the tendency to rationalize. Next, I will make use of Northop Fry's approaches, particularly his concept of ‘displacement’, that is, the shift of myth towards romance, and Gillian Beer’s ‘cluster of properties’ methodology.

1. MYTH THEORIES AND LITERARY INFLUENCE

The aim of this thesis is not to prove that Edgar Wallace belongs among the modernists, but that the specific atmosphere of the early 20th century influenced his work as much as that of the modernists. Like many of them, he went his own way and created his own distinctive style. What linked him with the modernists was above all his departure from realism and a specific return to myth. This drift towards the elusiveness and eternity of mythos was aptly captured by Joseph Conrad in the preface to *The Nigger of the Narcissus*:

> But the artist appeals to that part of our being which is not dependent on wisdom; to that in us which is a gift and not an acquisition—and, therefore, more permanently enduring. He speaks to our capacity for delight and wonder, to the sense of mystery surrounding our lives; to our sense of pity, and beauty, and pain; to the latent feeling of fellowship with all creation—and to the subtle but invincible conviction of solidarity that knits together the loneliness of innumerable hearts, to the solidarity in dreams, in joy, in sorrow, in aspirations, in illusions, in hope, in fear, which binds men to each other, which binds together all humanity—the dead to the living and the living to the unborn.[1]

It is as if Conrad hints at an eternal truth hidden in a myth that endures for centuries and is part of each of us. Something in us that the author addresses with his work. It is as if Conrad understands that human nature can be distilled from our soul without regard to reason and intellect. Such a conclusion is entirely consistent with the approach summarized in Robert Segal's *Literature and Myth*: "Myth remains germane to literature because myth, rightly grasped, is not about the fall of Troy or the fall of Jericho but about human nature."[2]

Edgar Wallace may not have had as profound a plan as the modernists to subtly incorporate myth into the mental processes of his characters and his literary-philosophical message, but he certainly seized the opportunity to use myth to build tension in his novels. He was the author of suspense novels, often referred to as the inventor of the thriller: "Wallace practically invented the modern 'thriller'."[3] He purposefully chose forms, themes and motifs that would serve him in building the suspense. Such tools to extract the anti-realist marrow of myth were on the one hand genre ones including elements of escapist fiction especially of romance, gothic literature or melodrama and on the other hand value ones with anthropological-structural components of primitivism, totemism, superstition, the supernatural

[1] Joseph Conrad, The Nigger of the Narcissus (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1914), 12.
[2] Robert Alan Segal, "Myth and Literature." in *Myth and Subversion in the Contemporary Novel*. ed. José Manuel Losada Goya and Marta Guirao Ochoa, (Newcastle upon Tyne, Gran Bretaña: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012), 25.
[3] "Edgar Wallace," Encyclopædia Britannica, accessed December 20, 2022, https://www.britannica.com/biography/Edgar-Wallace.

etc. As if Edgar Wallace was familiar with the ideas of American literary critics John Vickery and Lionel Trilling, presented by Robert A. Segal: "For Trilling and Vickery, the influence of myth on literature is to be found not in allusions to ancient figures or events but in themes. Those themes are eternal."[4] The forms and motifs updated by the influence of myth captivated the diverse literati of the tumultuous years of the early 20th century. This thematic overlap can be identified in a wide range of authors beginning with literary modernism and ending with popular literature. It is noteworthy that the mythical deity of Aztec culture, Quetzalcoatl, appears simultaneously in the political novel *The Plumed Serpent* (1926) by David Herbert Lawrence and the crime novel *The Feathered Serpent* (1927) by Edgar Wallace. Similarly, "Gothic Romance", "Henry James' Ghost Stories", and "The Supernatural in Fiction" are surprisingly areas of interest in the selected essays by Virginia Woolf, one of the leading exponents of modernism. Besides, Wallace turned his African experiences from a visit to the Belgian Congo into a collection of African short stories, *Sanders of the River* (1911) and "they deserve to be read together with Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899) as one of the co-ordinates of the British contribution to what Christopher Miller has called 'Africanist discourse' […]."[5] However, by setting the plot of his novels in the period of modernity, similarly to the Modernists, Edgar Wallace did not avoid confrontation with his contemporaneity and updated and retold the myth in contrast with his present.

While the modernists demonstrated their objections to realistic work mired in materialistic description by escaping into the realm of the unconscious and the mental processes of their heroes, Wallace made a similar departure, but into the realm of romance. Both of these escapes are linked by the liberation from consistent, almost slavish, descriptiveness and the subsequent liberation of the mind in its journeys of thought sequences flowing on the waves of unrestraint. In the case of the modernists, in the streams of mental psychological processes with a chain of thought associations, and in the case of Wallace, in the currents of sequenced romantic, sometimes even idealistic adventures. But what connects the modernists with Wallace even more is their escape into the realm of myth, where they seek answers to the eternal questions of humanity. Modernity at the beginning of the twentieth century has lost its way to the meaning of life and seeks faith in the future in the social orders of ancient societies, while at the same time being fascinated by their succumbing to the primordial instincts present even within us. Modernists work with a variety of myths

[4] Segal, "Myth and Literature.", 25.
[5] David Glover, "Looking for Edgar Wallace: The Author as Consumer," *History Workshop Journal* 37, no. 1 (1994): pp. 143-164, https://doi.org/10.1093/hwj/37.1.143, 147.

and legends. One cannot fail to mention James Joyce's *Ulysses* updating the story of Homer's *Odyssey* in a single day in the life of the inhabitants of Dablin, and the poem *The Waste Land* by T. S. Eliot reflecting on British society against the backdrop of, among other things, the Arthurian legend about the Fisher King and the Holy Grail. Non-European exotic mythical admixtures are inherent in Ezra Pound, who "use Chinese mythology which contributes to his spiritual 'periplum'"[6] v *The Cantos* and David Herbert Lawrence and his dalliance with the myths of ancient Mexico in *The Plumed Serpent*. William Butler Yeats went even further and "undertook to construct his own systematic mythology based on historical, astrological and occult material […]."[7] What is more, "some of the symbolic patterns (gyres, moon phases) provide important background to many of the poems"[8] he wrote, for example "The Second Coming" and "Byzantium". Whilst the Modernists work qualitatively and even academically with selected classical Greek myths, Christian mythology, or more exotic sources of stories from ancient times in their representational modernist works, Wallace, in his production of dozens of titles, plays with an inspirational quantitative conception of sources sometimes far beyond what can still be considered myth in purity of description. In addition to myth, it reaches into the realms of legends, folktales, ghost stories and even fairy tales, all of which are in their own way based on oral tradition.

I shall demonstrate the use of myth in Edgar Wallace's work predominantly through the three novels included in the primary literature of the thesis, namely *The Green Archer* (1923), *The Fellowship of the Frog* (1925) and *The Feathered Serpent* (1927) and partly through two others, *The Black Abbot* (1926) and *The Door with Seven Locks* (1926). The volumes are deliberately chosen so that each works thematically with a different story from ancient times that coincides to varying degrees with a pure definition of myth. They will be presented in order, from the one that meets most of the parameters of myth to the one that is already far from myth and resembles more of a tale or rumor. The books of Edgar Wallace selected for analysis are intentionally chosen from a segment of his approximately thirty years of work between 1923 and 1927, a period that coincides with the major works of modernists such as T. S. Eliot: *The Waste Land* (1922), James Joyce: *Ulysses* (1922), Virginia Woolf: *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), D. H. Lawrence: *The Plumed Serpent* (1926), who are known (except

[6] David Hsin-fu Wand, " To the Summit of Tai Shan: Ezra Pound's Use of Chinese Mythology," Paideuma 3, no. 1 (1974): 3–12, http://www.jstor.org/stable/24725485, 3.
[7] Nasrullah Mambrol, "Modernist Use of Myth," Literary Theory and Criticism, August 28, 2019, https://literariness.org/2016/03/24/modernist-use-of-myth/.
[8] "William Butler Yeats," Poetry Foundation, accessed May 30, 2023, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/william-butler-yeats.

for the rather differently focused Virginia Woolf) for their participation in the rediscovery of myth for literature.

2. SPURIOUSLY FICTITOUS REALM OF MYTH AND ROMANCE

The inspiration for Wallace's novel *The Plumed Serpent* is closest to myth. The novel's protagonist, journalist Peter Dewin, thanks to his wits and by deciphering a puzzle hidden in the inscription on a yellowed card attached to a mysterious key, comes up with the word Gucumatz. He hastily searched for the entry in the dictionary of the club's well-equipped library and was astonished:

> GUCUMATZ. The name given by the ancient Aztecs, and especially by the people of Quiche (Guatemala) to the Creator (see Popol-Vuh). Gucumatz, known in ancient Mexico as Quetzalcoatl, was invariably represented as a feathered serpent, by which name he is also called. Gucumatz is still worshipped in certain areas of Central America, and possibly the origin of the legend may be traced to the appearance in Mexico at a very early period of a white man with along beard, the legendary Quetzalcoatl.[9]

Here the link to the Aztec myth is obvious. The fact that the significance of the feathered serpent remains a symbol of menace after hundreds of years allows Wallace to update the myth. In the novel, the receipt of a card depicting the mythical snake signifies a warning, sometimes even a warning of death. By sending out the cards, an atmosphere of fear is created in society, stimulating irrational thinking. Surprisingly, the symbol of the feathered serpent did not originally have negative connotations; on the contrary, it was perceived in a very positive light, and only over the ages has its meaning shifted.

By its title, *The Green Archer* does not deny its connection to the story of the valiant archer who takes from the rich and gives to the poor. The story gets an extra thematic infusion containing the gothic setting of an English country mansion with a ghost. The identity of this admirable archer, as is Wallace's wont, is a source of conjecture, and the character of the inquisitive journalist Spike is also of interest: "'And who in thunder is the Green Archer ?'" What direction Wallace is taking in this piece of literature is recapped in a response to Spike by his superior Syme, editor of the Globe: "'The Green Archer of Garre Castle, […] was at one time the most famous ghost in England. Don't laugh, because this isn't a funny story. The original archer was hanged by one of the de Curcy's, the owners of Garre Castle, in 1487.'"[10] One of the clues that the archer is inspired by the archetype of Robin Hood is the reason for his execution, a reference to the oak tree on which he was hanged. That is how Wallace refers to killing the deer. "He was hanged for stealing deer, and even today you can, I believe, see

[9] Edgar Wallace, *The Feathered Serpent* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1941), 118.
[10] Edgar Wallace, *The Green Archer* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1923), 8.

the oaken beam from which he swung."[11] And this is how the story of Robin refers to the deer "[…] he [Robin] was outlawed, […] because he had poached upon the King's deer[…]"[12] It can be confirmed without much doubt that in this case Wallace has ventured into the realm of legend. Northrop Frye sees the connection between nature and figures like the Green Archer as the last vestiges of myths about forest gods and archetype "of the world of Robin Hood and other green men who lurk in the forests of romance, these last the counterparts in romance of the metaphorical myth of the tree-god."[13]

The book *Fellowship of the Frog* reflects the mythology of secret societies and the extent of their influence on the community. Wallace, however, tends to revive clan and totemism in relation to primitivism and their actualization in the form of an organization whose members bear the insignia of the society in the form of a frog tattooed on the left wrist. The mystery of the fellowship and its unexplained function and form of association does not let honest citizens sleep: "'Of course I've heard of the Frogs, but I didn't give much attention. Nowadays secret societies are so common that every time a man shakes hands with me, he looks sort of disappointed if I don't pull my ear or flap my feet.'"[14] A juicy headline in the Sunday Journal entices the reader to learn about the Brotherhood: "'TRAMPS' TRADE UNION TAKES FROG FOR SYMBOL OF MYSTIC ORDER'"[15] The entertaining and insightful article includes a "quite fanciful extract from its rules and ritual."[16] Although in this case Wallace refers more to totemic clans and his African experience, given the motivic construction of the dual identity of the Frog, the main antagonist, and his metamorphosis reminiscent of the shapeshifter archetype and the incredible stunts of the trickster archetype on the edge of genius, Wallace operates in the domain of folk tale and fairy tale.

The story of *The Black Abbot* delves more into the romantic settings of the gothic novel with the specter of a monk wandering once again in an old English manor house with all its genre peculiarities. Of course, to make matters worse, the storyline is thickened by the legend of a treasure of immense value, which may also be a holy grail. The almost alchemical figure of Harry Alford, eighteenth Earl of Chelford is obsessed with its relentless search. Of course, both of these tales circulating among the people are reported by the ravenous London press. To the monk the press has only this to say:

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[11] Wallace, *The Green Archer*, 8.
[12] Howard Pyle, *The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood* (Chicago: World Book, Inc., 1988), 5.
[13] Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1971), 144.
[14] Edgar Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog* (Ward, Lock & Co, 1926), 27-28.
[15] Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 7.
[16] Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 7.

> Chelfordbury, a sleepy Sussex village, is engaged in the thrilling sport of ghost-hunting. The Black Abbot of Fossaway has, after a period of quiescence, again made his appearance. The legend is that seven hundred years ago, the Abbot of Chelfordbury was assassinated by order of the Second Earl of Chelford. Since then, from time to time, his "ghost" has been seen. During the past few years horrific stories of an Unseen Being that shrieked and howled demoniacally have been current in the county, but the noisy spook was not actually seen until last week.[17]

However, he is not silent on the rumours about the treasure and supports these fabrications by telling fairy tales: "Fossaway Manor has other romances besides ghosts. Four hundred years ago, a great treasure of gold was, according to legend, hidden somewhere on the estate; so effectually, in fact, that it has never been discovered since, although successive Earls of Chelford have searched diligently for the ancestral hoard."[18]

In *The Door with Seven Locks*, the mysterious Brethen of the Keys, an unknown group of conspirators associated with Dr. Scarlletti, an eccentric Italian physician who creates and controls mutant force-evolved individuals who follow orders, comes to the forefront of Wallace's interest. This 'scientist' is the forerunner of the eugenicist, who usurps the divine rights of creation and rails against the degeneracy of society of which he himself is an example. Wallace's favourite Gothic plane as, together with romance, his indispensable tool for escaping into the abstract world, is here represented by the mysterious tombs near Selford Manor, the history of which is told in 'Baxter's Chronicle,' printed in 1584, this:

> Sir Hugh being under banne of church for hys synnes, and beinge denyed burialle such as is ryte for Christianne knyghtes, caused there to be dugge in the earthe a great burialle playce for hymme and ye sonnes of hys housse, the wyche w^{s} call^{d} the Sellforde Toomes, and this sayme w^{s} bless^{d} in proper fashione by F^{r}. Marcus, a holy manne of y^{e} time, butte in secrette because of y^{e} sayed banne. And theyse toomes to the number of a score he caused to be made yn stonne curiously cutte wyth mannie angyles and saynts, wych w^{s} wonderfull to see.[19]

An alleged curse associated with the violent deaths of most members of the Selford family, linked to the legend of the door with seven locks found in the Selford tomb, looms over the debauched and wicked Selford house. Opening the door with its seven locks and exploring the burial chamber behind it should provide an answer to the mystery of the curse and shed light on the circumstances of the sordid life of the Selfords, whose last heir, Lord Selvord, is crossing the world as Ahasuerus and it is uncertain whether he is still alive. Lord Selford's tireless wanderings are reminiscent of the myth taken from the Greek myths of Odysseus' journey or the Christian legend of the Wandering Jew. All again, of course, hidden under a

[17] Edgar Wallace, *The Black Abbot* (New York: A.L. Burt, 1927), 5.
[18] Wallace, *The Black Abbot*, 5-6.
[19] Edgar Wallace, *The Door with Seven Locks* (Garden City, N.Y,: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1926), 117.

layer of romance, another tool of Wallace's anti-realist approach to composition, with motif aces of gothic literature such as the Selford tomb or the curses of the House of Selford or perhaps the Ushers? There is also the extraordinary event that gave the myth its foundation - the death of Lord Selford, the heir's petulance, the plan to change the tomb's original function as a vault to store gold for the repository of the pact of conspiracy. And then the whole plot revolves around the circumstances that are related to the myth. In fact, Wallace shows in the novel how the myth comes into being, how it is subject to change and what remains of its original content - just a legend about a cursed family, piling on a lot of confirming findings, even if false, keeping the myth alive, even if in a completely ahistorical and diluted form.

Edgar Wallace's crime novels contain elements of thrill, mystery and suspense. Wheeler Winston Dixon highlights Wallace's preference for not repeating the plot formula[20], but one universal pattern can be found in Wallace after all. The fictional world of his mystery stories unfolds against the backdrop of a myth that must inevitably be confirmed or disproved. This myth is often a legend that has been around for centuries, seemed dead for a time, but is now coming back with full force. This versatile technique of falsifying or validating a myth is based on the inherent ambivalence of the definition of a myth precisely with respect to its validity. This indistinctness of meaning can be indicated with the help of the *Oxford Learner's Dictionary*. The first meaning of the dictionary entry defines myth as "a story from ancient times, especially one that was told to explain natural events or to describe the early history of a people." The second meaning of the dictionary entry defines myth as "something that many people believe but that does not exist or is false."[21] The second meaning of the word myth is presented by Robert A. Segal in his book *Myth: A Very Short Introduction* as follows: "In today's parlance, myth is false. Myth is 'mere' myth. […] A 'myth' is a conviction false yet tenacious."[22] In a similar vein, Ernst Cassirer outlines such a semantic disjunction at a level lower than myth, at the level of the word. "All linguistic denotation is essentially ambiguous-and in this ambiguity, this 'paronymia' of words lies the source of all myths."[23] Wallace creates his fictional worlds on this principle of ambiguity, on supposed myths that will only be valid as long as someone is willing to believe in them. Until the question is answered, truth or myth?

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[20] Wheeler Winston Dixon, *The Transparency Of Spectacle: Meditations on the Moving Image* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1998), 75.
[21] "Myth," Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, accessed December 20, 2022, https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/myth
[22] Robert Alan Segal, *Myth: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 6.
[23] Ernst Cassirer, Langer Susanne Katherina Knauth, and Ernst Cassirer, *Language and Myth* (New York: Dover Publications, 1946), 3-4.

How Wallace works with myth on this two-faced basis can be perfectly demonstrated in the novel *The Fellowship of the Frog*. At the very beginning of the novel, Wallace establishes three basic aspects of the story that relate directly to the chosen myth, and in the case of The *Fellowship of the Frog*, for example, his opening two-page preface suffices to do just that. The three constitutive aspects are the specification of the myth, the identification of the main opponent and the determination of the general threat. Positive and negative interpretations of validity are possible for all three aspects. Whether the myth, the opponent and the threat are real or falsum. This sequence of three basic aspects can be traced in each of the books analysed. Myth setting in this case is the myth of the existence of the Frog Fellowship. It contains, above all, a denial or confirmation of the myth of the very existence and degree of reality of the Frogs' actions. Part of the myth is the obscure form of this association, which is unknown and shrouded in mystery: "[…] the society, order, or whatever it was […]"[24] On the one hand, it is defined as a secret society: "'[…] FROG FOR SYMBOL OF MYSTIC ORDER'"[25] with disturbing social manifestations such as: ""lawless character of the association […] its rules and ritual […] accounts of mysterious outrages […]"[26] On the other hand, it is seen as a harmless charity, perhaps just a little eccentric: "[…] something benevolent in its intentions and necessarily eccentric in its constitution, and, believing this, were in their turn benevolently tolerant."[27] The second step is to determine the main opponent, whose existence is also uncertain. He is at the same time a kind of 'shapeshifter' who takes on the 'clan mask' of a totemic frog. "In the centre of many ramifications sat the Frog, drunk with authority, merciless, terrible. One who lived two lives and took full pleasure from both, and all the time nursing the terror […]". And third comes defining the threat, usually public, high-profile and publicly known: "the mass may learn with mild interest of a distant outbreak of epidemic disease, which slays its few, and wake one morning to find the sinister malady tapping at their front doors, so did the world become alive and alarmed at the terror-growth which suddenly loomed from the mists."[28] The Fellowship's crimes are slowly but surely beginning to terrify society, and are being likened to a disease that is sweeping the country and threatening the very fabric of the state. "The disease was found to be widespread

[24] Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 7.
[25] Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 7.
[26] Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 7.
[27] Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 7.
[28] Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 7.

… there was a force in being that had been born in fear and had matured in obscurity (to the wonder of its creator) so that it wielded the tyrannical power of governments."[29]

Max Müller sees this oscillation of truth and falsity in myth, which is the cornerstone of Wallace's novels, as perfectly natural. Thus Müller does not see the definitive answering of the question of the truth of a myth as something transitional and definitive. He refuses to see in myth merely "a transformation of history into fabulous legend [or, conversely,] fable accepted as history"[30]. For example, the Selford tomb in the novel *The Door with Seven Locks* was originally built in the 16th century as the final resting place of Sir Hugo, who, being cursed, could not be buried as a Christian. It was officially consecrated in 1720. However, at the beginning of the 20th century, Old Lord Selford decided to build an impregnable treasure chest of sorts in the crypt, where he wanted to be buried with the gold. "[I]t was his [Gregory, Viscount Selford] intention, […] that his property should be converted into gold and should be laid in the tomb which was occupied by the founder of the Selford family, and in which Lord Selford designed that he should also be buried."[31] The late Lord Selford had the old door with seven locks removed and replaced with a new steel door with the same number of locks. Even the text which adorned the entrance to the tomb was of a much younger date than the time when Hugh was laid to eternal rest there. However, it tried to look authentic and continued to work with the mythical motif of the curse:

> S^{R} HUGHE SELLFORDE K^{T}
> Fownder of y^{e} Sellford^{s} Houfe.
> Heare I wayte as quite as a moufe
> Fownder of the Sellforde houfe
> A curfe on whosoever mocks
> Who lieth fast with feven lockes.
> Godde have mercie.[32]

An improvised safe in the tomb eventually served a different purpose, storing the non-disclosure agreement of the members of the conspiracy group the brethren of the keys, and the seven keys served as insurance that only everyone would have access to it at the same time. Not only did Wallace here update the original myth of the Selford family curse almost with a mythical method of modernist shape, but at the same time he demonstrated that despite the mutability of the content of the myth and the evaporating meanings of the original language, when the original meaning of the curse is fully re-understood, the original meaning of the

[29] Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 8.
[30] Cassirer, *Language and Myth*, 3.
[31] Wallace, *The Door with Seven Locks*, 309.
[32] Wallace, *The Door with Seven Locks*, 142.

tomb as the result of the anathema suddenly emerges, hitherto lurking in the shadows of the language like the ornamentation of the crypt door frame: “The door was inclosed in a fantastic frame, and gruesomely ornamented. A stone skeleton was carved on each pillar; so real they looked, that even Dick was startled.”[33] “For Max Müller the mythical world is essentially world of illusion-but an illusion that finds its explanation whenever the original, necessary self-deception of the mind, from which the error arises, is discovered.”[34] That is, such an illusion lasts only so long until doubt returns. The meaning of the curse of the Seldorf family lasts only until it is recalled that the tomb was originally built for the purpose of final rest.

In the translator’s preface to *Language and Myth* by Ernst Cassirer, the translator Susanne K. Langer summarizes in the framework of binary opposition the aspects of mind (human mentality) contained in language as defined by Cassirer in his theory of mind. These two completely different modes of thinking exhibit these oppositions: mythmaking tendency/rationalizing tendency; creative imagination/discursive logic; figurative ideas/facts; religious, poetic heights/science; mythmaking phase/phase of logical thought; prehistorical conception and expression/reason and factual knowledge.[35] One cannot help but notice the parallels between these two extreme positions, which can be applied to the literary styles of myth and romance and, in contrast, realism and naturalism. Myth captures the aspects of the mode of thinking associated with the mythmaking tendency, and realism, on the other hand, apparently inclines to the mode of the rationalizing tendency. Wallace’s technique of using myth in his novels to heighten tension also works with these two modes and styles respectively. Some of the characters in his novels believe the myth in question, thus coming closer on the imaginary axis to the side of the truth of the myth, thus to the imaginative and figurative form of romance, and some of the characters do not believe the myth in question, thus leaning towards the side of logical and factual realism. It is still the essence of the duality of myth in the sense of fiction and reality or falsity and truth. In Wallace's novels, this duality is constantly present and is a source of tension that emanates from the constant undermining of faith. For example, the phantom of the novel *The Green Archer*, who refers to the legend of Robin Hood, is typically a character trying to bring the community from chaos to order and takes justice into his own hands. But who exactly is this character, a mere illusory legend living only in the minds of fearful people or a real archer from the flesh and blood, who only skillfully uses the legend to his advantage? This is exactly the myth-truth question that the

[33] Wallace, *The Door with Seven Locks*, 141.
[34] Cassirer, *Language and Myth*, 5.
[35] Cassirer, *Language and Myth*, VIII-X

editor Syme asks on the very first page of the novel: "'Is he the kind of man who is out for publicity? In other words, is the Green Archer a ghost or a stunt?'"[36] Is the green archer real or is it a deception? Is it myth or lie, true or false? On the one hand, there are frightened characters who convince themselves that the archer does not exist, such as Abe Bellamy:

> "There's a story around that there's a ghost in Garre Castle, Mr. Bellamy—a Green Archer."
> 'It's a lie," said the other promptly—too promptly, in fact. […]
> "According to our information, the Green Archer of Garre has been seen at the castle, and apparently has been in and out of your room——"
> "It is a lie!"[37] Abe Bellamy's tone was violent.

On the other hand, there are those who ironically relativize the existence of the Green Archer, such as Spike Holland, crime reporter of newspaper Globe: "'Then it is true,' said Spike. 'You have had a grisly apparition stalking along your battlemented walls? Say, did he wear any chains?'"[38] The reporter not only ironizes the existence of the ghost, but in terms of the laws of physics and the amount of force required to discharge an arrow, he denies its existence altogether: "'Green Archer!' he said incredulously. 'You're not suggesting that this job was done by a ghost, are you? If it was, then I can tell you he was a mighty substantial ghost, […]'"[39] Hence, from the different points of view of the individual characters and their immediate state of mind, the figure of the archer appears in the story either as A: the myth that does not exist or as B: the legend or the myth in the true sense of the word or A: that the mythical figure doesn't exist, or B: and is represented, 'acted' by a real character, a flesh-and-blood human being.

Northrop Frye, in his third essay, "Archetypal Criticism: A Theory of Myths" from *Anatomy of Criticism*, carves out a space for myth, romance, and naturalism: "Myth […] is one extreme of literary design; naturalism is the other, and in between lies the whole area of romance […]"[40]. He also notes the phenomenon of the shift from myth to realism, manifested by the tendency "to displace myth in a human direction and yet, in contrast to 'realism,' to conventionalize content in an idealized direction."[41] This shift is entirely consistent with Wallace's method of oscillation between realism and myth, respectively between the truth and falsity of myth. Frye suggests here that when a writer tries to set a myth in a more realistic setting, he succeeds most naturally within the romance genre, Wallace's heartland genre, as

[36] Wallace, *The Green Archer*, 8.
[37] Wallace, *The Green Archer*, 12.
[38] Wallace, *The Green Archer*, 13.
[39] Wallace, *The Green Archer*, 22.
[40] Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 136.
[41] Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 136-7.

will be shown. “The central principle of displacement is that what can be metaphorically identified in a myth can only be linked in romance by some form of simile: analogy, significant association, incidental accompanying imagery, and the like.”[42] Such an analogy can be found, for example, again in the novel *The Green Archer*. Such a significant association is the excessive amount of green colour, which the author deliberately and with exaggeration doses to the edge of parody. In the article “GHOST MYSTERY AT GARRE CASTLE.”[43] the newspaper reports the story of the archer as follows:

> Beneath was a long explanatory note, giving the history of Garre Castle, and the record of previous appearances of the Green Archer.
> “It is a tradition of the country that the mysterious ghost is dressed in green from head to toe. Not only that, but the tradition is that his bow and his arrows are of the same hue.”
> “In fact," said Spike as he folded the newspaper, ‘he’s green.’”[44]

Fray exemplifies such a simile with this example: “In a myth we can have a sun-god or a tree-god; in a romance we may have a person who is significantly associated with the sun or trees.”[45]

In connection with the principle of displacement, three organizations of myths and archetypal symbols in literature can be defined, namely “undisplaced myth”[46], “realism”[47] and “romantic, the tendency to suggest implicit mythical patterns in a world more closely associated with human experience.”[48] The romantic tendency is crucial to Wallace’s novels. In order to ground the plot in a realistic criminal London setting while at the same time using myth and legend to increase suspense, he needs to romanticise the story using displacement. This Wallace’s romanticisation is in fact the very departure from realism he mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, which links him with the modernists. As Wallace moves away from realism his stories become more fictitious and thus closer to romanticism, for it must be added that the opposite of realism is not anti-realism but romanticism! Abercrombie Lascelles takes as a fact that romantism is perfect opposite of realism.[49] Moreover, if, as Frye argues, romanticism is “a ‘sentimental’ form of romance,” in the sense of a later recreation of romance, then the same can be said of Wallace’s mystery thrillers mentioned in this paper.

[42] Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 137
[43] Wallace, *The Green Archer*, 19.
[44] Wallace, *The Green Archer*, 19-20.
[45] Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 137
[46] Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 139
[47] Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 140
[48] Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 139-140
[49] Lascelles Abercrombie, *Romanticism* (London: Martin Secker, 1926), 137.

Especially when Frye defines 'sentimental' as "primitive or popular," [50] to which genre, the popular, Edgar Wallace undoubtedly belongs. So if we accept, according to Fry, that the romance genre is the last bastion of mythic stories, then Wallace's suspense novels are a shining example.

Northrop Frye offers a list of the characteristic elements of the last sixth phase of the comedy, which transitions into the upcoming summer season, the romance. But it is rather the latter – the romance – for which these aforementioned elements will be typical. However, this enumeration also encapsulates aspects typical of Wallace's literary style:

> Secret and sheltered places, forests in moonlight, secluded valleys, and happy islands become more prominent, as does the *penseroso* mood of romance, the love of the occult and the marvellous, the sense of individual detachment from routine existence. In this kind of comedy we have finally left the world of wit and the awakened critical intelligence for the opposite pole, an oracular solemnity which, if we surrender uncritically to it, will provide a delightful *frisson*. This is the world of ghost stories, thrillers, and Gothic romances, […]."[51]

A more concise list of the themes of Wallace's amusing volumes would be hard to find. Sheltered place – a tomb that can be unlocked with only seven keys: "'This is called the Selford Stone,' explained Mr. Havelock, pointing with his stick; 'and that is the entrance to the tombs.'"[52] Forests in moonlight – harrowing scene of three adult men singing children song, a poignant moment of reunion with childhood friends afflicted by the experiments of the mad doctor Stalletti: "He passed from one tree to another, until at last he reached the cover of a giant elm, and from there he looked out upon the moonlit clearing."[53] Secluded valleys – Morby Fields, a disused quarry which is place where The Frog initiate and tatoo new members of the fellowship: "[…] waste land probably led to a disused clay pit . . . or was it quarry?"[54] And I could go on step by step. The love of the occult and the marvellous – Harry Chelford's mad quest for the elixir of life, or Dr. Stalletti's twisted experiments in *The Door with Seven Locks*. Individual detachment from routine existence – the librarian, Sybil Lansdown, living the quiet life of a proper lady and suddenly thrown into the whirlwind of events by being the last heiress of the Selford family, or the headlong chase with many Odyssey-like obstacles undertaken by Public Prosecutor Richard Gordon to prevent the execution of the innocent in *The Fellowship of the Frog*. Left the world of wit – Daphne

[50] Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton University Press, 1957), 35.
[51] Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 185
[52] Wallace, *The Door with Seven Locks*, 139.
[53] Wallace, *The Door with Seven Locks*, 295.
[54] Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 20.

Olroyd, a secretary of Mr.Beale succumbs to the influence of the Cult of the Feathered Serpent by sifting through a collection of clay artifacts that represent this deity in *The Feathered Serpent*: "'Seventy-five different varieties of the Feathered Serpent have been discovered,' he told her that morning. 'And I don't know how many legends there are—every district has its own.'" Ghost stories – about Black Abbot or Green Archer and it would be possible to continue with the chases, assaults and adventurous stunts of mighty heroes like crime reporter Spike Holland, or American millionaire Joshua Broad, or delve into the eerie and gloomy atmosphere of Fossaway Manor, the ruins of Chelford Abbey with its secret passage, or the lightless dungeons of the Garre castle.

Meyer Howard Abrams in *A Glossary of Literary Terms* defines romance as follows: "The romance is distinguished from the epic in that it represents, not a heroic age of tribal wars, but a courtly and chivalric age, often one of highly developed manners and civility."[55] Wallace's novels are full of young gallant gentlemen like Public Prosecutor Richard Gordon or Commissioner of Scotland Yard Captain Featherstone, who have the welfare of virtuous and ethereally beautiful ladies like Ella Bennett or Valerie Howett foremost in their minds. Abrams continues the definition as thus: "Its standard plot is that of a quest undertaken by a single knight in order to gain a lady's favor; frequently its central interest is *courtly love*, together with tournaments fought and dragons and monsters slain for the damsel's sake;"[56] Of course, such a nobleman and future heir of Fossaway Manor, Richar Alford, at that time without fortune but with an honest and valiant heart, has only the welfare of his only and chosen Miss Leslie Gwyn to consider. He is willing to come face to face with the phantom Black Abbot, thwart every plot by the scheming brother of the chosen one, well-known solicitor Arthur Gwyn and his sidekick Fabrian Gilder, and at any time put his life on the line for his madam even in the dark dungeons and vaults of Chelford Abbey. Abrams adds to the definition of romance: "it stresses the chivalric ideals of courage, honor, mercifulness to an opponent, and exquisite and elaborate manners; and it delights in wonders and marvels."[57] The life credo of the heroes of Wallace's books is to achieve justice and right at any cost. And thus Joshua Broad has no mercy on the leader of The Fellowship of the Frogs, John Wood (Compare Wood/Hood) aka Green Archer puts an end to the villain Abel Bellamy once and for all. Abrams concludes his definition of romance as follows: "Supernatural events in the epic had their causes in the will and actions of the gods; romance shifts the supernatural to

[55] Meyer Howard Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, Winston, 1988), 24.
[56] Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 24.
[57] Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 24.

fairyland, and makes much of the mysterious effect of magic, spells, and enchantments."[58] And so the heroes are under the curse of the Feathered Serpent, facing justice at the hands of the mythical Green Archer, or warding off the vengeance of the Black Abbot.

Gillian Beer provides a list of traits typical of romance, noting that, of course, they do not necessarily all occur in one book at the same time. This enumeration, which she calls "a cluster of properties"[59] lists these characteristic qualities:

> the themes of love and adventure, a certain withdrawal from their own societies on the part of both reader and romance hero, profuse sensuous detail, simplified characters (often with a suggestion of allegorical significance), a serene intermingling of the unexpected and the everyday, a complex and prolonged succession of incidents usually without a single climax, a happy ending, amplitude of proportions, a strongly enforced code of conduct to which all the characters must comply.[60]

The motif of love in the sense of adoration of the virtues of the girl and her endless adoration is certainly an integral part of the romance. Dick admires Ella: "It was the girl, in the red-lined basket chair, that arrested his gaze."[61] Dick is out of control: "I have idiotically fallen in love with your sister."[62] Dick does not recognize himself: "And because of this insane love I have for your sister,"[63] And as Ellyn's brother Ray noted, the interest is mutual: "'Where's the priceless Gordon?—say, Elk, watch Gordon! Look after poor old Gordon—my sister's very much attached to Gordon.'"[64] The siblings Ray and Ella are led by their father to modesty and live in seclusion: "'I don't give these young people all the company they ought to have at home, and I'm not much of a companion for them.'"[65] The two most important 'cluster of properties' that can be seen as dominant in Wallace, however, are "a strongly enforced code of conduct to which all the characters must comply," in other words, the character archetype and "a sustained series of actions or incidents" that is plot.

Wallace was not an author representing a particular writing doctrine or a member of a literary movement, but rather a literary maverick. He primarily wrote for a living, and neither the critics nor he himself attributed much depth and inward intellectual message to his crime novels. "Dorothy L. Sayers, Arnold Bennett, and George Orwell led the main critical attack against Wallace's work"[66] and "Wallace began to see himself […] as a sort of writing

[58] Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 24.
[59] Gillian Beer, *The Romance* (London: Methuen, 1970), 10.
[60] Beer, *The Romance*, 10.
[61] Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 10.
[62] Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 16.
[63] Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 16.
[64] Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 46.
[65] Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 14.
[66] Dixon, *The Transparency Of Spectacle*, 77.

machine, and (partially as a device to fend off adverse criticism in advance) professed to find little of literary value in his works himself […].”[67] It is all the more intriguing to behold some of the typical modernist elements appearing in his work. They can be attributed to the atmosphere of the time, to the revolutionary changes that affected all artists at the beginning of the 20th century, and each of them reflected their influence in his work in a unique way. Wallace, too, in his own original and innovative way, engaged in the ‘search for style’ that Virginia Woolf defines in her essay *Modern Fiction*: “no ‘method’, no experiment, even of the wildest — is forbidden […].”[68] It is crucial to emphasize that the motifs that are now considered the cliché of popular literature and especially of the thriller were in Wallace’s day entirely pioneering, and he was undoubtedly at their birth. “[T]he majority of the ‘clichés’ were invented by him [Wallace] and only turned into clichés by later writers.”[69] The incorporation of myth into fiction, or the departure from realism, were features typical of both Wallace and the modernists. What distinguishes Wallace from most modernists but, on the contrary, unites him with D. H. Lawrence, is the adherence to the original meaning of the Greek word Mythos from the time of Aristotle, which refers to a plot. Narrative is indeed an essential component of Wallace’s work, just as plot is an integral part of myth. It is not the “real, true, and convincing”[70] character required by Mr. Bennet and whose “reality”[71] is discussed by Virginia Woolf in an essay “Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown”. However, his stories are extremely colourful, varied and unprecedentedly fast-paced. What modernists call the ‘stream of consciousness’, those scores of associatively developing lines, correspond in Wallace’s work to a similar stream (‘stream of epicness’), perhaps even a flood of plot twists, digressions and astounding revelations. “[H]e seeks to keep his reader enthralled from first page to last with nonstop incident”[72] and thus “the novel sweeps forward in an inexorable wave […].”[73] Even his characters, same as those of Woolf and other modernists are living here and now, for today, at their times of modernity, restless and tormented by the twists and turns of fate, but their past and the ancient ancestral legacies are constantly at their heels.

Wallace’s characters are stereotypical, flat and substitutable in individual stories, but so is the mythos. According to *Encyclopedia of Mystery and Detection*, in Wallace’s suspense

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[67] Dixon, *The Transparency Of Spectacle,* 80.
[68] Virginia Woolf, “Modern Fiction,” in *Collected Essays Vol. 2.,* ed. Leonard Woolf, (London: Hogarth, 1966), 110.
[69] John M. Reilly, *Twentieth Century Crime and Mystery Writers* (Palgrave Macmillan Ltd, 1980), 1434.
[70] Virginia Woolf, “Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown,” in *Collected Essays Vol. 1.,* ed. Leonard Woolf, (London: Hogarth, 1966), 319.
[71] Woolf, “Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown,” 325.
[72] Dixon, *The Transparency Of Spectacle,* 89.
[73] Dixon, *The Transparency Of Spectacle,* 80.

stories "[t]he heroes and villains are clearly labelled, and stock characters—humorous servants, baffled policemen, breathless heroines—could be interchanged from one book to another."[74] In this sense, Frye points out the difference in the characters appearing in the novel and the romance: "The romancer does not attempt to create 'real people' so much as stylized figures which expand into psychological archetypes."[75] Further Frye states three basic archetypes based on Jung's concepts. "It is in the romance that we find Jung's libido, anima, and shadow reflected in the hero, heroine, and villain."[76] Carl Gustav Jung that only three archetypes are clear enough to be fully understood as character. Only "[…] the shadow, the anima, and the wise old man—are of a kind that can be directly experienced in personified form."[77] Jung further emphasizes that archetypes as such, in an isolated clearly defined form, do not exist "[…] because all of the archetypes were said to be contaminated one with another. That is to say that one cannot tease out one archetype without dragging with it significant elements of others."[78] That fully confirms Inna Semetsky in *Jung, Deleuze and the Problematic Whole*: "Indeed, the field of collective unconscious can never be fully exhausted because of the archetypes' manifold of references."[79] For this reason, there is no point in compiling an all-encompassing list of archetypes. It is possible to start from the few clearly defined ones and simply describe the ones lacking in the enumeration afterwards. Richard M.Gray provides an overview of the basic archety: "Archetypes are commonly enumerated in terms of specific motifs that appear in the myths of all cultures. These include the mother, father, senex [wise old man], puer [man-child] and trickster among others."[80] Jung adds to them those that Frye also considered, namely "the shadow, the anima/us, the self and the personae as archetypal structural elements that were regularly personified in dreams, myths and fairy tales."[81]

The recurring character types in Wallace's novels are very distinctive. These are simple character types very briefly and succinctly described. He presents no long detailed descriptions of appearance or complicated mental characteristics. For example: "The first of

[74] Chris Steinbrunner and Otto M. Penzler, *Encyclopedia of Mystery and Detection* (McGraw-Hill, 1976), 407.
[75] Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 304.
[76] Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 304.
[77] C. G. Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious: Volume 9.1 of the Collected Works of C.G. Jung* (Princeton University Press, 1969), 37.
[78] Richard M. Gray, *Archetypal Explorations an Integrative Approach to Human Behavior* (London etc.: Routledge, 1996), 8.
[79] Roderick Main, David N. Henderson, and Christian McMillan, *Jung, Deleuze and the Problematic Whole: Originality, Development and Progress* (London: Routledge, 2020), 113.
[80] Gray, *Archetypal Explorations*, 8.
[81] Gray, *Archetypal Explorations*, 8.

the men was tall, thin, and white-haired, and on his face was a look of settled melancholy."[82] The family relationship between parent and child is always crucial, often according to Freudian concepts. It is always a strong, time-tested bond. This unbreakable relationship forms a kind of starting point for the book. For example, Walter Howett and his daughter Valerie in *The Green Archer*. Or John Bennett and even his two children, the conscious Ella and the prodigal son celebrating his return, Ray in *The Fellowship of the Frog*. Thirdly, in *The Black Abbot*, perhaps the most complicated relationship of the half-crazed Harry Chelford to his already deceased mother Lady Chelford, in the degree of the son's love for his mother bordering on the Oedipus complex. Then a romantic relationship between a beautiful young shy girl (the daughter) and the hero, a handsome young athletic detective (lawyer, journalist). For example Captain Featherstone, Commissioner of Scotland Yard and Valerie Howett (Vali), Assistant Director of Prosecutions, Richard Gordon and Ella Bennett or Rick Alford, heir to Fossaway Manor and Miss Leslie Gwyn. Then there is the figure of the main opponent, who is always portrayed with more than enough villainy. These include Abel Bellamy, the Chicago man and millionaire, the financier Maitland and Dr. Antonio Stalletti. This contradictory character always dies at the end of the story and a revival comes. This motif is strongly reminiscent of the dying god in James George Frazer's *The Golden Bough* in the sense of king's sacrifice for a new beginning. This character disappears with the end of the story and his 'empire' and sphere of influence falls, making way for something new to emerge. Frye also mentions such a transformative moment in connection with the elegiac mood which "is often accompanied by a diffused, resigned, melancholy sense of the passing of time, of the old order changing and yielding to a new one [...]."[83] The one who leaves often has great influence and social power and after his downfall the air is 'cleared'. The hero has his sidekicks, such as the detective Sergeant Elk or the eccentric millionaire Joshua Broad, both from the novel *The Fellowship of the Frog*. The characters of Ray Bennett, the prodigal son, and Arthur Gwyn, the flaneur and layabout, also appear. The archetype of the nobleman is common, such as Harry Alford, the 18th Earl of Chelford or Old Lord Selford. Another prominent character is the famme fatale, for example Lola Bassano or Fay Clayton. They are, in their own way, women on the edge of crime, but uncorrupted in character. Few examples follows. Richard, hero: "'Fear,' he boasted, 'is a word which I have expunged from the bright lexicon of my youth.'"[84] Sergeant Elk, sidekick: "His dark, cadaverous face was set

[82] Wallace, *The Green Archer,* 16.
[83] Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 37.
[84] Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 11.

permanently in an expression of the deepest gloom, and few had ever seen him smile."[85] Lola Bassano, famme fatale: "She's not a bad girl—up to a point. Personally, vamps never appeal to me."[86] Abel Bellamy, main opponent: "If the evil deeds of men were, as the ancients believed, written in letters of blood in the place of their perpetration, the name of Abel Bellamy would be splashed red in many places."[87] Miss Valerie Howett, damsel in distress: "'That's the only woman I have ever seen who comes near to a magazine cover,' said Spike."[88] Frye, in his note on the archetype of the hero in romance, describes Wallace's ending in a way. For it can be said, with exaggeration, that Edgar Wallace, in his feverish churning out of the 'endless thriller,' collapsed from exhaustion: "At its most naive it is an endless form in which a central character who never develops or ages goes through one adventure after an other until the author himself collapses."[89]

The second essential 'cluster of properties' feature of romance, apart from simplified characters, that permeates Wallace's work is plot, meaning a complex and prolonged succession of incidents usually without a single climax. The main strength of Wallace's work lies in the narrative of the story. "[H]is works in this genre [thriller] have complex but clearly developed plots and are known for their exciting climaxes."[90] Wallace's hasty style full of gripping, bizarre, thrilling adventures involving supervillains with mad schemes in a way connects the restless artistic progressivity of modernism and the shocking thrilling oddity of popular fiction. *The Oxford Companion to the Theatre* explains that "Wallace showed extraordinary perfection of detail, narrative skill, and inside knowledge of police methods and criminal psychology, the fruit of his apprenticeship as a crime reporter."[91] Wallace had a gripping narrative style based on fast-paced action and sudden twists, which was indirectly recognised by Ezra Pound when he commented on the hard-boiledness of Ulysses in *ABC of Reading*: "And the language of the conversations is just as alive as when one of Edgar Wallace's characters says, 'We have lost a client.'"[92] Fry confirms that plot sequencing is a natural part of romance: "The essential element of plot in romance is adventure, […]"[93] Wallace's favourite pattern of chaining the adventurous escapades of his heroes was

[85] Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 25.
[86] Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 26.
[87] Wallace, *The Green Archer*, 10.
[88] Wallace, *The Green Archer*, 16.
[89] Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 186.
[90] "Edgar Wallace," Encyclopædia Britannica.
[91] Phyllis Hartnoll, *The Oxford Companion to the Theatre, Edited by Phyllis Hartnoll. 3rd Ed* (London, Oxford University Press. 1972, 1967), 995.
[92] Ezra Pound, *ABC of Reading* (London u.a.: Faber and Faber, 1991), 44.
[93] Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 186.

chronicled by Margaret Lane in *Edgar Wallace: the Biography of a Phenomemon*: "He would outline a chain of incidents to a certain point, break off, and begin an apparently independent story; then another, and another; at the crucial point the several threads would meet and become one, and the tale would end swiftly, tied in a neat knot of either comedy or drama."[94] Paul F. Erwin highlights Wallace's reader-appealing style, but also notes errors appearing to the detriment of his writing technique: "Although his work is sometimes marred by sloppy writing, the fast pace of Wallace's stories thrilled his readers to their sudden conclusions—the culprit revealed, arrested, or killed all within the last few pages."[95] David Glover takes Wallace's side in his loneliness against the relentless and very harsh criticism from Dorothy L. Sayers, Arnold Bennett or George Orwell about his writing style:

> The hierarchical structuring of the field of popular fiction by Wallace's contemporaries, the relocation of distinctions between high and low culture within the popular that one finds in Dorothy L. Sayers' criticism for example, has tended to produce a one-dimensional view of his writing that is at odds with both its range and its inventiveness.[96]

Stephen Knight tries to reconcile these opposing camps with the help of the 'newspaper' metaphor: "[…] his deviances, his devices, his plots and his resolutions are remarkably close to the work of the honoured Golden Age writers, especially Christie and Sayers. Wallace's work was the tabloid version of the clue-puzzle broadsheet, […]"[97] Wallace is fond of interjecting his opinions and insights into his novels. In the first chapter of The Green Archer, which is entitled "The Good Story" - in fact, this is in a way Wallace's literary credo - he outlines what such a successful story looks like: "'Ghost stories and children's institutions!" he said bitterly. 'And I'm just aching for a murder with complications. This journal doesn't want a crime reporter; it's a writer of fairy tales you need."

Wallace's departure from realism is also evident, with descriptiveness reduced to a minimum and used only to evoke impressions that strike the senses and evoke feelings of either terror or excitement. What is essential to recognize is that the Gothic theme is closely linked to romance. "The Gothic novels, such as Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* (1764), are typical English romances."[98] Romance is a genre that, with its anti-realism, escapism allows the story to be "[…] surrounded by a halo of mystery, an atmosphere of strangeness

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[94] Margaret Lane and Malcolm Morley, *Edgar Wallace: The Biography of a Phenomemon* (London: Heinemann, 1938), 226.
[95] Carl Edmund Rollyson et al., *Critical Survey of Mystery and Detective Fiction* (Salem Press, 2008), 1822.
[96] David Glover, "Looking for Edgar Wallace", 153.
[97] Esme Miskimmin, *100 British Crime Writers* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 61.
[98] Benét William Rose, *The Reader's Encyclopedia* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1965), 870.

and adventure."[99] Peter Childs in analysis *Modernisms* states that the genre of a romance "survives in Gothic and fantasy fiction."[100]

> Authors of such novels set their stories in the medieval period, often in a gloomy castle replete with dungeons, subterranean passages, and sliding panels, and made bountiful use of ghosts, mysterious disappearances, and other sensational and supernatural occurrences (which in some writers turned out to have natural explanations); their principal aim was to evoke chilling terror by exploiting mystery and a variety of horrors. Many of the novels are now enjoyed mainly as period pieces, but the best of them opened up to fiction the realm of the irrational and of the perverse impulses and the nightmarish terrors that lie beneath the orderly surface of the civilized mind.[101]

Wallace admits that he prefers to avoid romantic scenes between men and women in his novels and stick to what suits him: "'That is where I feel at home; I like actions, murderings, abductions, dark passages and secret trapdoors and the dull, slimy waters of the moat, pallid in the moonlight.'"[102] Paul F. Erwin explains what, among other things, made Wallace a popular writer: "His readers loved his fantastic and scary secret passages, hiding places, trapdoors, and mechanical death-dealing devices."[103]

Wallace knows how to evoke a gothic atmosphere and he thrives on causing distress. Several short examples from the book *The Door with Seven Locks* prove this. "And she was alone—down here with the dead in the dark."[104] "With a scream she turned to face the new terror."[105] "'Hush!' The voice was deep, sepulchral."[106] "His long, unclean fingers touched the stone skeleton's head caressingly."[107] "His eyes strayed along the narrow, cell-like doors, behind which the dead and forgotten Selfords lay in their niches, and cold fear gripped her heart with icy fingers."[108] And a brilliant example of a false myth: "There's a secret room somewhere in the house, according to all I've heard,"[109] "The secret room is a myth!"[110] To arouse terror through narrative - that's the demand Wallace wanted to fulfill along with suspense: "Now, please tell me something that will make my flesh creep."[111] She died of

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[99] Rose, *The Reader's Encyclopedia*, 870.
[100] Peter Childs, *Modernism* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 3.
[101] Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 111.
[102] Lane and Morley, *Edgar Wallace*, 190.
[103] Rollyson, *Critical Survey*, 1822.
[104] Wallace, *The Door with Seven Locks*, 241.
[105] Wallace, *The Door with Seven Locks*, 241.
[106] Wallace, *The Door with Seven Locks*, 242.
[107] Wallace, *The Door with Seven Locks*, 244.
[108] Wallace, *The Door with Seven Locks*, 245.
[109] Wallace, *The Door with Seven Locks*, 254-255.
[110] Wallace, *The Door with Seven Locks*, 261.
[111] Wallace, *The Door with Seven Locks*, 18.

fright: "[…] on her face there was a look of unimaginable horror."[112] "There was no sign of violence, […] 'Fright,' he said briefly. 'I saw a man like this about ten years ago. She saw something—horribler!'"[113]

The intersection of Wallace's writing with the works of the modernists is definitely in the use of myth and the anti-realist tendency. The elements and themes of the Gothic novel are a rather surprising convergence of the two distant worlds. Andrew Smith and Jeff Wallace even make the bold claim that popular literature began this fundamental departure from realism: "British literary modernism is indebted to an innovative, anti-realist tradition inaugurated in the popular fiction of the fin de siècle – Gothic Horror, sensation fiction, science fiction."[114] Gothic, like romance, is a field somewhere between myth and realism. It can help to actualize myth because it stands outside the world of reality and is a link between the original mythic themes and the dark side of our souls. We have seemingly lost both forever, but we never have. "In other words, if the suspicious thinkers like Freud hadn't come up with a theory of the Unconscious, […] then it would have been necessary for readers of the Gothic to invent it."[115] John Paul Riquelme also notes the connection between Gothic, Modernism and some popular forms: "[…] the Gothic in modern writing indicate the persistence of a cluster of cultural anxieties to which Gothic writing and literary modernism, along with […] some popular forms of expression, continue to respond."[116] And that is the link between the Wallace myth and the modernists. Wallace really extracts the deepest emotions and basic instincts with the help of the gothic from myth – love, hate, good, evil, etc. – and all of those allow for a return to myth even in Wallace's and modernist's present. His return to myth is its planned simplicity and even primitiveness. Because only the position of where which is simple allows its clarity to distinguish the good from the corrupt. "Gothic text and modernist text are joined, that is to say, by their fascination with the potential erosion of moral value, and with the forms that amorality can take."[117] Wallace realized that Gothic romance, with its themes and motifs, was a full-fledged vehicle for the treatment of myth in the era of his thrillers.

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[112] Wallace, *The Door with Seven Locks*, 213.
[113] Wallace, *The Door with Seven Locks*, 214.
[114] Andrew Smith and Jeff Wallace, *Gothic Modernisms* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), 2.
[115] Jim Hansen, "A Nightmare on the Brain: Gothic Suspicion and Literary Modernism," *Literature Compass* 8, no. 9 (2011): pp. 635-644, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-4113.2010.00763.x, 637.
[116] John Paul Riquelme, "Introduction: Toward a History of Gothic and Modernism: Dark Modernity from Bram Stoker to Samuel Beckett," *MFS Modern Fiction Studies* 46, no. 3 (2000): pp. 585-605, https://doi.org/10.1353/mfs.2000.0055, 589.
[117] Smith and Wallace, *Gothic Modernisms*, 3.

3. PRIMORDIAL ANTIDOTE OR ATAVISTIC VENOM

The concern of cultural anthropologists and ethnographers at the end of nineteen century was not confined merely to mythology, but also to those who were the bearers of these stories. The abundant cultural accounts of 'the others' have brought growing fascination for the exotic and authentic life of indigenous communities. "The label 'primitivism' […] has generally been used to describe a Western interest in, and/ or reconstruction of, societies designated 'primitive', and their artefacts." The European embrace of unknown exotic cultures with their artefacts, ways of life, traditions and values has become a vast source of inspiration for many disciplines of the time, including art and literature. In the European milieu, the term 'primitivism' was "used both pejoratively and as a measure of positive value."[118]

The reception of what was at that time called 'primitive', i.e. uncivilized and at a lower stage of evolution or progress, was on the one hand adored for its naturalness without the impositions of the then modern society, but at the same time with this attitude came its opposite, i.e. the fear of the unknown, the savage and the crud. Primitivism can therefore be perceived as "a sort of antidote to modernity itself, a nostalgia for an imagined 'state of nature' when humankind is assumed to have lived more instinctually and in closer harmony with the natural and spiritual worlds."[119] But it can also refer because of various prejudices and feelings of superiority to "backward, uncivilized peoples and their cultures."[120]

Edgar Wallace's personal experience of his travels mainly as a reporter in Africa became a strong source of inspiration for his original African novels, the Sanders of the River series with District Commissioner Senders as the protagonist, which he was however able to incorporate into his later mystery thrillers set in another less exotic setting in England. "[T]he exploitation of Wallace's African experiences becomes the cultural capital which underwrites the rest of his [Wallace's] career as a novelist."[121] Thus, a parallel can be discerned between the primitive inhabitants of Sanders's African adventures, with the criminal gangs that roam the streets of London, sometimes resembling a wilderness. "There are also important psychological and cartographic continuities between Wallace's imaginary West African 'River People' and the no less imaginary criminal London of his later thrillers, […] For both

[118] Charles Harrison, Gillian Perry, and Francis Frascina, *Modern Art: Practices and Debates* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1993), 5.
[119] Charles Cramer and Kim Grant, "Primitivism and Modern Art," Smarthistory, March 7, 2020, https://smarthistory.org/primitivism-and-modern-art/.
[120] Harrison, *Modern Art*, 5.
[121] Glover, "Looking for Edgar Wallace", 148.

are concerned with policing refractory alien populations in uncharted territories […].”[122] Criminals and savages are united by the prejudices of the time about their brutality, and primitiveness. The incomprehension of a divergent culture and the conviction of the 'normality' and superiority of the European one resulted inevitably in a proliferation of the distinction between us and them. Within the framework of this opposition, modernist primitivism can be defined as “[…] the twentieth-century Euro-American self-representational mode in which images of people and cultures projected as other than the self or outside time and history are used as symbols of violence, energy, sensuality, regeneration, de-generation, and freedom.”[123] The Fellowship of the Frog, which recruited its members among tramps and criminal elements, can also be seen as ‘the others’.

The fear of the ‘Frogs’ gradually gripped the town, spreading and resembling the fear of the unknown typical of the late nineteenth century anxieties associated with foreign cultures. “Western Europeans repeatedly sought to define their own humanity in opposition to a monolithic usually dark-skinned being who was imagined to be supremely savage, barbaric, natural, *un*natural, exotic, or some contradictory combination of these.”[124] The Fellowship of the Frog brutally attacked the venerable hardware merchant James G. Bliss at his country place after a strenuous day and he was found “[…] lying on the ground unconscious, his face and shoulders covered with blood. He had been struck down by some heavy weapon; there were a slight fracture of the parietal bone and several very ugly scalp wounds.”[125] The crudity, ferocity and primitiveness of this assault on Mr. Bliss’s skull is in direct contrast to his modern mansion which is equipped with “modern plumbing, the newest systems of heating and lighting, and the exigent requirements of up-to-date chauffeurs.”[126] This excerpt neatly illustrates the contrast between the two opposing (antithetic) interrelated concepts of primitivism and the idea of progress, that “the course of history represents an overall improvement in the life, morality, and happiness of human beings from early barbarity to the present stage of civilization.”[127] Wallace accentuates this contrast between the regression of attack and the conveniences of building by alluding to the legendary King Solomon, renowned for his wisdom, who is eclipsed by the cunning and proficient merchant Mr. Bliss only by the passive material possession of all the modern conveniences of his dwelling: “It is

[122] Glover, “Looking for Edgar Wallace”, 148.
[123] Robin Hackett, *Sapphic Primitivism: Productions of Race, Class, and Sexuality in Key Works of Modern Fiction* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 3.
[124] Hackett, *Sapphic Primitivism*, 10.
[125] Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 8.
[126] Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 8.
[127] Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 149.

referred to as 'The Hut,' but is the sort of hut that King Solomon might have built for the Queen of Sheba, had that adventurous man been sufficiently well acquainted [...]. In these respects Mr. Bliss was wiser than Solomon."[128] Wallace further demonstrates the idea of progress as the opposite of primitivism in an excerpt from the novel *The Fellowship of the Frog*, using the motif of the modern automobile as a cleavage between tradition and modernity. Driving such a modern vehicle – "the big Rolls"[129]; "a big machine"[130] "beautiful car"[131] – symbolizes endorsing the idea of progress and suppressing tradition. Ray Bennett longs to drive such a car, but his sister Ella, anchored in traditional values, advises him to restrain himself. Implicit in this act is a distrust of the world represented by the material achievements of modern times, of only fleeting value: "'[B]oys ought not to be allowed to drive big cars,' she said. 'You remember the awful smash there was at the Shoreham cross-roads?'"[132] The parallel with driving a car is related to a typical feature of romance, the aspect of aging, and the conflicts of youth representing progress and the old relying on proven values. And so the father, John Bennett, advises his son through an intermediary that the kind of life you do not have completely in your hands does not only bring positives: "'And you'll be able to tell this foolish son of mine that owning a big car isn't all joyriding.'"[133] The ensuing oxymoron underscores the whole driving metaphor and refers to the refusal to break with longstanding habits. A world where vagrants - members of the frog fellowship - drive cars is completely absurd: "A tramp with a motor-car was a monstrosity."[134] But back to primitivism in this next demonstration coincidentally also linked to the car. Sergeant Elk of Scotland Yard and American millionaire Joshua Broad sat in a closed limousine, leaving a working-class neighbourhood full of small houses and Elk "[…] heard the chuckle of his companion as the car moved toward the civilized west." The use of the word 'civilised' within the binary opposition suggests that the place they are departing is uncivilised and backward. "Broadly speaking the label 'primitive' has been used since at least the nineteenth century to distinguish contemporary European societies and their cultures from other societies and cultures that were then considered less civilized."[135] It is evident that Wallace is able to portray even the social strata within one city, London, as less civilised and is able to link the African themes of savagery and "criminal tendencies and depravities of that section of the

[128] Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 8.
[129] Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 11.
[130] Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 12.
[131] Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 13.
[132] Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 12.
[133] Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 13.
[134] Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 21.
[135] Harrison, *Modern Art*, 5.

British Empire which lies between the northern end of Victoria Dock Road and the smelly drabness of Silvertown."[136]

The expeditions of the European colonizers of England, France and Germany returned from their voyages to Africa and the South Seas with evidence of curious cultural practices, including tattooing. "All the primitive peoples of the tropics who go naked in the freedom of the light have, in this way and at all times, loved to paint or tattoo their skins with color—the Negroes of Africa and the Indians of America, as well as the Polynesians."[137] Gradually, tattoos were associated with sailors who adopted the practice from the natives. "Sailors continued for centuries to wear tattoos, a practice that began in England and later spread to the United States."[138] The tattoo, as an identifying element, is also an essential literary motif in the story *The Fellowship of the Frog*. Dick believes he saw a tattoo on the arm of Mr. Maitland, the head and eyes of a frog, but Philo contradicts this: "'He is tattooed with crowns and anchors and dolphins all up his arms. […] No, I've never seen a frog. There's a bunch of snakes on one wrist—I've seen that.'" In general, tattoos were associated with the working class, but above all they became a symbol of criminals. "Criminals too were being punitively tattooed in England, starting perhaps in the sixteenth and certainly by the seventeenth century, which led, as it has in other societies in which tattooing is a form of punishment, to self-tattooing among criminals."[139] For Richard Gordon, Public Prosecutor, the recurring tattoo of a frog is a clear indicator of both the criminality and the primitiveness of its bearer. "'It isn't the fact that every other bad road-criminal we pull in has the frog tattooed on his wrist. That might be sheer imitation—and, in any case, all crooks of low mentality have tattoo marks.'"[140] This directly links tattoos to low intelligence, and a synonym for the expression 'low mentality' would surely be, more primitive.

Although Wallace himself, in describing criminal groups, refers to a secret order or society and an inspirational link to American gangs is suggested because of his fascination by United States[141], in fact the traces of these criminal bands, such as the frogs in *The Fellowship of the Frog*, or the serpent-worshippers in *The Feathered Serpent*, lead back to the indigenous societies, the clans, to which anthropologists paid considerable attention at the time. Moreover, Wallace had his own source, 'an anthropological journal' "[t]he Congo notes

[136] Edgar Wallace, *White Face* (Toronto: Musson Book Co., 1932), 45.
[137] Jack D. Flam, Miriam Deutch, and Carl Einstein, *Primitivism and Twentieth-Century Art: A Documentary History* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003), 57.
[138] Margo DeMello, *Encyclopedia of Body Adornment* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2007), 105.
[139] DeMello, *Encyclopedia of Body Adornment*, 105.
[140] Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 18.
[141] Bruce Murphy, *The Encyclopedia of Murder and Mystery* (New York: Palgrave for St. Martin's Minotaur, 2008), 218.

which he had made three years before were searched out and eagerly studied—the tribes, the customs, the roundabout proverbial speech, the fragments of the Lomongo tongue […].”[142] This association of criminal groups with clans in an ethnographic sense is obvious. “Some clans express their unity in terms of the possession of a common emblem, which may represent the ancestral being or common origin of the members and, as such, is often an object of reverence.” Such a common mark can be, for example, the symbol of a frog. “On the panel had been stamped a small white frog—an exact replica of those he had seen that morning on the photographs […] A squatting frog, slightly askew.”[143] Or a ritual statuette of a snake. “Peter picked up the little clay model again and turned it over in his hand. How many thousands of years ago, he wondered, had some dead Indian fashioned this crude shape?”[144] Such an emblem representing an individual or group is called a totem and is usually a representative symbol of the clan. “A totem is any animal, plant, or other object, natural or supernatural, which provides deeply symbolic meaning for a person or social group.”[145] The criminal gang motif of Wallace’s novels is formally very reminiscent of these totemic clans. These criminal groups, consisting of members of usually common social status with a criminal past or the mark of outcasts on the fringes of society, refer to Totemism as Claude Lévi-Strauss speaks of it. Mythical animals appear in the names of these criminal ‘clans’ on the principle of Lévi-Strauss’s structural binary oppositions. The most basic of these oppositions expresses the nature vs culture relations: “On the one hand, there were in nature certain realities such as […] specific animals or plants. On the other hand, there were in culture various groups and individuals who identified themselves with […] specific animals or plants.” Such a group of individuals rejected by society can be found in the novel *The Fellowship of the Frog*. Displaying a frog as a placeholder for a clan can serve as a warning. “And then his eyes strayed to the grotesque white frog on the door.”[146] Likewise the depiction of a snake on a card the size of a lady’s visiting card accompanied by a warning inscription: “Stamped on the centre and in red ink was a curious design—the figure of a feathered serpent. Beneath were the words: ‘Lest you forget.’”[147] The bearer of the totemic animal as a sign of the clan can be primarily a member of the clan. “Most damning evidence of all was the tattoo

[142] Lane and Morley, *Edgar Wallace*, 224.
[143] Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 36.
[144] Wallace, *The Feathered Serpent*, 99.
[145] “Totemism,” New World Encyclopedia, accessed August 27, 2022, https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Totemism.
[146] Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 37.
[147] Wallace, *The Feathered Serpent*, 10.

mark on his wrist."[148] In the case of frogs, the tattoo connects its bearer not only with the clan, but also with a criminal past: "[T]hey were both 'Frogs' and bore the totem of the tribe—they were both ex-convicts"[149] Totemism is closely linked to a ritual, often a rite of passage, when a new adept becomes a member of the clan. "The origin of ritual, therefore, was believed to be found in totemic (animal symbolic clan) cults."[150] Becoming a member of the Fellowship of the Frog was not easy, and only after two years did Inspector Genter "[…] got into touch with the organization and expected to be initiated"[151] Members of the clan kept the details of the initiation of new members scrupulously secret, and the places where the ritual was performed were also kept secret. "He says he has never seen a Frog since he was initiated. Where he was sworn in he doesn't remember."[152] Part of the initiation ritual was the tattooing of a frog, according to a uniform pattern that was precisely prescribed. "'The frog is always on the left wrist, always a little lob-sided, and there is always one small blob tattooed underneath […]'"[153] Undergoing the pain of a tattoo was part of the ritual, as Genter experienced firsthand once the rubber stamp imprinted a pattern on his wrist. "A rubber stamp, he [Genter] noted mentally, and braced himself for the pain which would follow. It came, the rapid pricking of a thousand needles, and he winced."[154] But the main part of the initiation ritual was a test, to do something for the fellowship, that something was to commit a crime. "'All new fellows have to do something to show their pluck and straightness.'"[155]

The main antagonist of the story, called The Frog, successfully hides his identity, in addition to the darkness into which he always plunges, thanks to the mask in the form of a frog's head, which he puts on to reduce identification. It imparts a "hollow voice"[156] to him and an unearthly appearance especially in the dark. "[H]e [Genter] closed with his prisoner. So doing, his face touched the Frog's. Was it a mask he was wearing? . . . The cold mica goggles came against his cheek. That accounted for the muffled voice. . . ."[157] The encounter with the primordial Frog made Ella's blood run cold, for his figure in the shadowy doorway looked out of this world: "It looked tall, by reason of the tightly-fitting black coat it wore. The face and head were hidden behind a hideous mask of rubber and mica. The reflection of the

[148] Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 78.
[149] Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 18.
[150] "Ritual," Encyclopædia Britannica, accessed April 14, 2023, https://www.britannica.com/topic/ritual.
[151] Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 18.
[152] Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 74.
[153] Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 19.
[154] Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 22.
[155] Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 22.
[156] Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 22.
[157] Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 23.

lamp shone on the big goggles and filled them with a baleful fire." An anthropological parallel is provided by Charles Harrison, who mentions in *Ancient Warriors of the North Pacific* a real totemic mask of a frog: "Perhaps little less notable was the frog's head mask, which was an important 'property' in the dances of the frog clan. The lower jaw of this was operated by the wearer, and a grating sound was produced which was believed to be like the croaking of a frog."[158] The symbolism of the frog was not a local phenomenon, but can be found historically in the artifacts of various ancient ethnic groups. "I[t] is evident, from art and literature, that the frog and the toad were well known by the most ancient civilizations of the world. Long before the time of Christ, they were occasionally used in primitive art."[159] However, the symbolism of this art was not always positive, but "[…] fear and sorcery were associated with the frog and toad […]"[160]

From an archetypal point of view, the connection to ritual and the superhuman powers highlighted by the mask make the Frog a trickster figure. "In short, trickster is a boundary-crosser."[161] These boundaries define the edges beyond which society will never exceed, but the tricksters cross them and "violate principles of social and natural order, playfully disrupting normal life and then re-establishing it on a new basis."[162] The Frog, being a man of flesh and blood, can use his tricks to create insecurity in people and the false impression of his supernatural power. He arrives alone in an abandoned cabin in a quarry and seems superhumanly powerful thanks to a cunning entrance in the floor, prepared cylinders of poison gas and the darkness. "'There are no others,' he said, 'only the Frog himself.'[163] His ingenuity and slyness give him superhuman powers in the eyes of others. "'They'd never catch him, not if they brought forty million cops.'"[164] He seems to be omniscient, as if no secret and no information escapes him, and this makes him a mythical figure. "'He knows everything, does the Frog."[165] Even his eyesight is unbelievably perfect. "It was as though the mysterious Frog could see, even in that blackness."[166] And, of course, he has incredible

[158] Charles Harrison, *Ancient Warriors of the North Pacific: The Haidas, Their Laws, Customs and Legends: With Some Historical Account of the Queen Charlotte Islands* (London: H.F. & G. Witherby, 1925), 87.
[159] S. W. Frost, "The Amphibian in Art and Literature." *The Scientific Monthly* 34, no. 4 (1932): 369–75, http://www.jstor.org/stable/15181, 369.
[160] Frost, "The Amphibian in Art and Literature.", 369.
[161] Lewis Hyde, *Trickster Makes This World: Mischief, Myth, and Art* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998), 7.
[162] Paul Mattick, "Hotfoots of the Gods," *The New York Times,* February 15, 1998, https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/books/98/02/15/reviews/980215.15mattict.html.
[163] Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 21.
[164] Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 21.
[165] Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 21.
[166] Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 22-23.

strength. “Then Genter felt his pistol wrist seized in a vice-like grip.”[167] The Frog also has people everywhere and pulls strings. So he infiltrates the police station undetected and poisons an inconvenient prisoner with potassium cyanide[168], or even caused an explosion in the police headquarters building where he managed to sneak a dynamite charge into a closed safe[169]. “Most at home on the road or at the twilight edge of town, tricksters are consummate boundary-crossers, slipping through keyholes, breaching walls, subverting defense systems. Always out to satisfy their inordinate appetites, lying, cheating, and stealing […].”[170]

The frog can also be metaphorically perceived as the archetype of the shapeshifter “a person who can change from a human form to that of an animal, either through his own agency or that of an outside source.”[171] In order to conceal the Frog’s true identity, criminal Harry Lyme physically transformed into Philo Johnson, the hidden identity of the Frog. Lyme’s transformation is forced upon him by external circumstances and is a form of punishment for his previous criminal history. “Another shapeshifter motif is that the shapeshifter represents punishment or discipline […] for some transgression they have committed.”[172] The transformation of Lyme into Johnson is a physical transformation that includes “changing his [Lyme’s] whole appearance, shaving off his moustache and producing an artificial baldness by the application of some chemical.”[173] In contrast, Johnson's transformation into the Frog is a metaphorical transformation, but in the context of Frog’s unusual conjuring tricks and trickster hocus-pocus it has the attributes of persuasiveness and impact on the surroundings, giving the impression of a real transformation. The paradox is that even in his civilian disguise as the philosopher Johnson, he looks and acts like a frog, making his mask irremovable and permanent. The frog is Philo Johnson with and without the mask.

“Fairy tales and folklore are full of examples of people who are transformed into animals […].”[174] With the character of Frog, Wallace enters the realm of the fairy tale, and the motif of Frog’s, respectively Phil’s secret affection for the young and attractive Ella Bennett, is significantly reminiscent of the Brothers Grimm tale “The Frog King” or “Iron Heinrich.” Jack Zipes in his specific adult way summarizes the story as follows: “a literary classic, almost everyone knows - even those people who have never read the tale - about the

[167] Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 23.
[168] Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 114.
[169] Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 171-172.
[170] Hyde, *Trickster Makes This World*, second cover.
[171] John B. Kachuba, *Shapeshifters: A History* (London: Reaktion Books, 2019), 7.
[172] Kachuba, *Shapeshifters*, 13.
[173] Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 285.
[174] Kachuba, *Shapeshifters*, 13.

aggressive, nasty, disgusting, talking frog, who wants either to sleep with or to be kissed by a beautiful princess." Even Richard Gordon, who himself has an eminent interest in Ella, has noticed the comic longing of the aging man, the Frog, for a young woman: "The plump Mr. Johnson was in love with the girl." Unfortunately, even without the mask, poor Philo looks a lot like a frog. His 'plump figure' directly refers to the collocation plump frog, which can be found simultaneously in the scientific designation Elachistocleis pearsei i.e. Colombian Plump Frog[175]. His head and mouth, which seems to be smiling all the time, reflect the form of a frog. "[B]ald and middle-aged man with the good-humoured face was the subject of their discussion. His round, fat face […]"[176] Another quality, the ability to speak, which is also mentioned by Zipes, is hyperbolized in the Frog character and Wallace transforms it into philosophical verbosity. "Presently he saw that plump and philosophical man."[177] Not only does he have great competition in the character of Dick Gordon, but his eloquence fades in the presence of Miss Ella. "Good-looking and young. Mr. Johnson was not good-looking, and only just on the right side of fifty. And he was bald. But, worst of all, in her presence he was tongue-tied."[178] The lovelorn Philo may just want to make friends like Prince Frog in the classic story. "'Everybody is a friend of Philo's—he's the kind of man that makes friendship easy.'"[179] In the end, Philo kidnaps Ella just as Hades abducted Persephone in mythical times. "[S]he knew she was in the power of the Frog."[180] "No violence was offered to her; she was not bound, or restricted in any way, though she knew it was perfectly hopeless for her to dream of escape."[181] Hades and Phil's goal is the same, to get a particular woman and marry her. "'You will undertake to marry me, and to leave the country with me in the morning.'"[182] Jack Zipes conditions the frog's success in breaking the curse on two conditions. He must become handsome and rich. "Only when he [frog] is handsome and wealthy and suits the mating standards princess does he succeed in bedding and wedding her. He then passes the test as an appropriate bridegroom suited for a lovely princess"[183] Unfortunately for the Frog, he is only able to meet one of two conditions. "Against one of the walls were piled two shallow wooden boxes, […] 'Money,' he said tersely, 'your money and my money. There is a

[175] "Elachistocleis Pearsei," AmphibiaWeb, accessed June 8, 2023, https://amphibiaweb.org/species/2211.
[176] Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 16-17.
[177] Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 85.
[178] Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 60.
[179] Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 16.
[180] Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 275.
[181] Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 276.
[182] Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 275.
[183] Jack Zipes, "What Makes a Repulsive Frog so Appealing: Memetics and Fairy Tales," *Journal of Folklore Research: An International Journal of Folklore and Ethnomusicology* 45, no. 2 (2008): 109–43, https://doi.org/10.2979/jfr.2008.45.2.109, 109-110.

million there.'" He failed to achieve the charming beauty of Dick Gordon and so failed. "'The Frog wanted to marry you?' said Ray with a frown. 'It is incredible! Did you see his face?' She shook her head. 'He was masked,' she said. 'Don't let us talk about it.'"[184] The curse was not broken even when the frog was thrown against the wall as the classic story tells. "And almost everyone knows that the prince/king needs to be magically transformed to get what he wants - even if it means he must sometimes be slammed into a wall […]. The frog does not achieve the desired transformation and loses. "[H]e was flung back against the wall, and Ella uttered a scream of joy."

Similar to the *Fellowship of the Frog*, the snake worshippers in *The Feathered Serpent* are speculatively referred to as a secret society. "The Feathered Serpent is a very real and potent force to me. I have never met members of this society, and I haven't the slightest idea as to their modus operandi."[185] In his book The Mythology of the Secret Societies, historian John Morris Roberts explains political science's interest in secret societies by the very strong mythology that has emerged around them. Many ordinary people considered the secret societies to be the hidden agents of great change in nineteenth-century Europe: "Much which seemed mysterious had, traditionally, been explained in terms of plots and conspiracies—in terms, that is, of conscious human agency—and the supposed misdeeds of secret societies fitted easily into this general assumption."[186] Reporter Peter Dewin condemns this tendency to mythicize secret societies: "All good newspaper men stop and shiver at the mention of murder gangs and secret societies, because such things do not belong to honest reporting, but are the inventions of writers of best or worst sellers."[187] This is reminiscent of Wallace's actual words when he was still a journalist, but it is fitting to add the second part of his credo relating to the second half of his career as a popular writer: "A real good crime story may gain in value from a touch of the bizarre."[188] Wallace, like Roberts, noticed the contradictory nature of the arguments commenting on the existence and influence of secret societies and used it in the exact vein of his literary technique of the truth and falsity of myth. "[W]hy people should have accepted so readily 'mythologies' about these societies, despite the tortuous counterfactual reasoning required to make such interpretations of the societies'

[184] Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 269.
[185] Wallace, *The Feathered Serpent*, 98.
[186] J. M. Roberts, *The Mythology of the Secret Societies* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1972), 9-10.
[187] Wallace, *The Feathered Serpent*, 5.
[188] Wallace, *The Feathered Serpent*, 5.

activities plausible."[189] Wallace employs these societies and the mystery associated with them in his novels, as well as a variety of other literary devices to increase suspense. Firstly, by attributing negative connotations to them. "'Do you seriously think that there is any secret society behind this murder, and that the cards which have been sent to various people in London have any sinister significance?'"[190] At the same time, he attributes to them a criminal background, again with a touch of myth and primitivism. "'In Mexico the worship of the Feathered Serpent has degenerated to such a degree that it has become the symbol of certain prison cliques—in other words, it is a sort of fetish, the fetish of certain types of criminal.'"[191]

Fetish is again a concept referring to indigenous societies, clans and totemism. Fetish is "an object believed to have supernatural powers, or in particular, a man-made object that has power over others. Essentially, fetishism is the etic attribution of inherent value or powers to an object."[192] These supernatural powers are derived from the demoniacal power of totemic ancestors and illustrate the relationship between totem and fetish: "[I]t is these inanimate vehicles of a magic derived from totem ancestors, that form the transition from the totem object to the so-called fetish."[193] One such fetish is an ancient clay figurine of a feathered serpent, which derives its power from its ancestors. "[…] the serpent superstition is intimately connected with ancestor-worship, probably originating among uncultured tribes, who, […] viewed it as a spirit embodiment."[194] But its imaginary past scares journalist Peter Devine. "What dark-visaged families had bowed their heads in worship before this four ounces of insignificant clay? […] when this clay was modelled the green stones of sacrifice ran red with blood, and the pitiable procession of flower-decked victims climbed daily upward to death..."[195]

The general dictionary definition of fetish refers to superstition and thus to the falsity of the myth. Fetish is "a material object regarded with superstitious or extravagant trust or reverence."[196] Where the horror that Wallace gleefully wrings from myths originates is in the concept of superstition, the old belief that our fate is not solely in our hands. "'Why, Mr.

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[189] Nannerl O. Keohane, "The Mythology of the Secret Societies. by J. M. Roberts. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1972. Pp. 370. $17.50.)," *American Political Science Review* 68, no. 1 (1974): 265–265, https://doi.org/10.2307/1959766, 265.
[190] Wallace, *The Feathered Serpent*, 102.
[191] Wallace, *The Feathered Serpent*, 98.
[192] Fabienne Le Houérou, *Humanitarian Crises and International Relations (1959-2013)* (Bentham Science Publishers, 2014), 108.
[193] Wilhelm Wundt, *Elements of Folk Psychology* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1916), 186.
[194] C. Staniland Wake, *Serpent-Worship: And Other Essays, with a Chapter on Totemism* (London: G. Redway, 1888), 96-7.
[195] Wallace, *The Feathered Serpent*, 99.
[196] "Fetich," Merriam-Webster, accessed April 10, 2023, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/fetich.

Dewin, you're superstitious! […] I suppose you believe in the stories of baleful statues that are attributed with possessing evil qualities, so that the curator of no museum can touch them without dying?""[197] While Ernst Cassirer understands superstition as a diluted form of myth when he claims that "[t]he inveterate belief of all mankind in myth, sometimes crystallized into dogmas, sometimes degraded into vulgar superstition, […]"[198] Claude Lévi-Strauss describes myth as the product of our ancestral superstition: "Ever since the advent of science in the seventeenth century, we have rejected mythology as a product of superstitious and primitive minds."[199] The meaning of the myth gradually weakens with time and its power wanes. Just as it arose from superstition, it can dissolve back into it. To the original Aztecs, the Feathered Serpent was literally a god, "[…] the ancient Aztec conception of the Creator. He was the First Being. He existed, as they say, 'before any two things touched'; in other words, before there was material existence of any kind."[200] By the time of the Cortes expeditions, the influence of his cult had waned considerably when: "[…] to the later Aztecs, those whom Cortes fought and conquered, he was merely a myth, was no longer worshipped in the Aztec temples, and had been entirely replaced by a new hierarchy of gods."[201] And it surprised Holland that "[…] there has always been a small clique, even in those days—even today—of serpent-worshippers."[202] Wallace works subtly with terms inherent in ethnography and anthropology that refer to indigenous societies and their ancient myths and religions, updating their fading power and their obscured content affecting the seemingly rational characters of his novelsFor example, crime reporter Spike Holland ponders the still-living residue of stories circulating among us when he re-reads a newspaper article about Green Archer: "It was extraordinary, he thought, that traditions of this kind could live in the twentieth century and that there were still people who believed in manifestations such as were described here." A more qualified figure in the field of myth, Claude Lévi-Strauss, would have expressed the idea of the eager reporter in a more competent way as follows:

> This is precisely the case for general mythology. It cuts off myths from those supports that, because of the generality of the approach itself, have become inaccessible. Emptied of their content, reduced to hollow forms, myths then receive as a substitute the content that the philosopher thinks himself permitted or forced to introduce in

[197] Wallace, *The Feathered Serpent*, 99.
[198] Cassirer, *Language and Myth*, viii.
[199] Lévi-Strauss Claude, *Myth and Meaning* (London: Routledge, 2005), vii.
[200] Wallace, *The Feathered Serpent*, 96.
[201] Wallace, *The Feathered Serpent*, 96.
[202] Wallace, *The Feathered Serpent*, 96.

them. In so doing, he only replaces a content that lies beyond his reach with his fantasies or his desires."[203]

The distillation of myth through the centuries and people's innate tendency towards superstition perceives the savage more often as a primitive creature than as a man living in harmony with nature, and likewise interprets myth as a threat rather than as advice. Similarly, the heroes of *The Feathered Serpent* consider the snake fetish more of a threat: "'Is this—image supposed to have any malignant influence?'"[204] And the threat can also be read in one of the ancient interpretations of the myth: "He was the symbol of supremacy. He was also a kind of Aztec Nemesis."[205] What a disillusionment when the original interpretation of the myth has just the opposite meaning and its hitherto valid meaning is exposed as a false myth, as in Wallace's other books mentioned in this thesis. The mysterious key to the safety deposit box with a paper label attached contained the password to the box, chosen in a pious sense. "Mr. Beale chose the word 'Gucumatz'—that is to say, 'The Feathered Serpent.' He had taken a very deep interest in early Aztec history, and the Feathered Serpent stood for him as the symbol of creation, benevolence and loving kindness."[206] This interpretation of the myth of the Feathered Serpent is exactly in line with its original meaning. "First, The serpent has been viewed with awe or veneration from primeval times, and almost universally as a re-embodiment of a deceased human being, and as such there were ascribed to it the attributes of life and wisdom, and the power of healing."[207] The character of Mr. Beale in *The Feathered Serpent* is also trying to cure society and takes care of the poor. He is the one who sends the cards with this feathered serpent symbol after he becomes disappointed in people and takes revenge. Thus, the meaning of the retribution of the Greek goddess Nemesis comes to the fore and demonstrates how ambiguous the symbol of the serpent as well as its myth can be. "The serpent-spirit may, however, have made its appearance for a good or a bad purpose, to confer a benefit or to inflict punishment for the misdeeds of the living."[208] Like Peter, the superstitious person is more likely to expect a revelation associated with punishment for his sins, and Wallace takes this tendency into account in creating suspense by means of myth. "He shivered as he put the thing down upon the table and dusted his hands as though to rid himself of its contamination."[209]

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[203] Lévi-Strauss Claude, *The Story of Lynx* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 189-190.
[204] Wallace, *The Feathered Serpent*, 99.
[205] Wallace, *The Feathered Serpent*, 96.
[206] Wallace, *The Feathered Serpent*, 297.
[207] Wake, *Serpent-Worship*, 105-106.
[208] Wake, *Serpent-Worship*, 97.
[209] Wallace, *The Feathered Serpent*, 99.

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, primitivism can be understood through a dual lens. Either as a step backwards on the evolutionary line towards civilisational decline or as a celebration of the nature of life in harmony with its habitat. The latter is represented in the visual arts by Paul Gauguin with his Tahitian inspirations, by Pablo Picasso captured by the shapes of African masks, in music by Igor Stravinsky and his "barbaric cries of modern life"[210] and in literature by T.S. Eliot who calls primitive art a way to "revivify the contemporary activities"[211]. The "primitive" can shape the form of the "modern."

> "Picasso and others embraced the primitive of their imaginations—including constructions of people, arts, cultures, and landscapes—for that primitive's violence, energy, and natural sensuality. Barbarism and savagery were to provide antidotes to corrupting, over-civilized, effete modern Euro-American societies as well as, paradoxically, to explain the violence unleashed in world wars."[212]

Poison gas became one of the symbols of the atrocities of the Great War. The results of modern science have turned into a primitive weapon in the hands of man. Technological innovations of modernity in the service of rawness. "'Run!' cried Elk, and leapt for the stairs. The American saw the first large billow of greenish-yellowy mist that rolled from the open door, and followed."[213] A vicious gas attack is launched by the Frog Fellowship against peaceful Scotland Yard detective Elk and American millionaire Joshua Broad. "The building is full of poison gas!""[214] It was only due to the coincidence that most of the tenants were out of the building that there was only property damage, but the traces of the attack left a sense of bitterness. "[S]ilver was tarnished black, and every window glass and mirror covered with a yellow deposit"[215] The foul smell in the building and the traces of the vile chemical constantly reminded of the terrifying idea of what if there were people here, like in the trenches at Ypres, where a new 'modern' weapon had caused a stir. "The Germans called their new weapon 'Lost,' or 'Yellow Cross' after the marking on shells, in contrast to the 'Green Cross' that designated chlorine and phosgene. […] The British […] gave it another name that stuck: mustard gas."[216] Yellow sediment is the colour that brings death. "Every pane of glass was misty with some yellow, opalescent substance. […] a yellow wraith of poison-vapour curl out

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[210] T. S. Eliot, "London Letter: September, 1921," in *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot. The Critical Edition. Volume 2: The Perfect Critic, 1919–1926*, ed. A. Cuda, and R. Schuchard, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), 370.
[211] T. S. Eliot, "War-paint and Feathers," in *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot. The Critical Edition. Volume 2: The Perfect Critic, 1919–1926*, ed. A. Cuda, and R. Schuchard, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), 138.
[212] Hackett, *Sapphic Primitivism*, 10.
[213] Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 44.
[214] Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 44.
[215] Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 45.
[216] Steven L. Hoenig, *Handbook of Chemical Warfare and Terrorism* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002), 7.

and downward through the broken pane."[217] 'The novelty' of the modern world is so revolutionary that it is reluctant to submit to the laws of chemistry. "Despite its name, mustard gas is technically a liquid and forms a mist of small droplets in the air when released."[218]

Another technical convenience that can be used to maim people is electricity. Such an electric assault is not received readily, and even a member of the Frog fellowship, Hagn, ranked high in the hierarchy, does not condone it. "I'll fix you for that. You shall try electric shock yourself, you dog!"[219] The elaboration of an improvised device with the help of which such an electrical assault can be executed is reminiscent in the steps of the construction procedure directed by Richard Gordon, Public Prosecutor quite literally of 'bricolage' in the sense of the word as used by the French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss in The Savage Mind (1962) "to describe the characteristic patterns of mythological thought."[220] Step one: "[U]nwrapping the rubber insulation from the wires of the cable, pulling the copper strands free."[221] Bricolage, as defined by Lévi-Strauss, can thus be imagined as "the skill of using whatever is at hand and recombining them to create something new."[222] However, primitive methods also require extreme deployment regardless of prior socialization. "His (Richards') hands were bleeding, his nails broken"[223] Step two: "fasten the frayed copper wires of the cable to the rivet holes"[224] The steel plate is now energized and Hagn can go for the electric pulse. "He came running up the stairs, put one foot on the electric plate, and stood for the space of a second motionless."[225] This use of the existing in a new way is typical for an emergency. In the event of such a critical situation, Dick is armed. "In his drawer he [Dick] found two ugly-looking Browning pistols and examined their magazines before he slipped them into his pocket."[226] "What Levi-Strauss points out here is that signs already in existence are used for purposes that they were originally not meant for."[227] Lévi-Strauss would be amazed to see Edgar Wallace prescribe his fictional character to use a modern firearm as a club for the purpose of a primitive blow to the head: "A Browning is an excellent weapon

[217] Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 47.
[218] "Mustard gas," Encyclopædia Britannica. accessed February 10, 2023, https://www.britannica.com/science/mustard-gas.
[219] Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 256.
[220] Nasrullah Mambrol, "Claude Levi Strauss' Concept of Bricolage," *Literary Theory and Criticism*, July 1, 2020, https://literariness.org/2016/03/21/claude-levi-strauss-concept-of-bricolage/.
[221] Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 255.
[222] Mambrol, "Claude Levi Strauss".
[223] Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 255.
[224] Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 255.
[225] Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 255.
[226] Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 244.
[227] Mambrol, "Claude Levi Strauss".

even if it is not loaded, and Dick Gordon brought the barrel down with smashing force upon the head of the man who tried to grapple with him." These excerpts from Wallace's books, with their themes of using gas, electricity and firearms to destroy and devalue human life, demonstrate how far mankind has drifted from humanity. The concept Chronological primitivism refers to this shift:

> [T]he belief that the ideal stage of humanity's way of life lies in the very distant past, when men and women lived naturally, simply, and freely, and that the process of history has been a gradual 'decline' from that happy stage into increasing artifice, complexity, inhibitions, prohibitions, and consequent anxieties and discontents in the psychological, social, and cultural order.[228]

Primitivism, however, did not only answer the questions of the challenges of the society coming with the period of modernity, but it was also a means of finding a way to escape from the trap of overcivilization of the world into which it was thrown by the rapid development. "[T]he essential purity and goodness of 'primitive' life, by contrast with the decadence of over-civilized Western societies, were gaining ground within European-culture."[229]

A symbol of the positive acceptance of the natural lifestyle of the natives was the concept of 'noble savage'. This is an idealised idea of "uncivilized man, who symbolizes the innate goodness of one not exposed to the corrupting influences of civilization."[230] Oxymoron 'noble savage' remotely resembles another with a similar structure, namely 'gentleman thief': "The gentleman crook maintains a code of honour, which reflects his breeding. He abhors violence, robs only the rich and is in it for the sport as much as for the money."[231] Characters in Wallace's novels often commit crime for noble reasons, often to right some long-standing wrong, often for altruistic reasons and to punish an injustice. While the notion of noble savage is primarily associated with the works of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the most famous character archetype of gentleman burglar is Maurice Leblanc's stock character, Arsène Lupin. In Wallace's novel *The Door with Seven Locks*, one such type of criminal is Lew Pheeney, a professional burglar who describes himself as: "'I'm too much of a gentleman to be on the crook.'"[232] But the earthy Captain Sneed has his own opinion of him: "'Honest robber! He's got that out of a book.'"[233] Wallace's characters committing crime in the name of good and justice are actually a combination of tropes noble savage and gentleman thief. They can be

[228] Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 149.
[229] Harrison, *Modern Art*, 6.
[230] "Noble savage," Encyclopædia Britannica. accessed January 21, 2023, https://www.britannica.com/art/noble-savage.
[231] Jeffrey Richards, *Visions of Yesterday* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), 92.
[232] Wallace, *The Door with Seven Locks*, 5.
[233] Wallace, *The Door with Seven Locks*, 5.

identified, for example, in the characters of John Wood running the children's home, who is the mysterious Green Archer from the book of the same name, righting the reprehensible deeds of Abel Bellamy. Another such character is Joshua Broad, the American millionaire from the novel *The Fellowship of the Frog*, who tries to put a stop to the Frog's rampage and thereby finds himself on the brink of crime. And another combination of noble savage and gentleman thief is philanthropist Gregory Beale, who reckons with criminals afflicted by the supposed curse of the feathered serpent. All three are linked by a characterization from the pen of journalist Peter Dewin: "Will this perfect criminal, with his knowledge of languages, his extraordinary aptitude for disguise, with a nimble mind foreseeing all possibilities, ever fall into the hands of justice? I permit myself to doubt the possibility." Although the heroes and villains of Wallace's books fully embrace the binary of good and evil, they also struggle with their instincts and inner drives. What is still moral and where do the limits of justification for our actions end. It was as if something lurked deep within us, something 'Jungianly' unconscious, something savage, and it wanted out. When that 'something still within us' surfaces, we wonder where it comes from, like Charles Marlow tracing the soul of Mr. Kurtz in Joseph Conrad's novella *Heart of Darkness* (1899). Wallace's negative characters in his novels function as counterparts to the heroic characters. They are not villains in the true sense of the word. They are more like Mr. Kurtz, who discovered something morally despicable in themselves, but were not afraid to let it out. They often had the same fate as Wallace and found a place in the sun and went from rags to riches. Following the national ethos of the American Way, they earned a material status they later refused to relinquish, contributing to the construction of the myth of the American Dream. Unlike most modernists, for Wallace the infusion of optimism and faith in the morality of people remains a motif he does not neglect in his novels. "In such a capricious world [of Wallace's thrillers] as this, it is surely satisfying to know, deep down, that after astounding revelation piled upon astounding revelation (and a thrilling chase) good will at last triumph over evil."[234] If for nothing else, it is for this message that his voluminous production is often praised. "They [critics] applauded the moral standards of his [Wallace's] novels, […] and the decency of his protagonists who fight for a just cause. In Wallace's novels, crime never pays."[235] Together with the modernists, he reveals the psyche of the villain and sometimes the darkness of his soul, but Wallace never definitively renounces the good in man and never lets him fall

[234] Reilly, *Twentieth Century Crime and Mystery Writers,* 1435.
[235] Kate Macdonald and Christoph Singer, *Transitions in Middlebrow Writing*, 1880-1930 (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, 235.

completely. While both hero and villain make unprecedented use of 'will to power' to achieve their goals, the hero never solely for his own benefit, unlike the villain. The villain is often a nobleman, the owner of a business empire, or a wealthy man who, like the king of Frazer's *Golden Bough*, must eventually fall to make room for revival.

The idealized notion of noble savage was accompanied by a deepening attention to primitive art and its inspirational potential for modernism. "Gauguin […] is often identified as the first modern artist for whom this myth of the 'savage' became the touchstone of his philosophy of art and life.[236] Into the tranquil Tahitian waters of primitivism in art and literature of which "[t]he eighteenth-century cult of the Noble Savage, […]"[237] was an integral part, a competing concept of when "[…] the artefacts of colonized peoples were widely seen as evidence of their 'barbaric' uncivilized nature, of their lack of cultural 'progress'. This view was reinforced by the increasing popularity of pseudo-Darwinian theories of cultural evolution."[238] Wallace incorporates this shorthand and simplistic view of the term 'primitive' into his fiction as well. In this 'unnoble' way Wallace in his novel *The Fellowship of the Frog* portrayed the character of Maitland, a financier who, despite his wealth, does not appear dignified. "His head was completely bald . . . she looked at his big ears, standing away from his head, fascinated. Patriarchal, yet repulsive. There was something gross, obscene, about him that hurt her."[239] Ella Bennett is shocked by Maitland's appearance and finds him most rude. "It was not the untidiness of his dress, it was not his years. Age brings refinement, that beauty of decay that the purists call caducity. This old man had grown old coarsely."[240] Despite her apparent reverence for old age and purist euphemism, Ella is unable to feel any respect for this 'unnoble savage'. "Maitland was a man advanced in years, patriarchal in appearance, sparing of speech."[241] He seems taciturn and stoic, and his appearance of a patriarch would be consistent with the idea of a noble and mature elder, but the whole idea is spoiled by an inherent rudeness, uncouthness and uncivilizedness. Dick comments on Maitland as follows: "'He's a rough diamond,'"[242] His lack of refinement is fully revealed in his language: "The voice was harsh and common. The language and tone were of the gutter."[243] His uncultured nature is accentuated by the fact that he cannot write: "'[…] Maitland, a man who could neither read nor write.'" And even his dwelling is inconsistent

[236] Harrison, *Modern Art*, 6.
[237] Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 148.
[238] Harrison, *Modern Art*, 5-6.
[239] Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 49.
[240] Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 49.
[241] Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 16.
[242] Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 53.
[243] Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 50.

with the standard seen in millionaires: “But old Maitland is living in some place that is nearly a slum—living meanly and horribly like an unemployed labourer! […] He has a cheap house in one of the suburbs, a place I wouldn’t use to stable a cow!”[244]

Another such ‘barbarian’ of Wallace’s fictional world is again the millionaire character, this time from Chicago, Abel Bellamy from *The Green Archer*. He is portrayed in opposition to the purely positive figure of John Wood, bringing binary oppositions such as evil and good or beauty and ugliness to the fore. With such a classification distinction deals Structuralism. “By comparing the principles at work in myths throughout the world, the structural anthropologist hopes to discover universal logical attributes of the human mind.”[245] One of the main representatives of structural anthropology is Claude Lévi-Strauss, who stresses that the mind “[…] naturally classifies by absolute opposition. Good and evil, high and low, old and young, white and black, illustrate how all humans convert continuous contrasts into absolute distinctions.”[246] John Wood is literally the embodiment of goodness, thank goodness, and wallace’s anti-realist approach to writing makes the catalogue of his virtues succinct: “‘I live in Belgium, at a place called Wenduyne. I have a home there for consumptive children, which, by the way, I am moving to Switzerland this year. I am the inventor of the Wood’s system of carburation, I am a bachelor—and I think that is about all.’”[247] Opposite stands Abel Bellamy, a heartless half-wit, an ugly harsh man and evil personified.

> Remorse was foreign to his nature, fear he did not know. He had done evilly and was content. The memory of the horror of lives wantonly broken, of suffering deliberately inflicted, of children delivered to hardship and pain, of a woman hunted to death by a tiger of hate that the Moloch of his selfesteem should be appeased, never caused him a second‘s unrest of mind.[248]

Abel Bellamy’s unsightliness perfectly matched his execrable character. “His ugliness was fascinating, his immense red face was seamed and lined into a hundred ridges and hollows. His nose was big, squat, bulbous. His mouth broad and thick-lipped; one corner lifted so that he seemed to be sneering all the time.”[249] Likewise, John Wood’s character qualities were perfectly complemented by his worldly appearance: “He was a tall man, prematurely grey, with a face of singular beauty. The eyes lived, and the sensitive mouth seemed to speak even

[244] Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 58.
[245] Jeanne Guillemin, *Anthropological Realities: Readings in the Science of Culture* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1981), 52.
[246] Guillemin, *Anthropological Realities*, 52.
[247] Wallace, *The Green Archer*, 15.
[248] Wallace, *The Green Archer*, 10.
[249] Wallace, *The Green Archer*, 10.

when it was in repose."[250] Fictional character, crime reporter Spike Holland, with admirable journalistic insight, notes the colossal contrast in the appearance of the two literary characters. "Spike, glancing at the delicate face, could not help making a contrast with the fascinating ugliness of the man he had just left."[251] More fundamentally, however, Holland sees this contrasting pair not only through the eyes of Lévi-Strauss, but at the same time through the lens of primitivism, adding another opposition of the white man and the unwilling savage. It is strikingly reminiscent of the concept of 'the white man's burden' based indirectly on the poem of the same name by Rudyard Kipling. By the way, the great literary model of Edgar Wallace in his poetic experiments early in his literary career, when he even managed to have dinner with him: "The greatest triumph, however, was to come six weeks later, when, as the celebrated poet who had dared to address Kipling in his own vein, he [...] '[r]eceived invitation to dine with Garrett and Kipling. Whoop!'"[252] Anyway, Spike Holland completes his admiring description of John Wood: "He was the very antithesis of Abe Bellamy, a gentle soul, whose eyes smiled all the time. His every movement was alert and vital, and the long, white hands seemed never to be still."[253] On one side there is a lively, energetic, and cultured white man who loves children, is proficient in internal combustion engines, has a university degree[254] and whose appearance is simply "singular beauty,"[255] and his "gentle soul,"[256] is reflected in "eyes lived,"[257] and in "sensitive mouth seemed to speak."[258] His overall movement is "alert and vital,"[259] and his "white hands seemed never to be still."[260] And on the other side there is a selfish, deceitful and ruthless (mythically updated) savage devoid of remorse, ignorant of fear and deliberately committing evil, likened to the exotic beast "tiger of hate,"[261] worshipping the foreign deity Moloch[262] "associated in biblical sources with the practice of child sacrifice."[263] Moreover, he's ugly, he has got "immense red face"[264] with

[250] Wallace, *The Green Archer*, 14.
[251] Wallace, *The Green Archer*, 14.
[252] Lane and Morley, *Edgar Wallace*, 98.
[253] Wallace, *The Green Archer*, 14-15.
[254] Wallace, *The Green Archer*, 15.
[255] Wallace, *The Green Archer*, 14.
[256] Wallace, *The Green Archer*, 14-15.
[257] Wallace, *The Green Archer*, 14.
[258] Wallace, *The Green Archer*, 14.
[259] Wallace, *The Green Archer*, 15.
[260] Wallace, *The Green Archer*, 15.
[261] Wallace, *The Green Archer*, 10.
[262] Wallace, *The Green Archer*, 10.
[263] "Moloch," Encyclopædia Britannica. accessed January 27, 2023, https://www.britannica.com/topic/Moloch-ancient-god.
[264] Wallace, *The Green Archer*, 10.

"hundred ridges and hollows,"[265] his nous is "big, squat, bulbous"[266] and his mouth is "broad and thick-lipped"[267] and he sees to be "sneering all the time."[268] Lucky for such a modern savage, Abel Bellamy, that he accepts his lot without realizing it, such is the entrenched ethnocentrism of colonial discourse: "He was neither proud nor ashamed of his ugliness. He had accepted his appearance as he had accepted his desires, as normal in himself."[269]

Although Bellamy was never interested in history and never read a single book, he moved to Garre Castle, the "home of the dead and gone lights of chivalry. […] It was the strength of it that thrilled this old builder."[270] Belamy wants to escape from the modern world full of complications to a time when he believes the world was still in order, to a mythical time. The historian Mircea Eliade calls such a return, as does his book *The Myth of the Eternal Return*. The "[…] repetition of archetypes belonging to the time of 'beginnings' is what Eliade meant by the 'myth of the eternal return.' To recall the primordial archetypes is to give meaning to the present as a creative moment."[271] Bellamy turns to the past and seeks a place where his thoughts can rest in peace, a place where his present deeds, sometimes cruel, can be given meaning and justified again. "He would spend days wandering around the walls, hours in speculation upon some stone. Who placed it there? What was the man's name, what life did he live, […]?"[272] Bellamy projects his own desires into the medieval past because he is "longing to escape from the complications, fever, anxieties, and 'alienation' of modern civilization into the elemental simplicities of a lost natural life."[273] Bellamy revive the myth of medieval times through his own memories and experiences.

> There was something in these stones that was in tune with the latent ferocity in his cruel nature. The lightless dungeons with their foot-thick doors, the worn chain-rings fastened to pillars rubbed smooth by the shoulders of tortured humanity, the power and majesty of Garre Castle spoke to the primitive in him and awakened in his soul an atavistic devil that found joy even in the contemplation of forgotten suffering.

Bellamy is described as an 'atavistic devil' and the idea of 'atavism' is mentioned by the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche in connection with the appearance of rare people called 'Glücksfälle': "They are seen as suddenly emerging late ghosts of past cultures and their powers. Rare characteristics of individuals in one epoch, […] used to be common traits

[265] Wallace, *The Green Archer*, 10.
[266] Wallace, *The Green Archer*, 10.
[267] Wallace, *The Green Archer*, 10.
[268] Wallace, *The Green Archer*, 10.
[269] Wallace, *The Green Archer*, 10-11.
[270] Wallace, *The Green Archer*, 39.
[271] David Cave, *Mircea Eliade's Vision for a New Humanism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 84.
[272] Wallace, *The Green Archer*, 40.
[273] Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 149-150.

in earlier epochs."[274] This expression from the German 'Glücksfälle' literally means "[…] the lucky strokes'" of evolution, perish most easily as fortunes change. They are exposed to every kind of decadence: they are extreme, and that almost means decadents."[275]

Apart from Abel Bellamy, the mad Harry Chelford, the nobleman and heir to Fossaway Manor in the novel *The Black Abbot*, could be considered such an atavistic decadent. He is described as "[…] the thin, irritable young man — the weakling with all that man needed in his hands, save manhood. A pitiable, nerve-racked creature, now pleading, now bullying — oblivious of the impression he made on the woman who was to share his life."[276] According to Nietzsche, the individual should work on his atavistic exceptionalism. "It is the task of this atavistic individual to nurse, defend, honor and cultivate his atavism until he becomes a great human being."[277] An atavistic individual's lack of self-improvement will spell his doom, which is exactly what happens to Harry in the story of *The Black Abbot*. "However, the Nietzschean atavistic individual is also subject to the risk of becoming 'mad and eccentric' [...] or he perishes early."[278] Harry is the epitome of the gothic torn individual who is only concerned with the pursuit of the Chelford Treasure, which can be either a thousand bars of Spanish pure gold or, which Harry finds very exciting, the philosopher's stone, that holy grail of all alchemists. It is the only way to ensure Harry's immortality and relieve him of his anxiety. "'The flask — I want the flask of Life Water! The gold — throw it into the road — let the poor devils take it who want it. I want life — do you Understand? — life and the end of fear.'"[279] Moreover, he struggles with an Oedipus complex because he posthumously still loves his mother, the late Lady Chelford, whose portrait he guards anxiously: "To Harry Alford, Fossaway Manor, for all its beauty and charm, was a poor casket for such a jewel [full-length painting of Lady Chelford].[280] And it was Harry's mother of noble descent from whom Harry inherited her madness, in accordance with the degeneration myth of a house afflicted with mental illness. "[S]he had the same delicate features, the same raven hair and dark, fathomless eyes. Lady Chelford had been the most famous debutante of her time, and her tragic end had been the sensation of the early

[274] Vasti Roodt and Herman Siemens, *Nietzsche, Power and Politics: Rethinking Nietzsche's Legacy for Political Thought* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008), 385.
[275] Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, Walter Arnold Kaufmann, and R. J. Hollingdale, *The Will to Power: A New Translation* (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), 363.
[276] Wallace, *The Black Abbot*, 12.
[277] Roodt, *Nietzsche, Power and Politics*, 385.
[278] Roodt, *Nietzsche, Power and Politics*, 385.
[279] Wallace, *The Black Abbot*, 19.
[280] Wallace, *The Black Abbot*, 2

'nineties."[281] Nietzsche's idea of atavism "stands in opposition to other contemporary discourses on atavism, such as that of Lombroso or Nordau, who considered it to be a socially harmful regression."[282] Harry's manifestations of madness seem to be a description of such a regression.

> "Gold — gold — gold! You think of nothing else! Curse the gold! Find it and keep it. It is the flask I want!" His voice sank to a whisper, his face had grown suddenly moist. "Dick, I'm afraid of death. God! You don't know how afraid ! The fear of it haunts me day and night — I sit here counting the hours, wondering at which my spirit will go from me! You'll laugh — at that — laugh, laugh!"
> But Dick Alford's face was set, unsmiling.

"Degeneration theories of the late nineteenth century, ones that argue for evidence of a 'retrogressive evolution,' are the inverse image of Darwin's evolutionary theory, and they expose fears of the 'decline of the West' mirrored in some scientific writings."[283] Wallace takes inspiration from real figures associated with these theories, namely Max Nordau, Gustave Le Bon and Cesare Lombroso. For example, a note in the introduction of *The Fellowship of the Frog* captures attention because of its reference to crowd psychology: "It was of interest to those who study the psychology of the mass that, until the prosperous but otherwise insignificant James G. Bliss became the object of their attention, the doings and growth of the Frogs were almost unnoticed."[284] The French anthropologist and sociologist Gustave Le Bon studied the behaviour of individuals as part of a crowd and argued, among other things, that: "[w]hen the structure of a civilisation is rotten, it is always the masses that bring about its downfall."[285] The characters of Nordau and Lombroso probably served as models for the fictional scientist, Dr. Antonio Stalletti, who skillfully caricatured both. As with the real degenerative theory founders, society turned its back on Stalletti for lack of seriousness. "He is really a brilliant pathologist, but his experiments are a little too peculiar for the modern school."[286] However, Dr. Stalletti's research also resulted in a tangle with the police. "He was prosecuted for practising vivisection without a license […]"[287] Max Nordau's book *Degeneration* "demonstrates virulent anti-modernity"[288] and propose that "the stress and

[281] Wallace, *The Black Abbot*, 2.
[282] Roodt, *Nietzsche, Power and Politics*, 385.
[283] John Cartwright and Brian Baker, *Literature and Science: Social Impact and Interaction* (Oxford: ABC-Clio, 2005), 205-206.
[284] Wallace, *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 7.
[285] Le Gustave Bon, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2002), xiii.
[286] Wallace, *The Door with Seven Locks*, 105.
[287] Wallace, *The Door with Seven Locks*, 104.
[288] Cartwright, *Literature and Science*, 206.

speed of modern […] culture induced a kind of hysteria."[289] Stalletti also boasts an 'expert' publication entitled "'New Thoughts on Constructive Biology.'"[290] The book is about "'[…] human beings,' she said solemnly, 'like you and me, and how much better and happier they would be if, instead of being mollycoddled—I think that is the scientific term—they were allowed to run wild in a wood and feed on a generous diet of nuts.'"[291] The parallel between Stalletti and Lambroso is obvious. Criminalogist Cesare Labroso was known as Italian doctor and the same with "[…] Stalletti, an Italian doctor,[…]."[292] Match? Almost: "'What Cody had to do with Selford, or in what manner this wretched Italian———' 'Greek,' said Sneed quietly. 'He calls himself Italian, but he's of Greek origin; I've established that fact.'"[293] According to Lombroso, the term 'atavistic' describes "the 'criminal type' and means the recurrence of 'lower' behavioral or physical traits in 'higher' forms (the return of the 'primitive')."[294] Another detail that links Stalletti with Nordau is the interest in "theories of heredity, with 'inheritance' of […] debility."[295] Moreover, "Nordau characterizes 'degeneracy' as both 'retrogressive evolution' and as 'arrested childhood' […]"[296] Stalletti's circle of interest was similar, unfortunately in practice his 'research' was responsible for the unnatural genetic development of two children –Lord Selford and 'Beppo', Thomas Cawler's brother: "The poor creature wanted his toys—that is all. These two half-mad creatures were mentally children. They had only children's amusements and children's fears—that was the hold Stalletti had on them.'"[297] It is scary how reality can sometimes surpass fiction even when Wallace outdid himself in portraying Stalletti. "Lombroso's use of 'retrogressive evolution' theories leads him to suggest that the mutation required of natural selection will occasionally produce degenerate beings, ones that in all respects are the siblings of 'primitive man.' This process is known as atavism."[298] Wallace created the image of the mad scientist to caricature a prefigurement that in reality was already a hyperbole. It is no coincidence that Stalletti borrowed a book from the forefather of eugenics in Germany, "Haeckel called 'Generelle Morphologie.'"[299] Stalettis theories could boldly compete with the real ones, the

[289] Cartwright, *Literature and Science*, 206.
[290] Wallace, *The Door with Seven Locks*, 17.
[291] Wallace, *The Door with Seven Locks*, 18.
[292] Wallace, *The Door with Seven Locks*, 14.
[293] Wallace, *The Door with Seven Locks*, 288.
[294] Cartwright, *Literature and Science*, 210.
[295] Cartwright, *Literature and Science*, 206.
[296] Cartwright, *Literature and Science*, 208.
[297] Wallace, *The Door with Seven Locks*, 307.
[298] Cartwright, *Literature and Science*, 210.
[299] Wallace, *The Door with Seven Locks*, 13.

irony remains that the real theories did not remain only on the pages of popular literature ridiculing and parodying their authors.

> Doctor Stalletti's theory was that, if the vital forces are inhibited in one direction, they will find abnormal expression in another, and it was his desire to create what he called the perfect man, strong and obedient, having no will of his own, but subservient to the will of another. To this conclusion, he said, the biologists of the world were tending, and just as the bee delegated its reproductive functions to one queen bee, so the time would come when the world would be populated by unthinking workers.[300]

It is just a pity that, as in the pages of romance, there are not more vigorous men of the law like Captain Sneed of Scotland Yard ready to put a stop to such mayhem at any time: "'I guess you've come upon one of his experirnents—Il'll put him away for life if I find anybody in his house, dressed or undressed, who can't spell c-a-t, cat.'"[301] It is also disappointing that of the many commentators on Edgar Wallace's work only "few recall his firm-minded anti-racist standpoint."[302]

[300] Wallace, *The Door with Seven Locks*, 313.
[301] Wallace, *The Door with Seven Locks*, 125.
[302] Miskimmin, *100 British Crime Writers*, 59.

CONCLUSION

The thesis focuses analytically on the issue of the truth and falsity of myth. This ambiguity of myth, along with primitivism, is an important tool for Wallace to build tension in his novels. His strategy is that the myth identified somewhere in the beginning of the book can be challenged or believed by any of the characters at any time.

The introduction to the second chapter presents a total of five books by Wallace, three of which are listed in the primary literature – *The Green Archer* (1923), *The Fellowship of the Frog* (1925), *The Feathered Serpent* (1927) – and at the same time two supplementary books – *The Black Abbot* (1926), *The Door with Seven Locks* (1926) – to expand the examples analysed. For each book, the genre is identified in the order of its closest relationship to the myth in its pure form. The inspiration for Wallace's novel *The Feathered Serpent* is closest to myth for its direct reference to the Aztec deity Gucumatz, or the Plumed Serpent, who is part of Aztec mythology. In the case of *The Green Archer*, it can be confirmed that Wallace has ventured into the realm of legend. There are a number of references to the legend of Robin Hood, although he is not directly mentioned anywhere in the book. His clear common feature is his selfless help to the weak. He dresses in the historical costume that is typical of the portrayal of Robin Hood, including the typical hat and the requisite bow and quiver of arrows. The most significant clue is the hanging of the legendary figure on an oak branch for killing a deer. In the case of *The Fellowship of the Frog*, it takes Wallace again a little further away from myth and into the realm of fairy tale. Considering the character of the trickster Frog, the leader of the gang, the connection to the Brothers Grimm fairy tale "Frog Prince" is conclusive. Thematically, however, Wallace is more concerned here with his second and abundant source of inspiration, namely primitivism. In the Frog Fellowship, clan affiliation to the totemic frog and the ritual context of recruitment of new members, including the structure of the hierarchy to the clan can be inferred. *The Black Abbot* is a classic gothic romance with all the trappings of the genre. Strangely enough, a reference to two existing linked legends can be found here. One refers to a black monk and the other to a hoard of gold bars from the Spanish pirate expeditions. In the case of this book, Wallace is once again close to legend. The last case is the book *The Door with Seven Locks*. Here the main theme is the curse of the Selford family and their family tomb. Although here, apart from the distant reference to Ahsvár in the figure of the wandering son who cannot find his way home, it is rather an opportunity to demonstrate Wallace's technique of the validity and invalidity of myth,

precisely through the example of a curse whose truth changes over the years. And at the same time updating the myth in the case of the use of the tomb as a vault.

The next section of the chapter demonstrates the strategy of Wallace's approach to writing that is valid in each of the books analysed. Wallace defines three constitutive aspects, which are the specification of the myth, the identification of the main opponent and the identification of the general threat. Positive and negative interpretations of validity are possible for all three aspects. The identification of these three aspects is exemplified in the book *Fellowship of the Frog*. Methodologically, this ambivalence of myth in its truth or falsity is approached by Max Müller, who argues that myth is never finished and is subject to change. For Max Müller, the mythical world is essentially a world of illusion. The illusion lasts until new doubts arise. In his book *Language and Myth*, Ernst Cassirer notes two opposite aspects of the human mind: the mythmaking tendency associated with the emotional side of man and the rationalizing tendency associated with reason. This concept can also be applied to the binary opposition of the literary genres of myth and romance and, in contrast, realism. They lean towards either the mythmaking tendency, that is, romance, or the rationalizing tendency, that is, realism. And on such a principle of opposition of fiction (romance) and reality (realism) one can understand the truth (reality) or falsity (romanticism) of myth. The truth remains that the opposite of realism is romanticism and not anti-realism. Northrop Frye enters into these considerations with his concept of displacement, by which he means the shift of myth towards humanity, that is, towards realism. But not so much that it becomes reality, the shift stops somewhere in between, precisely in the sphere of the romance mode. Romance is Edgar Wallace's absolute genre, and most of his thrillers and suspense novels do not defy that genre. The identification of the myth in the romance can be made on the basis of simile, as in the example of the green archer, by reference to the green colour which refers to the forest, the former haunt of the forest god. Northrop Frye offers a list of the characteristic elements of the last sixth phase of the comedy, which transitions into the upcoming summer season, the romance. But this list defines the elements typical of romance for Wallace's work. These include sheltered place, forests in moonlight, secluded valleys, the love of the occult and the marvellous, individual detachment from routine existence and others. Such thematic elements in Wallace's work can be identified with certainty.

The next part of this chapter explores the genre of romance, which is typical of Wallace and, according to Fry, is the closest thing to myth in literature. According to the typical elements of this genre as defined by Meyer Howard Abrams in *A Glossary of Literary Term*s, it is again easy to demonstrate their presence in Wallace's work. Similar features

according to another methodology by Gillian Beer, who lists a list of features typical of romance, which she calls a 'cluster of characteristics', can also be traced in Wallace's work. She adds that they never all appear in one work. Of these features, two are typical for Wallace: 'a strongly enforced code of conduct to which all the characters must comply,' in other words, the character archetype and 'a sustained series of actions or incidents' that is plot. As in the romance, Wallace's characters are flat and simple. In the individual novels they could even be interchanged with each other, which clearly proves their high degree of archetypality. In Wallace we can find most of the archetypes as defined by Jung, but because of their elusiveness and unclear boundaries, some other character types also appear, such as the hero, sidekick, famme fatale, main opponent, damsel in distress and even shapeshifter and trickster. It is the same with the plot, which contains a series of adventurous escapades, where one follows another in an endless sequence. Wallace operates these sequences by accumulating mysteries that lead to these subsequent adventures. The plot does not lose speed because Wallace's departure from realism is also evident, with descriptiveness reduced to a minimum. The chapter concludes with a summary of the properties typical of Gothic romance, which Wallace uses ably in his novels. Those are gloomy castle replete with dungeons, subterranean passages, and sliding panels, and made bountiful use of ghosts, mysterious disappearances, and other sensational and supernatural and many more. Again, these typical features of the Gothic genre serve Wallace mainly to increase the suspense and displacement towards the mythic.

The second chapter focuses entirely on the interpretation of the term primitivism and how Wallace uses it in his books. The same Wallace volumes as in the previous chapter are used for analysis. The term is mostly associated with indigenous communities and exotic and authentic life. The discourse of primitivism actually contains all the aspects associated with these cultures. However, the term primitivism can have two interpretations, one positive and the other negative. On the one hand as something uncivilized and at a lower stage of development or progress, backward, uncivilized peoples and their cultures, and on the other hand admired for their nature without the imposition of the then modern society, a kind of antidote to modernity itself.

In Wallace one can also notice the involvement of the opposite of primitivism and the ideal of progress. This split between tradition and modernity is symbolically demonstrated, for example, in the desire to drive a large modern car. This is central to the updating of myth, for within the mythic method, outmoded traditions and customs, superstitions and myths can be updated in the world of modernity. Wallace's personal African experience of these

societies is important in the context of primitivism. Wallace is thus able to incorporate many aspects of the natural life of the natives into his novels set in urban settings, treating the city as a modern jungle. The harshness of the natural environment and some of the prejudices of Europeans of the time, Wallace also engages with the criminal behaviour of the London street dwellers. For example, in *The Fellowship of the Frog* one can clearly see a clan with a totemic frog. The Frog even transforms into a kind of 'shaman' with the help of a frog mask. Wallace discovers tattoos as a reference to indigenous people for his novel. Each member of the Frog fellowship has a tribal frog tattooed on their wrist. However, tattoos are also typical of criminals, which fits well in a thriller setting. In *The Feathered serpent*, the Snake-worshippers resemble such a community. Wallace elaborates on the use of these totemic animals in anthropological terms such as clan, totem, totemic animal, or perhaps fetish. The Frog as an African shaman with a frog mask on his head, which by the way is documented in ethnographic writings, demonstrates his supernatural qualities. He can see in the dark, has incredible strength and no door will remain closed to him. In addition to the clans, in *The Feathered Serpent* Wallace refers to secret societies associated with the myth of controlling the world from the beyond.

But Wallace also engages a second aspect of primitivism, seeing it as a step backwards on the evolutionary line towards civilisational decline. He mentions the use of gas as an offensive weapon against civilian tenants in the novel *The Fellowship of the Frog*. It draws attention to the atrocities of the First World War. Furthermore, Wallace plays with the concept of 'noble savage' which is reminiscent of the concept of 'gentleman thief'. It also incorporates the motif from Fraser's *The Golden Bow*, when the king dies so that society can be reborn. In the same way, Walllace's novels end with the death of a man with great power and society begins a new season. One can also find the approach of Lévi-Strauss, with its binary oppositions of good and evil, which Wallace expanded in 'burden of the white man' by portraying the two men in the story antithetically as white man and savage. Furthermore, one can identify definitions of atavism as an outdated feature in society and so-called 'Degeneration theories,' which allude to the gradual decline of society. Wallace uses these aspects successfully to portray the villains.

It can be said that this involvement of a number of inspirational motifs associated with primitivism is exactly in line with the idea of simplicity that Wallace prefers in all respects. Just as in the first chapter he uses the tension between the authenticity of myth and its falsity, so here he works with the tension of primitivism and the idea of progress. Wallace's approach to writing combines both myth and primitivism. Simplicity, but not shallowness, becomes the

key word in Wallace's work. In his work one can detect a certain tension between simplicity and his tendency towards myth and primitivism. This specific use of myth can be traced both in his story-oriented style of writing (mythos = plot), in his escape to abstraction in genres such as romance, in his choice of simple archetypal characters, in his style of writing based on dictation and rewriting that is reminiscent of storytelling, and even in his interest in primitivism as a return to naturalness and unadornedness. It can be assumed, therefore, that although Wallace is labelled as a simple author, his poetics are more complex and built on more complex foundations. My point here is not to try to rehabilitate the author in any way before the critical community, only to draw attention to such tensions. The simplicity, the uncomplicatedness, the directness is actually contained in the type of story of the myth, which is a kind of manual for life, but it is also a programme of primitivism in art with its inclination towards naturalness. Their opposite is reality and progress, both of which go hand in hand against myth and primitivism.

RESUMÉ

Tato práce se zaměřuje na dílo Edgara Wallace v kontextu mýtické literatury. V první části jsou představeny teorie mýtu a jeho zapojení do tvorby modernistů. Druhá část vysvětluje dvojí povahu mýtu jako pravdy nebo nepravdy a koncept posunu mýtu k románu. Třetí část se zaměřuje na primitivismus jako protilátku proti přecivilizované společnosti nebo jako formu civilizačního úpadku. V závěru práce jsou shrnuty všechny literární prostředky, které Edgar Wallace používá ke zvýšení napětí ve svém díle. Práce se analyticky zaměřuje na otázku pravdivosti a nepravdivosti mýtu. Tato dvojznačnost mýtu je pro Wallace spolu s primitivismem důležitým nástrojem k budování napětí v jeho románech. Jeho strategie spočívá v tom, že mýtus identifikovaný někde na začátku knihy může kterákoli z postav kdykoli zpochybnit nebo mu uvěřit. Cílem této práce je ověřit metody Wallaceova posunu mýtu k romanci, tedy jeho anti-realistické tendence. Dále ověřit jeho specifické využití mýtu ke zvýšení napětí. A konečně jeho vztah k jednoduchosti a přímočarosti ve vztahu k jeho stylu psaní. Všechny tyto aspekty budou sledovány ve dvou analytických kapitolách práce.

Specifická atmosféra počátku dvacátého století do značné míry ovlivnila tvorbu Edgara Wallace i modernistů. Nejen anti-realistické tendence, návrat k mýtu a inspirace primitivismem byly aspekty, které Edgara Wallace spojovaly s modernisty, ale především zájem o nové přístupy k psaní, které Ezra Pound vystihl ve svém modernistickém imperativu ‘Make It New’. Také Wallace našel ve svém díle svůj vlastní specifický styl využití mýtu, a to budování napětí, jednoduchost postav a přímočarost děje. Aby aktualizoval mýtus a distancoval se od realistických tendencí v literatuře, využil žánry eskapistické beletrie, zejména romance, gotického románu nebo melodramatu, a přidal tematické prvky inspirované primitivismem, totemismem a pověrami. Cíleně volil formy, témata a motivy, které mu sloužily ke zvýšení napětí. Jeho návratem k mýtu je jeho plánovaná jednoduchost, ba primitivnost, v níž se setkává s podstatou nejhlubších citů a základních instinktů: láska a dobro nebo zlo a nenávist jsou tak zobrazovány i žánrem romance, protože jen v tomto modu jednoduchosti lze rozlišit čistotu a zkaženost.

V úvodní kapitole se zmíním o přístupu vybraných modernistů k mýtu a o tom, jak jej využívali ve svých dílech, a neopomenu se zastavit u předních vědců, antropologů, lingvistů, kteří přispěli k trvalému zakotvení mýtu ve vědeckém světě. Druhá a třetí kapitola přinesou analýzu zejména tří Wallaceových románů: *Zelený lučištník* (1923), *Žabí bratrstvo* (1925) a *Opeřený had* (1927) a jako tematické rozšíření budu brát v úvahu další dva *Černý opat* (1926), *Dveře se sedmi zámky* (1926).

Druhá kapitola, kapitola žánrová, osvětluje dvojí povahu mýtu, který může být pravdivý nebo falešný. Tato dvojznačnost mýtu je pro Wallace důležitým nástrojem k budování napětí v jeho románech. Jeho strategie spočívá v tom, že mýtus identifikovaný někde na začátku knihy může kterákoli z postav kdykoli zpochybnit nebo mu uvěřit. Inspirací pro Wallaceův román *Opeřený had* je mýtus, který má nejblíže k aztéckému božstvu Gucumatzovi neboli Opeřenému hadovi, jenž je součástí aztécké mytologie. V případě *Zeleného lučištníka* lze potvrdit, že se Wallace vydal do říše legend. V knize se objevuje řada odkazů na legendu o Robinu Hoodovi, ačkoli ten není nikde přímo zmíněn. V případě *Žabího bratrstva* se Wallace dostává opět o něco dále od mýtů do říše pohádek. Vzhledem k postavě šibala Žabáka, vůdce bandy, je souvislost s pohádkou bratří Grimmů "Žabí princ' jednoznačná. Tematicky se však Wallace zabývá spíše svým druhým a hojným inspiračním zdrojem, a to primitivismem. *Černý opat* je klasický gotický román se všemi atributy tohoto žánru. Kupodivu zde najdeme odkaz na dvě existující propojené legendy. Jedna odkazuje na černého mnicha a druhá na poklad zlatých prutů ze španělských pirátských výprav. Poslední ukázkou je kniha *Dveře se sedmi zámky*. Zde je hlavním tématem prokletí rodiny Selfordů a jejich rodinné hrobky, ale spíše by se dala využít jako příležitost k demonstraci Wallaceovy techniky platnosti a neplatnosti mýtu.

Metodologicky se k této ambivalenci mýtu v jeho pravdivosti či nepravdivosti přibližuje Max Müller, který tvrdí, že mýtus není nikdy dokončen a podléhá změnám. Pro Maxe Müllera je mýtický svět v podstatě světem iluzí. Iluze trvá, dokud se neobjeví nové pochybnosti. Ernst Cassirer si ve své knize *Jazyk a mýtus* všímá dvou protikladných aspektů lidské mysli: 'mýtotvorné tendence' spojené s emocionální stránkou člověka a 'racionalizační tendence' spojené s rozumem. Toto pojetí lze vztáhnout i na binární protiklad literárních žánrů mýtu a romance a naopak realismu. Přiklánějí se buď k tendenci mýtotvorné, tedy k romantice, nebo k tendenci racionalizační, tedy k realismu. A na takovém principu protikladu fikce (romantiky) a reality (realismu) lze chápat pravdivost (realitu) či nepravdivost (romantismus) mýtu. Pravdou zůstává, že opakem realismu je romantismus, a nikoli anti-realismus. Northrop Frye do těchto úvah vstupuje svým pojmem 'posun', jímž rozumí posun mýtu směrem k lidskosti, tedy k realismu. Ne však natolik, aby se stal realitou, posun se zastavuje někde uprostřed, právě v oblasti romantického modu.

Dále se práce zaměřuje na žánr romance a gotického románu, který je pro Wallaceovo dílo zásadní. Mýtus a romance spolu s odklonem od realismu a primitivismu jsou podpůrnými nástroji Wallaceova stylu zaměřeného na jejich využití ke zvýšení napětí. Romance je pro Edgara Wallace absolutním žánrem a většina jeho thrillerů a napínavých románů se tomuto

žánru nevymyká. Identifikace mýtu v romanci může být provedena na základě ‘přirovnání’, jako v příkladu zeleného lučištníka, odkazem na zelenou barvu, která odkazuje k lesu, někdejšímu útočišti boha lesa. Žánr romance je pro Wallace typický a podle Frye má v literatuře nejblíže k mýtu. Podle typických prvků tohoto žánru, jak je definoval Meyer Howard Abrams v jeho *Slovníku literárních pojmů*, lze opět snadno prokázat jejich přítomnost ve Wallaceově díle. Podobné rysy podle jiné metodiky Gillian Beerové, která uvádí seznam rysů typických pro romance, které nazývá ‘shluk charakteristik’, lze vysledovat i ve Wallaceově díle. Beerová dodává, že se nikdy neobjevují všechny charakteristiky v jednom díle. Z těchto rysů jsou pro Wallace typické dva: ‘silně prosazovaný kodex chování, který musí všechny postavy dodržovat’, jinými slovy archetyp postavy, a ‘trvalá řada akcí nebo událostí’, která je zápletkou.

Třetí kapitola, kapitola hodnotová, se zaměří na primitivismus, který Wallace tematicky ovlivnil. Primitivismus je definován jako protijed proti přecivilizované společnosti nebo jako forma civilizačního úpadku. Oba tyto pohledy na primitivismus spolu se svou osobní africkou zkušeností Wallace začlenil do svého díla spolu s antropologicko-strukturálními složkami klanů, totemismu a pověr. Wallace tak dokáže do svých románů zasazených do městského prostředí začlenit mnoho aspektů přirozeného života domorodců, přičemž město považuje za moderní džungli. Drsnost přírodního prostředí a některé předsudky tehdejších Evropanů Wallace zapojuje i do kriminálního chování obyvatel londýnských ulic. Například v románu *Žabí bratrstvo* je jasně vidět klan s totemickou žábou. Každý člen žabího bratrstva má na zápěstí vytetovanou kmenovou žábu. Tetování je však typické i pro zločince, což se do thrilleru dobře hodí. Kromě klanů Wallace v knize *Opeřený had* odkazuje na tajné spolky spojené s mýtem o tahání za nitky světového dění. Wallace však zapojuje i druhý aspekt primitivismu, který jej definuje jako krok zpět na evoluční linii směřující k civilizačnímu úpadku. V románu *Žabí bratrstvo* se zmiňuje o použití plynu jako útočné zbraně proti civilním nájemníkům. Upozorňuje tím na zvěrstva první světové války. Wallace si pohrává s pojmem ‘ušlechtilého divocha’, který připomíná pojem ‘zloděj gentleman’. Lze zde nalézt i přístup Léviho-Strausse s jeho binárními opozicemi dobra a zla, které Wallace v ‘břemenu bílého muže’ rozšířil tím, že oba muže v příběhu zobrazil antiteticky jako bílého muže a divocha. Dále lze identifikovat definice atavismu jako přežitku ve společnosti a takzvané ‘degenerační teorie’, které odkazují na postupný úpadek společnosti. Wallace těchto aspektů úspěšně využívá k vykreslení padouchů.

Lze říci, že toto zapojení řady inspirativních motivů spojených s primitivismem je přesně v souladu s myšlenkou jednoduchosti, kterou Wallace ve všech ohledech preferuje.

Stejně jako v první kapitole využívá napětí mezi autenticitou mýtu a jeho falešností, tak i zde pracuje s napětím primitivismu a ideje pokroku. Wallaceův přístup k psaní kombinuje mýtus i primitivismus. Klíčovým slovem Wallaceova díla se stává jednoduchost, nikoli však povrchnost. V jeho díle lze vysledovat určité napětí mezi jednoduchostí a příklonem k mýtu a primitivismu. Toto specifické využití mýtu lze vysledovat jak v jeho stylu psaní zaměřeném na příběh, zápletku tedy vlastně mythos, tak v jeho úniku k abstrakci v žánrech, jako je romance, ve volbě jednoduchých archetypálních postav, ve stylu psaní založeném na diktování a přepisování, který připomíná vyprávění příběhů, a dokonce i v jeho zájmu o primitivismus jako návratu k přirozenosti a nestrojenosti. Lze tedy předpokládat, že ačkoli je Edgar Wallace označován za jednoduchého autora, jeho poetika je složitější a postavená na komplexnějších základech než se na první pohled zdá. Nejde mi zde o to, abych se snažil autora před kritickou obcí jakkoli rehabilitovat, pouze chci na tato napětí upozornit. Jednoduchost, nekomplikovanost, přímočarost je vlastně obsažena v typu příběhu mýtu, který je jakýmsi návodem k životu, ale je také programem primitivismu v umění s jeho příklonem k přirozenosti. Jejich protikladem je realita a pokrok, které jdou ruku v ruce proti mýtu a primitivismu.

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