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# ADAPTING THE ADAPTED: THE BLACK RAPIST MYTH IN E.R. BURROUGHS' *TARZAN OF THE APES* AND ITS FILM ADAPTATIONS

## Abstract

Whether in art or science, adaptation does not refer to something original but to a mutated and permutated version of a pre-existing original. In literature, adaptation occurs first when real-life stories are adapted into fiction; these fictions then often undergo a second technological adaptation as literary works are adapted into theatrical productions for stage or film. This paper explores one such doubled adaptation; it examines how the black rapist myth, which grew out of the social and cultural realities of the Jim Crow South, was transformed in E.R. Burroughs' portrayal of Terkoz in the popular adventure novel, *Tarzan of the Apes* (1914), and then how this fiction was adapted into multiple and varied films between 1918 and 2016.

**Keywords:** Black rapist myth, white racial anxiety, Edgar Rice Burroughs, *Tarzan of the Apes*, popular fiction, adaptation

Literature and film: the link between these two art forms is both conjugal and deceptive: conjugal as it centers on a narrative, whether in a literary or cinematic form, and deceptive as it connects the opposing elements such as the verbal and the visual, high culture and popular culture, art and commerce, an individual act of creation and a joint venture. Cinematic adaptations of (canonical and/or popular) literary works are often seen as un-original – a mutated and permutated version of a pre-existing original, as mutually exclusive endeavors with their "own incontestably unique properties and effects" (Tibbetts and Welsh xvi). Yet, it is important to note that, for instance, "the modern novel actually anticipated many effects and storytelling techniques, like temporal, causal, and spatial disjunctions, that we are all too accustomed—sometimes erroneously—to regard as essentially 'cinematic'" (Tibbetts and Welsh xvi). The reverse also occurs when filmmakers appropriate literary techniques and effects in their works.

The following is an analysis of how the black rapist myth, itself a social and cultural adaptation of Southern Jim Crow laws, was transformed in Edgar Rice Burroughs' portrayal of Terkoz in the popular adventure novel *Tarzan of the Apes* (1914), which was in turn adapted multiple times into silent and sound, B/W and color, motion and animated, American and European, films between 1918 and 2016. Beginning with a brief exploration of the black rapist myth and its employment in American literature, the paper will attempt to detect how Burroughs used its traits in the depiction of Tarzan's antagonist, Terkoz, and how the original "Terkoz" scene has been depicted in the film adaptations of the novel. The paper concludes by considering, in light of possible objections, some consequences of the proposed argument: performances of the black rapist myth in *Tarzan of the Apes* and its film adaptations reflect social and cultural trends and anxieties at the times of their production thus (re)producing (the fear of) socially and culturally unacceptable desires.

## On the Black Rapist Myth

In the chapter "June Second, 1910" of *The Sound and the Fury,* Quentin Compson asserts: "[A] nigger is not a person so much as a form of behavior; a sort of obverse reflection of the white people he lives among" (Faulkner 86). In this depiction, Quentin Compson ignores and distorts the humanity of the black man, defining him not as a real human being, but as a mental cliché, a formula, a creation of the white (fe)male imagination. This perception was rooted in perverse scripts of the black body, intelligence, and social status that repre-

sented black men as primitive, uncivilized, criminal, or sexually pathological and labeled them as "Bamas," "beasts," "bucks," "field Negros," "house Negros," "Jim Crows," "monkeys," "niggas," "Old Black Joes," "Rastuses," "Topsies," "tragic mulattos," "Uncle Moseses," "Uncle Remuses,"[1] and "the black rapists." The production of the last stereotype – the black rapist – in its social, cultural, literary, and cinematic form will be a focal point of this paper.

Invented after emancipation, the black rapist stereotype was the result of the increasing panic about racial intermixture after the abolition of slavery and reflected the American South's obsession with protecting white womanhood to ensure the purity of the white race. The reproduction of this myth provided the basis for racial control, since it found justification in the belief that rape represented black men's wish to overthrow the Southern white supremacist society. The black rapist stereotype centered on the assumption that the black man, in the act of rape, was trying to reach white Southern woman's social and economic status of which she was the symbol. The myth of the black male rapist was "a public and ritualized manifestation of growing white panic about a shifting social order in the South that promised blacks education, property, political participation, and social inclusion" (Richardson 59), and was constructed to "justify withholding citizenship from African Americans by representing black men as 'moral monsters'" (Lott 39). The black rapist stereotype was also used to cushion increased social differences between lower and upper white classes in the American South as well as to reinforce white solidarity. As it was impossible for all Southerners to have equal wealth and property – the majority of the Southern population belonged to lower classes, which could unite them in their whiteness –, "patriarchal ideology resorted to sex and made it property of all white Southerners" (Oklopcic 27). They could now claim to possess property contained in the bodies of their wives, daughters, and sisters. Interacting with this ideology of women as sexual property was the assumption of white men's "right" to protect their women by using every possible means of pressure and violence. Consequently, throughout most of the American South, lynching occurred as a ritualized disciplinary practice of race, class, and sex control. In being a response to "the theoretical effect of emancipation, which was the definition of black men as socially the same as white males" (Tucker 54), lynching was meant to re-create the sense of a "disturbed" or "threatened" social order by

[1] For a more detailed discussion of the above-mentioned stereotypes, see *Black Masculinity and the U.S. South: From Uncle Tom to Gangsta* (2007)by Riche Richardson.

demonstrating black men's and women's "vulnerability and debasement" (Tucker 54), white women's racial purity and dependence upon white men, and white men's "intention to occupy the loftiest position in the racial and gender hierarchy of the South" (Tucker 54).

The black rapist stereotype also mirrored white Southerners' "anxieties and obsessions with respect to sex" (Finkenstaedt 160). Driven by the impetus to forbid and/or punish any thought, or (un)conscious desire, to violate the taboo against miscegenation, the black rapist stereotype "sanctified" two most sacred Southern principles – "that black men are rampagingly sexual and that white women are immutably chaste" (Roberts 170). Behind this also lurked the white Southerners' fear that they could have been characterized as sexually inadequate and that potent black males could have replaced the white man in their wives'/sisters' beds. This highly improbable, yet widely cherished assumption was justified upon several premises, the origin of which can be looked for in both the Southern idea of acceptable sexual behavior for men and women and the insistence on chivalric manhood and asexual, sanctified womanhood. With white women elevated so high on a pedestal and emancipation denying white men easy access to black women, white Southerners, still embracing the Victorian idea that men are more sexual and, consequently, more promiscuous than women who consider sex a painful duty, balanced between their "women angelic above . . . [them and] the black male (fully supported by black women) below" (Williamson 188). Driven by, to use Frantz Fanon's term, Negrophobia (124), they had to objectify a black man and to endow him "with evil intentions and with all the attributes of a malefic power" (120). By connecting those evil intentions and malefic power attributes almost entirely to the genital, white men produced an *imago* (Fanon 130; emphasis Fanon's) of the black man as the biological danger – a perverse person of abnormal and hallucinating potency (Fanon 122) – and turned him into "a penis symbol" (Fanon 123), which had to be annihilated as it personified the racial and sexual Other. Such an image of the black man also reveals a white man's "irrational longing for unusual eras of sexual license, of orgiastic scenes, of unpunished rapes, of unrepressed incest" (Fanon 127). And by "projecting his own desires onto the Negro, the white man behaves 'as if the Negro really had them'" (Fanon 127), and in this very "fact" finds justification to put the black man in "his place" – in the myth of the black rapist. The sexual contextualization of the black rapist myth had its finale in the castration of black men. The very act of castration had multiple meanings: not

only did it signify "the mob's denial of both the physical sign of the masculine and the symbolic marker of patriarchal authority" (Tucker 54) and sexual revenge but it also showed that "these white sons of the South control the most important symbol of male power: the penis" (Leak 42). The sexual aspect of the black rapist myth also disclosed the invisibility of black women's rape as the

> emphasis on protecting white womanhood concealed the sexual victimization of black women. The invisibility of black women's rape was a product of those stereotypes that, in part, supported the myth of the black rapist. While the white woman was cast as the desirable and inaccessible symbol of white power and culture, the black woman occupied the place of her opposite, the easily accessible symbol of the uncivilized, animalistic black masses. (Guttman 171)[2]

## The Black Rapist Myth in American Literature

Stereotypes about black men and women have become a recurring theme and/or motif in American literature. Many writers, who at some point in their lives were in position to "know the blacks," "reduced . . . [them] to an abstraction" (Finkenstaedt 162), to an uncivilized threat to the American domestic metaphor. As such, stereotypes of black Americans occasionally appear in the works of Ellen Glasgow,[3] who put emphasis on their primitive, hedonistic, and immature nature; Robert Penn Warren,[4] who treated his black characters "as if they had no place in civilization" (Finkenstaedt 163); William Faulkner, who employed and (re)examined the black rapist stereotype in his novels and short stories, in particular in the novels of race and gender segregation, *Light in August* (1932) and *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936), where he mirrors the genesis of the black rapist stereotype, its contextualization, and the means of its perpetuation – lynching and castration – and centers it in the characters of Joe Christmas and Charles Bon; Margaret Mitchell, who in *Gone with the Wind* (1936) depicted African Americans as "split dramatically between the exceptional class of house slaves—which is vividly dramatized in the novel—and the lowly caste

[2] It is also interesting to note that rarely, if ever, a rapist of any race has been sentenced to death for raping a black woman, which, as N. Jeremi Duru notes, sends "an unmistakable signal that rapes of white women have historically been deemed more tragic in America than rapes of black women" (366).

[3] See, for instance, *Barren Ground* (1925) and *In This Our Life* (1941).

[4] See, for instance, *Brother to Dragons: A Tale in Verse and Voices* (1953).

of field hands—which is utterly invisible during the novel's antebellum scenes and which remains faceless and anonymous throughout the remainder of the narrative" (Ryan 23); Allen Tate,[5] who portrayed his lynched "Negro" as an abstraction, as an inferior and less worthy creature; Erskine Caldwell,[6] who, even though sympathetic to African Americans, considered them, more or less, primitive; William Styron,[7] who, more than any of the above-mentioned writers, insisted on depiction of black people as barbaric, violent, sexually pathological, and perverse; Tennessee Williams,[8] who in many of his plays did not stage African American characters, and when he did stage them, he, as George W. Crandell asserts, "relegated [them] to peripheral positions, acting as servants or in subservient roles" (337); Thomas Dixon,[9] who in his novels, plays, and screenplays used racist images of "savage black men as sex-starved villains and lionhearted Ku Klux Klansmen as national heroes" (Gillespie and Hall 1) to evoke "a feeling of abhorrence in white people, especially white women, against colored men" (Cobleigh qtd. in Mast 128–29); and Edgar Rice Burroughs, who in his *Tarzan* series not only depicted most of the native Africans as savage, brutish, and cannibalistic "black British subjects" (4) but also utilized the traits of the black rapist in his portrayal of Terkoz, a huge black-haired ape.

## Terkoz as the Black Rapist in *Tarzan of the Apes*

Burroughs ties Terkoz's "blackness" to the behavioral patterns stereotypically attributed and ascribed to black people in the American South: cowardice, treachery, "susceptibility to violence," "a so-called inability to fend off or control primal urges" (Abdur-Rahman 178–79), and the belief that black males are not only "inexhaustible sex-machine[s] with oversized genitals" (Finkenstaedt 159) but also aggressive, unrestrained, and incompetent lovers – "hurried, inattentive . . . animalistic sexual brutes" (Finkenstaedt 159), lurking for, what a wonder, a white woman's body to rape. The reader's first encounter with Terkoz occurs in

5 See, for instance, some of his collections of *Poems*.

6 See, for instance, *Georgia Boy* (1943), *A Place Called Estherville* (1950), and *Deep South* (1969).

7 See, for instance, *The Confessions of Nat Turner* (1967) and *Lie Down in Darkness* (1979).

8 See, for instance, *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947), *The Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1955), *Orpheus Descending* (1957), *Sweet Bird of Youth* (1959), *Clothes for a Summer Hotel* (1980), etc.

9 See, for instance, *The Leopard's Spots* (1902), *The Clansman* (1905), *The Traitor* (1907), and *The Flaming Sword* (1939).

the chapter titled "Man's Reason," where Burroughs attributes cowardice and treachery to him:

> [H]e so feared the keen knife and the deadly arrows of his new lord that he confined the manifestation of his objections to petty disobediences and irritating mannerisms; Tarzan knew, however, that he but waited his opportunity to wrest the kingship from him by some sudden stroke of treachery, and so he was ever on his guard against surprise. (120)

Terkoz's cowardice is again confirmed in the chapter titled "The Call of the Primitive" when several apes of his tribe dethrone him because of his cruel and tyrannical rule:[10] "at heart he was an arrant coward, which is the way with bullies among apes as well as among men; so he did not remain to fight and die, but tore himself away from them as quickly as he could and fled into the sheltering boughs of the forest" (Burroughs 212).

Terkoz is further described as "the ferocious brute" (Burroughs 125) and "the ugly[,] stupid beast" (Burroughs 125–27) who does not possess "that little spark which spells the whole vast difference between man and brute—Reason" (Burroughs 127). Burroughs also emphasizes Terkoz's susceptibility to violence by "his claim to physical supremacy over the few bull apes who had dared resent his savage bullying" (125), by his "brutish nature" (Burroughs 211), which he vents on the older and weaker apes or other "weak things" (Burroughs 212), and by his "bloody battle" (Burroughs 133) with Tarzan, which he eventually lost because of his lack of reason. Terkoz, too, has a "history" or "record" of gender-related abuse directed toward female apes in the tribe. In the chapter titled "Man's Reason," he is found by the tribe and Tarzan

> holding an old female by the hair and beating her unmercifully with his great hands. As Tarzan approached he raised his hand aloft for Terkoz to desist, for the female was not his, but belonged to a poor old ape whose fighting days were long over, and who, therefore, could not protect his family. Terkoz knew that it was against the laws of his kind to strike this woman of another, but being a bully, he had taken advantage of the weakness of the female's husband to chastise her because she had refused to give up to him a tender young rodent she had captured. (Burroughs 126)

[10] Terkoz became the king of the tribe after Tarzan left.

This incident foreshadows what will occur in the chapter titled "The Call of the Primitive." In this chapter, Burroughs endows Terkoz with a "spark" of reason, helping him realize that "the tribe had kept his women. He must find others to replace them. This hairless white ape [Jane Porter] would be the first of his new household" (Burroughs 212), and thus transforms him into the black-ape rapist. It is important to note that Terkoz does not take Esmeralda, Jane's black maid, who is with her at the moment of abduction, but Jane, a white Southern girl from Baltimore, Maryland, which further reinforces the idea of the black rapist myth.

What follows is one of the most affective scenes in the novel. Jane is taken into the jungle to "be his [Terkoz's] wife" (Burroughs 267), a destiny so horrible that it "may be better that the poor lady were never found" (Burroughs 220). A sexualized conflict ensues, as Jane –

> her lithe, young form flattened against the trunk of a great tree, her hands tight pressed against her rising and falling bosom, and her eyes wide with mingled horror, fascination, fear, and admiration—watched the primordial ape battle with the primeval man for possession of a woman—for her. (Burroughs 216)

Finally, Tarzan's "long knife drank deep a dozen times of Terkoz' heart's blood, and the great carcass rolled lifeless upon the ground" (Burroughs 217).

In Tarzan and Terkoz's fight, "pure animal strength is matched against animal training combined with a primitive human technology – and in this re-staging of an evolutionary rivalry between two species, the superior human wins" (Richter 84). Following Terkoz's demise as the black-ape rapist, the temporary heterosexual bond based on desire, primeval urges, and the need for survival forms between Tarzan and Jane: "[He] did what no red-blooded man needs lessons in doing. He took his woman in his arms and smothered her upturned, panting lips with kisses" (Burroughs 217). This is the point when Burroughs places Tarzan in Terkoz's rapist position as Tarzan faces "a problem the like of which he had never encountered" (Burroughs 227) – whether to rape Jane himself or not as he "knew why the ape had not killed her" (Burroughs 227). Tarzan, however, feels that he "must meet it as a man and not as an ape" (Burroughs 227). By comparing "his intentions with those of Terkoz" (Burroughs 227), Tarzan asks himself the following: "True, it was the order of the jungle for the male to

take his mate by force; but could Tarzan be guided by the laws of the beasts? Was not Tarzan a Man? But what did men do? He was puzzled; for he did not know" (Burroughs 227) thus rejecting the lesser forms of reasoning and masculinity. Tarzan's transition from the laws of nature to the laws of humans and his subsequent rejection of the role of the white-ape rapist occur in three stages: "by comparing his own intentions with those of Terkoz; by observing Jane's behavior that has returned, after the first 'primeval' embrace, to the reserve of the modern American girl; and finally, by remembering what his father's books taught him about men and women" (Richter 84–85).

"*Tarzan*'s sensationally gendered [and racialized] conjunction of eroticism and violence" (Pettegrew 79) in the above-described scenes adapts and reenacts one of the most poignant racist myths – that of the black rapist – thus offering the (1914) readers chills and thrills as well as the action-and-romance-packed plot. Burroughs' adaptation of this myth into the narrative space of *Tarzan of the Apes* can be regarded as "a reflection of his temperament and his time" (Early 525) – his enormous pride in his Virginian cavalier ancestry and his Anglo-Saxon blood (Early 525) – as well as the ideology of social Darwinism, racial segregation in the United States, and outbreaks of national racial violence caused by the victories of Jack Johnson, the first black heavyweight champion of the world (Early 525). By creating the white lord of the apes, who is able not only to defeat apes and Africans but also to protect Jane, a Southern girl from Baltimore, Maryland, whose "sexual allure of white women is universal and trans-species" (Early 526), from animal and lesser kinds of human rapists, Burroughs thus voices "both the arrogance and the insecurity of white masculinity of his time" (Early 526).

## The "Terkoz" Scene in the 1918–2016 Film Adaptations of *Tarzan of the Apes*

The 1918–2016, silent and sound, B/W and color, motion and animated, American and European, film adaptations of *Tarzan of the Apes* approach the black-ape rapist scene in a variety of ways. The first film adaptation, which is the only one to carry the same title as the novel – *Tarzan of the Apes*, is a 1918 American silent B/W film directed by Scott Sidney starring Elmo Lincoln as Tarzan and Enid Markey as Jane Porter. Being the most faithful to the novel of all the film adaptations, the 1918 film rejects the black-ape rapist scene and features the black rapist myth in its original form: instead of being abducted by Terkoz, Jane

is taken by a black African warrior and saved by Tarzan, who either kills or incapacitates the potential rapist (this is left unclear in the film). Released just three years after D.W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation*, which is D.W. Griffith's and Thomas Dixon's collaborative effort as *The Birth of a Nation* is mostly based on Dixon's *Leopard's Spots* and *The Clansman*, this first film adaptation also employs "Dixon's *primal scene*: black masculinity violates white womanhood; white manhood revenges itself upon the black body" (Romine 126; emphasis Romine's). Like *The Birth of a Nation*, *Tarzan of the Apes* also hyperbolizes the physical aspects of the black male body as the black African warrior is stripped to the waist to emphasize his great size, vitality, and strength. The fixation with the physical is used to convince spectators that it is "the 'ugliness' of the Negro [as well as his desire for the white woman] that . . . [are] to be feared" (Slide 145). Such a stridently hostile depiction of the black male body was commonplace in the early twentieth century American society, fiction, and film as it was axiomatic that "all races and peoples should be measured against a single criterion of development, or 'civilization,' and that western Europeans and Anglo-Americans stood at the apex of civilization" (Brundage 30). Scott Sidney's use of the original black rapist myth is also the result of an American obsession with manhood, bound up with notions of class and race difference, at the turn of the century and in the first decades of the twentieth century, the obsession that testified to "collective anxiety over manhood, from individual concerns over one's own masculinity to national concerns over the nation's manliness, [and that] dominated Americans' perceptions of their place and power within society and the world" (Gillespie and Hall 7–8). Not only does the film adaptation place the black African warrior in the social and cultural context of the black rapist myth but it also places Jane Porter in the same context. Jane Porter's reaction to her attacker is also culturally and socially conditioned and appropriate for the situation she finds herself in: she does not look at her attacker and when she eventually lifts her eyes to look at him, she immediately faints in terror. By denying herself the right to look at her attacker, Jane confirms both his status as a sexual predator and her sexual purity. Yet, Jane's look, no matter how quick it was, at the black African warrior, who is in her vision transformed into a black rapist monster,

> acknowledges her sameness to the monster in that both are similar in their freakishness. This is important to the extent that if women become linked to the black monster, as is the case in *The Birth of a Nation* [and *Tarzan of the Apes*], the fear that they provoke (castration anxiety, as posed by wom-

> en, and the castration anxiety as posed by blacks) and the threat that they provide to white manhood is rendered even more visible. (Regester 167)

This first adaptation also introduces Jane's black maid Esmeralda,[11] who is absent from all other film adaptations, in the same way as she is presented in the novel: hysterical, swooning, and not tempting enough to be abducted as the white woman is the "goddess" to be idolized and admired. Esmeralda's depiction mirrors the view on African American women in Thomas Dixon's fiction, and by extension in most popular fiction novels of the day, as they "are presented as comic buffoons" (Lyerly 95).

The second adaptation of *Tarzan of the Apes* appeared in 1932 as *Tarzan the Ape Man*. This American sound B/W film was directed by W.S. Van Dyke and starred Johnny Weissmuller as Tarzan and Maureen O'Sullivan as Jane Porter. In this adaptation, loosely based on the original, the Terkoz scene is absent; yet, Tarzan adopts some behavior traits of Terkoz as he is barely articulate, abducts Jane, and treats her in an aggressive and violent way. Toward the end of the film, Van Dyke introduces a scene that in part mirrors Burroughs' black-ape rapist myth: Jane and her company are captured by a tribe of violent pygmies and delivered to a huge, King Kong-like, black ape to entertain him. While her father dies in attempts to fight the ape, Jane is, judging by the ape's movements and facial expressions, there to entertain him in another way. Luckily, Tarzan arrives on time to save her and kill the beast.[12] Even though this adaptation does not feature the black African warrior as a potential rapist, the similarities between the two adaptations are undeniable as both films share the same social and cultural context – the Jim Crow era. The second adaptation mostly repeats the scenario already seen in the first adaptation: it (1) positions a white woman as a victim, (2) constructs a monster embodied in the image of the King Kong-like black ape, and (3) creates negative feelings among black and white spectators. The very fact that the monstrosity of the black ape is comparable to that of King Kong turns the black ape, according to Harvey Roy Greenberg,

[11] The spectator has an impression that Esmeralda is in fact a white woman wearing blackface.

[12] The third film adaptation is *Tarzan, the Ape Man* (1959). The film could not be analysed as it was impossible to find it on DVD. According to the reviews, it is considered a "mess" (Tibbetts and Welsh 439) – a "tepid remake of MGM's 1932 Weissmuller vehicle," borrowing "large chunks from the original, including tree-swinging stunts and animal fights" (Tibbetts and Welsh 439). It might be assumed that this adaptation repeats the scenario present in the first two adaptations as it was made at the end of the Jim Crow era when the fear of the racial and sexual Other was at its peak.

into "'the epitome of the white man's day dream of the brute black, the heartless, mindless foreigner, feasting on violence and rapine'" and "'the degraded repository of the white man's forbidden impulses'" (qtd. in Regester 171–72). Like the first adaptation, this adaptation also idolizes Jane as the embodiment of white woman's sexual purity because she cannot look at her attacker and faints in terror. It is also interesting to note that the film was released amidst the Great Depression and immediately after the Harlem Renaissance, when the rise of the NAACP and increased job-competition were all making race issues tense again. This aspect of racial tension is perhaps discernable in the fact that all the roles, including the African American ones, are starred by whites (even the pygmies are starred by white little people wearing blackface).

*Tarzan, the Ape Man* is another American (sound and color)film adaptation of Burroughs' novel. It was released in 1981 and directed by John Derek starring Miles O'Keeffe as Tarzan and Bo Derek as Jane Parker.[13] This film adaptation adopts the 1932 motif of Tarzan abducting Jane; yet, it modifies it by the introduction of an almost instant emotional and sexual tension between the protagonists. The original "Terkoz" scene is not included; yet, there is a modification of the black rapist myth similar to the scene depicted in the 1918 film adaptation. Jane is abducted by a local African tribe and is to be raped (in a tribal kind of marriage) by their leader. The race of the tribe leader is ambiguous as it is not quite clear whether he is a black, a mulatto, or a white of a lower class worshipped by the natives. As in the previous film adaptations, Tarzan saves the day by killing the villain and freeing Jane (her father, unfortunately, dies in the attempts to protect her). Filmed at the beginning of the 1980s, when the feminist movement grew in power and strength, this film adaptation mostly focuses on Jane and her perspective on the events occurring around her,[14] thus almost completely erasing the racialized and sexualized context of the Jim Crow era Tarzan adaptations. Unlike the cinematic Janes in the previous adaptations, the 1981 Jane resists the scenario enacted in them – up to a point. She is again a victimized white woman; yet, she is not afraid to look at her attacker, is aware of everything going on around her, and does not remain silenced and voiceless as the possible rape scene is visualized through her eyes and words. Jane's "failure" to adopt a typical female victim's vision might be attributed to the socio-cultural currents of the 1980s, one of them being the rise of the feminist movement.

[13] In this film adaptation, Jane Porter is renamed to Jane Parker.

[14] Throughout the film, Tarzan is muted.

Similarly, the ambiguity of the rapist race in the film – he might be of any race and class – testifies to the changes in the perception of who or what the victimizer in rape cases could be – not just the demonized and bestial racial/ethnic Other but the familiar domestic one.

The first non-American (sound and color) film adaptation of *Tarzan of the Apes – Greystoke: The Legend of Tarzan, Lord of the Apes* – was released in United Kingdom in 1984 and directed by Hugh Hudson. Christopher Lambert stars as Tarzan, and Andie MacDowell as Jane Porter. This is the only film adaptation that does not incorporate any kind of the "Terkoz" scene as Tarzan and Jane's first meeting does not occur in the African jungle, but at his grandfather's country estate. Jane is his grandfather's ward who, as the plot unfolds, falls in love with Tarzan and rejects the marriage proposal of another man. The absence of the "Terkoz" scene in this film adaptation might be explained by the film's radical departure from Burroughs' original, especially in the second part where the "Terkoz" scene should have taken place, as well as by the film's focus on Tarzan's development in terms of behavioral psychology and disability studies.

In 1999, the first animated (sound and color) film adaptation of *Tarzan of the Apes* was released. Titled *Tarzan*, it was directed by Kevin Lima and Chris Buck, and featured the voices of Tony Goldwyn as Tarzan and Minnie Driver as Jane Porter. This adaptation retains the general idea of the ape's aggressive attack on Jane and her being saved by Tarzan (after a lot of swinging and many dangerous lifts and turns); yet, it changes the type and number of attackers (instead of a single anthropoid, there is a horde of baboons), thus rejecting the racial and sexual background of the original scene. In addition, there is the moment in the middle of the film when the spectator gets the impression that the original "Terkoz" scene might be reenacted as Tarzan clashes with Kerchak, the tribe leader, over Jane and her company. The reason for this conflict, however, is not to be looked for in the sexualized and racialized context of the black rapist myth but in Tarzan's need to protect his own kind from the aggressive and animalistic nature of the ape tribe leader, thus making the themes of survival and noble savage, which are at the heart of Burroughs's novel, central to the film adaptation as well. The film's return to the original premises of Burroughs' novel, yet without its racialized and sexualized context, might be ascribed to the film's G rating and its targeted audience – children, as well as to the disinterest in the revival of the ghosts of the Jim Crow era.

Another animated (sound and color) film adaptation of Burroughs' first novel was released in 2013 in Russia and in early 2014 in other countries. *Tarzan* (or *Tarzan 3D*) is an English-language German-produced 3D computer-animated film directed by Reinhard Klooss starring the voices of Kellan Lutz as Tarzan and Spencer Locke as Jane Porter. This animated film adaptation repeats, more or less, the pattern seen in the first animated version of *Tarzan of the Apes* – the general idea of hostile animals' attack on Jane (birds, snake, and alligator) and Tarzan as a savior as well as the vague reenactment of the original Terkoz scene through Tarzan's conflict with Tublat, a tyrannical ape, who interrupts Tarzan and Jane's reunion and whom Tarzan defeats in the combat but spares his life. The repetition of both scenes in *Tarzan 3D* lacks, however, the power and the message of the first animated adaptation.

The last (sound and color) film adaptation of *Tarzan of the Apes* is *The Legend of Tarzan* released in 2016 in the United States. Directed by David Yates, this most contemporary film adaptation stars Alexander Skarsgård as Tarzan and Margot Robbie as Jane Porter, and features Burroughs' first novel as a subplot. As in most *Tarzan of the Apes* adaptations, Tarzan and Jane's first meeting scene takes place in the jungle where he, in the manner of the original "Terkoz" scene, yet without the original racial and sexual undertones, shields her from the vicious mangani attack thus saving her life. The film, however, modifies the outcome of the attack as Tarzan gets badly injured and is in need of serious care that Jane provides and thus creates the opportunity for them to fall in love. As such, the "Terkoz" scene, which is presented in a flashback, operates as one of the essential narrative elements of the romance plot – the meeting between heroine and hero (Regis 30) – and serves to further the romantic subplot of the film.

## Conclusion

In the end, there is only a hope that this paper, which attempted to give an insight into the historically (de)constructed black rapist myth and its literary construction in the character of Terkoz, has been successful enough to explain the complex and, at the moments, violent development of Burroughs' black rapist stereotype. The analysis set forth in the previous chapters was based on the assumption that the construction of black masculinity in the American South was a process mainly influenced by the concept of whiteness as a property ideology, which invented the black rapist myth to determine race, class, and gender roles of Southern black people. Following this assumption, the first step in the

investigation of the black rapist stereotype was the itemization of the salient features of Southern cultural, social, racial, and class discourses that produced the black rapist myth. It was pointed out that the black rapist myth provided the basis for (1) racial control justified by the fantasized belief that the desire to rape white women represented black men's wish to overthrow the Southern white supremacist society, (2) the growing white anxiety about the prospect of sharing social privileges between whites and blacks, and (3) the white fear of the black Other, which was driven by impetus to forbid and/or punish any thought, or (un)conscious desire, to violate the taboo against miscegenation. The main section of the paper presented the attempt at discussing how Edgar Rice Burroughs and the film adaptations that followed the publication of his *Tarzan of the Apes* approached the black (ape) rapist stereotype. The first two film adaptations – *Tarzan of the Apes* (1918) and *Tarzan the Ape Man* (1932) – are the products of the Jim Crow era as they stick to the well-known paradigm of a victimized white woman and a monstrous sexual predator presented by either a black man or a black-haired ape. The next two film adaptations – *Tarzan, the Ape Man* (1981) and *Greystoke: The Legend of Tarzan, Lord of the Apes* (1984) – mutate the original "Terkoz" scene by either not including it in the plot (the 1984 adaptation) or by erasing its racial aspect as the sexual predator is of ambiguous race and class, thus conveying the message that the rape is a crime not bound by race or class (the 1981 adaptation). Through its portrayal of Jane Parker, the 1981 adaptation also introduces the idea of female empowerment attributable to the rise of the feminist movement in the 1980s. The animated adaptations of Burroughs' novel – *Tarzan* (1999) and *Tarzan 3D* (2013/2014) – reject the racialized and sexualized context of the original "Terkoz" scene and present it, with more (the 1999 adaptation) or less (the 2013/2014 adaptation) success, as a part of the survival and noble savage theme. The last Tarzan adaptation – *The Legend of Tarzan* (2016) – also avoids the racialized and sexualized implications of Burroughs' "Terkoz" scene by using it just as one of the essential narrative elements of the romance plot in the film. By focusing on the original "Terkoz" scene and its 1918-2016 film adaptations, the paper wanted to show at least two things: (1) that different performances of the black (ape) rapist myth – the original, depicting the black rapist stereotype in its historically and culturally determined context, and others, reflecting the dominant social and cultural tendencies of the time in which they were filmed – set the scene for the articulation of the black masculinity either in a violent or racially neutral way, and (2) that the racist fantasies about the black male rapist and the brutality and criminality of black

men inscribed in Burroughs' narrative and mutated in its film adaptations have persisted in the United States for more than a century and are very much alive today, as evidenced by the emergence of "the New Jim Crow."[15]

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[15] For a more detailed discussion of the "New Jim Crow," see *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (2010) by Michelle Alexander.

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# ADAPTACIJA ADAPTACIJE: MIT O AFROAMERIČKOM SILOVATELJU U *TARZANU ČOVJEKU MAJMUNU* EDGARA RICEA BURROUGHSA I FILMSKIM ADAPTACIJAMA ROMANA

## Sažetak

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U umjetnosti ili prirodnim znanostima, adaptacija je uvijek određena verzija originala. U književnosti, adaptacija se prvo pojavljuje kada se priče iz stvarnog života fikcionaliziraju; te fikcionalizirane priče često su po drugi put tehnološki adaptirane kao kazališne predstave ili filmovi. Cilj je ovoga rada analizirati dvostruku adaptaciju: kako je mit o afroameričkom silovatelju kao društvena i kulturna adaptacija južnjačkih Jim Crow zakona adaptiran u Burroughsovom prikazu Terkoza u popularnom pustolovnom romanu *Tarzan čovjek majmun* (1914.) te ponovno u nijemim i zvučnim, crno-bijelim i u boji, igranim i animiranim, američkim i europskim adaptacijama romana snimljenima između 1918. i 2016.

**Ključne riječi:** mit o afroameričkom silovatelju, bjelačka rasna tjeskoba, Edgar Rice Burroughs, *Tarzan čovjek majmun*, popularna književnost, adaptacija