

The most iconic image of Tarzan is of a white man “flying” from tree to tree through a jungle canopy, an image that’s been imitated so many times as to strip away much of the novelty that originally made it worth imitating. And because this familiarity makes it easy to forget all that the image originally implied and presumed, I want to start with the racial narratives that Edgar Rice Burroughs crystallized in sending his white-skinned *Übermensch* soaring above Africa. The spectacle of Tarzan surveying, commanding, and transcending everything below him not only naturalizes the white race’s domination of Africa but renders it precisely as intuitive and obvious as man “rising above” nature itself.

White domination is a starting point, however, not a conclusion. In the original *Tarzan of the Apes* (1912), the character’s name literally means “white-skin,” and he is only legible as a character through the social Darwinist understanding of race and gender that he both presumes and performs: on the one hand, a broad fear of civilization’s emasculating effect on white men, and on the other, the fantasy of white omnipotence that industrial and technological modernity allowed white men to play out in colonial spaces like Africa.<sup>1</sup> Yet if Tarzan confirms or adheres to a particular set of assumptions about race, gender, and cultural hierarchy that obtained in 1912, framing Tarzan as representative of that historical moment prevents us from getting much purchase on the problem of how the character and image have endured even as those cultural points of reference have been transformed.

I will approach Tarzan, then, by emphasizing the trajectory of his

development and adaptation over the past century. As an icon and a franchise, Tarzan has gone through some very basic and fundamental transformations: first, in the Johnny Weissmuller films of the early 1930s and then, more elusively, through the constellation of generic conventions that we find in his progeny, the long line of flying super-strong crime fighters of mysterious birth origins such as Superman, Batman, and Spiderman.<sup>2</sup> After all, Burroughs's most famous creation could be considered the first superhero, or at least the first generically super-strong flying crime fighter of mysterious birth origins, and certainly the first to make the power of flight the hero's most iconic attribute.<sup>3</sup> Yet as this set of attributes has become a central convention of the superhero genre, we tend to forget both how novel the idea of a man who could "fly" originally was in the early 1900s and how tied that image was to racial narratives of (white) man's transcendence of the merely (African) animal and the earthbound. These figures, as well as the many postmodern superheroes who, in turn, parody and ironically retool those conventions, speak to the flexibility of the original narrative, the extent to which it could evolve and adapt to the changing cultural context of the twentieth century. Indeed, the fact that the language of the novels had to be comprehensively—if superficially—updated in the 1960s nicely frames the larger interpretive problem posed by Tarzan's continuing popularity: how does a character so inseparable from assumptions about race and gender in 1912 change or remain the same after those assumptions have been (at least officially) disavowed?<sup>4</sup>

Tarzan is most recognizably and iconically himself when he is "flying" through the jungle canopy, and however much the character might be airbrushed, updated, and reimagined, a particular fantasy of flight endures as the central crux of his appeal. We should ask, then, what does it mean to fly? In one sense, of course, Tarzan does not fly at all. Unlike Superman, he is still bound to the earth by gravity, which he only overcomes by lifting himself and leaping through the trees, hurtling through the air with (superhuman) strength and agility. But, of course, an airplane is also bound to the earth by gravity. It merely stays aloft by wings that convert forward propulsion into lift. In other words, the intuitiveness of the distinction between Tarzan's form of flight and that of an airplane might be more apparent than real—an airplane only *seems* to move effortlessly through empty space because the means by which it stays aloft is not visually apparent; the lift pro-

vided by the air pressure on the underside of an airplane's wing is both counterintuitive and invisible. So on what basis would Tarzan's ability to lift-and-hurtle himself through the trees be considered a fundamentally different form of locomotion from an airplane's wing converting the forward momentum provided by a propeller or jets into lift?

The assumptions behind that question, I would suggest, are more important and interesting than the question itself, since they define what is, at basis, a matter of perspective and genre. If Tarzan flies like Superman, for example—whose ability to move through the air is utterly unexplainable and unexplained—then flight is simply fantasy, a license to do what is otherwise not possible.<sup>5</sup> Conversely, if he flies like Batman or Spiderman—who lift-and-hurtle by means of merely technological gadgets and superhuman agility—then the comprehensibility of such “flight” indexes its adherence to established rules and conventions, making it seem less like flight at all. Spiderman or Batman might as well be flying as they soar above their respective cities, but because it is no longer a fantasy to do so, it signifies as a different kind of flight. To underscore the point, if *this* kind of aerial mobility is not flight, then we have isolated a definition of the concept derived from a particular kind of fantasy: whether or not Tarzan “flies” depends on the perspective we adopt toward the question itself. Is flight essentially fantastical—as Superman is and as an airplane *appears* to be—or might (as the lyric goes) a “daring young man on the flying trapeze,” be said to “fly through the air with the greatest of ease”?<sup>6</sup> Is flight an ability defined by its extraordinary impossibility or is it something as simple as possessing the daring to hang and leap from a rope, trapeze, or vine?

This question has no answer, but when Burroughs first published “Tarzan” in *All-Story* in 1912, it was being asked with a striking new salience.<sup>7</sup> *Tarzan of the Apes* was written and read during the first wave of “airmindedness,” a cultural moment in which the miracle of science had suddenly made real the hitherto impossible dream of human flight.<sup>8</sup> Like Tarzan himself, the airplane blurred the distinction between fantasy and science: especially in the early years of aviation, the mechanics of flight were so counterintuitive that powered flight was demonstrated to be real long before it was understood by the general public. This was particularly true for scientists, ironically. Since there had been a consensus that powered air flight was impossible, the first aeronautic pioneers were practical engineers whose studied

ignorance of scientific “fact” was precisely what enabled them to proceed as if powered flight were possible (and to make it so). And like establishment scientists, the press and the mass public were extraordinarily slow to acknowledge that powered flight was a reality. The Wright brothers, for instance, would spend the first half decade after the Kitty Hawk flight mostly failing to interest anyone in their invention. The earliest powered flights were not very impressive, so their claim to have mastered the skies was initially lost among the many frauds and cranks regularly exposed as such by respectable, reasonable men of science.

When this changed, of course, it would change fast, and the term “airmindedness” would be coined to describe the incredible outpouring of enthusiasm with which mass populations took to the idea once it was demonstrated. Over a million New Yorkers saw Wilbur Wright fly over Manhattan and around the Statue of Liberty in 1909, and soon a variety of self-taught “birdmen” (and “birdwomen”) were busily demonstrating the new invention before rapturous crowds.<sup>9</sup> But flying didn’t cease to be a fantasy. Such demonstrations only underscored the miraculous nature of flight, which Americans described by borrowing terminology from religion: the “moment of miracle” was persistently a function of “His gift of wings” or “an instrument in the hands of God,” while the word “heaven” was frequently used to cement the link between the merely earthly heavens and the heavenly land to which man hoped by grace to ascend.<sup>10</sup> And however quickly scientific theorists worked to catch up, early scientific literature on powered flight was itself essentially a genre of fantasy, since a scientific understanding of the principles, limitations, and capabilities of the new invention would have to wait until military uses of the airplane—especially during World War I—provided sufficient data on its application. Prewar aeronautics, by contrast, was a patchwork of guesses and speculation.<sup>11</sup>

Burroughs wrote the first *Tarzan of the Apes* in this cultural moment, before popular understanding of flight had caught up with reality. Yet the original novel is emphatically uninterested in flight as fantasy. Or, rather, Tarzan’s movement through the treetops is miraculous only and specifically to those *beneath* him: the Africans and apes who see him as an incomprehensible “forest god.” By contrast, Burroughs makes it quite clear to his readers that Tarzan moves through the jungle canopy not by a miracle but by a comprehensible (if superhuman) ability to leap and climb:

From early infancy he had used his hands to swing from branch to branch *after the manner of his giant mother*, and as he grew older he spent hour upon hour daily speeding through the tree tops with his brothers and sisters. He could *spring* twenty feet across space at the dizzy heights of the forest top, and *grasp* with unerring precision, and without apparent jar, a limb waving wildly in the path of an approaching tornado. He could *drop* twenty feet at a stretch from limb to limb in rapid descent to the ground, or *he could gain the utmost pinnacle of the loftiest tropical giant with the ease and swiftness of a squirrel*. (TA, 57, my emphasis)

Since his ability to fly is no more than what his physique allows him to do, the separation between Tarzan and those below him is epistemology inscribed in space: he can comprehend them because he flies above them, though they cannot comprehend him because they are earthbound. In other words, the novel refracts the distinction between science and fantasy onto its social landscape. While it is a judgment on those below him that they can only explain his aerial mobility as divinity, the fact that *we* understand him allows us to share his epistemological height.

This is not to deny that the novel sometimes depicts Tarzan's flight in strikingly unrealistic ways. In the novel's climax, for example, Tarzan rescues Jane from a forest fire in northern Wisconsin by "swinging with the speed of a squirrel" through "the waving foliage of the forest," apparently scooping her up and carrying her to safety (TA, 381). This scene is so physically implausible that it has never been filmed. After all, because Tarzan is not the size of a squirrel, his strength or agility isn't even relevant—without the thick weave of creepers and vines that make it possible for human-sized primates to swing through the treetops in much denser equatorial canopy, the foliage of even a turn-of-the-century upper midwestern forest would be spectacularly inadequate to sustaining his weight. The idea that Tarzan could swing through a deciduous forest as if he were in Africa is more than simply unlikely; it is pure fantasy.

In part, a scene like this one only testifies to Burroughs's occasional amateurishness. And moments of inconsistency, inaccuracy, or departures from the plausible like this one are simply the exceptions that prove the rule, since here—as elsewhere—his failure to imagine Tarzan's flight in nonfantastical terms is simply that, a failure. Burroughs tried to minimize and correct such failures. When it was

pointed out to him in reviews, for example, that he had made a mistake in writing about tigers in Africa, he corrected the mistake in later editions.<sup>12</sup>

At the same time, Jane's reaction to the bizarre spectacle of a flying jungle-man in Wisconsin also helps clarify the stakes in the comprehensibility of Tarzan's flight. As Tarzan bears her out of danger, Jane is curiously resistant to the experience and frames it as an impossible African fantasy: "[I]t seemed to Jane that she was living over in a dream the experience that had been hers in that far African jungle" (*TA*, 381). But the fantasy that had delighted her in Africa becomes a problem in Wisconsin: there, she had accepted his amorous advances but here she cannot. The first novel ends not with the happy ending we have come to expect, but with a thwarted love plot: instead of marrying Tarzan, Jane accepts the suit of marriage of Tarzan's more conventional cousin, William Cecil Clayton.

Critics tend to place Jane's choice in the context of the novels that would follow. Since we "know" that Jane and Tarzan will eventually marry in Burroughs's 1915 sequel, *The Return of Tarzan*, Jane's choice is not usually given much significance.<sup>13</sup> But when the first novel is read in isolation—as it was before its popularity made a sequel possible—Jane's rejection of the jungle fantasy that Tarzan's flight represents to her is centrally important: instead of reveling in fantasy, the novel—through Jane—regulates and excludes it. The fantasy he represents is African and has to *stay* in Africa.

The first half of *Tarzan of the Apes* sets the stage for this distinction by telling the story of Tarzan's birth and upbringing. After his parents are shipwrecked in Africa, Tarzan is born just in time for apes to kill his parents and then adopt and raise him in ignorance of his origin. This section of the novel is essentially a peculiar bildungsroman: Tarzan grows up and reaches maturity not by socializing himself into the Ape or African communities he encounters, but by understanding himself to be essentially different from them. The arrival of a party of Americans—Jane Porter, her black servant Esmeralda, and three men (her father, a friend, and Tarzan's own cousin)—inaugurates the second half of the novel, in which Tarzan and the Americans negotiate Tarzan's entrance into white society by investigating his origins. The love plot hinges on the answer: since ignorance of Tarzan's origin is an unsurpassable obstacle, Tarzan and Jane cannot marry until his genealogy has been unraveled. And so the novel ends with Jane and Tarzan apart:

while he had risen above the Africans in Africa, the fantasy of flying he represents in Wisconsin is illegible, and therefore unacceptable. Just as Jane flags being “carried away” by love as a dream that happens “in that far African jungle,” Tarzan’s suit of marriage represents the same impossible fantasy. After asking herself if she could “love where she feared,” she decides she cannot: although “she realized the spell that had been upon her in the depths of that far-off jungle . . . there was no spell of enchantment now in prosaic Wisconsin” (*TA*, 397). Impossible fantasies can happen in Africa, in other words, but they do not happen in the midwest. Following her idyll in the jungle with a wild and savage man, Jane returns to civilization to accept the marriage proposal of a more conventional suitor, declining to trade the known quantity of an English lord for the fantasy represented by her jungle paramour. Even when Tarzan returns to press his own suit, she can only ask question upon unanswerable question, demanding:

“What did she know of this strange creature at her side? What did he know of himself? Who was he? Who, his parents?

Why, his very name echoed his mysterious origin and his savage life.

He had no name. Could she be happy with this jungle waif? Could she find anything in common with a husband whose life had been spent in the tree tops of an African wilderness? . . .

Could he ever *rise* to her social sphere? Could she bear to think of *sinking* to his?” (*TA*, 385, my emphasis)

The language of “rising” and “sinking” is ironic: Tarzan has just literally lifted Jane out of certain death in a forest conflagration. And in the sequel, she will learn that Tarzan is rightfully an English lord—when Clayton fails to protect her from the jungle, thereby losing her respect, Tarzan will (again) providentially rescue her and she will (again) regard his intercession as a dream.<sup>14</sup> This time, she will learn that it is no dream. Instead, she will see “the marvelous fineness of character of this wondrous man, who, though raised by brutes and among brutes, had the true chivalry and tenderness which only associates with the refinements of the highest civilization” (*TA*, 358).

But while Jane chooses to marry an earthbound man rather than the impossible flying man of her dreams in the first novel, the later novels only resolve the problem by removing Tarzan’s fantasy elements, essentially de-Africanizing him. The man Jane eventually mar-



ries, after all, is no longer the subverbal ape man who first swept her off her feet, but a hypercivilized Englishman who speaks French and behaves like a gentleman. Indeed, he becomes a fit mate for Jane by *leaving* Africa and joining Euro-American society: he goes from living in the West African jungle to splitting his time between an English manor and a settler estate in East Africa. And instead of flying through the treetops like an ape, he flies in an airplane like a man.<sup>15</sup>

Modern readers of the original Tarzan novels are often surprised by Burroughs's insistence on repressing the fantasy element that has become so central to the character's appeal: that Tarzan's ability to move through the treetops like an ape or squirrel is both emphatically *not* a form of flight (in the novels, the word is only used to describe "flight" away from danger), and that his role as an attractive jungle fantasy is not what attracts Jane to him but what she *fears* in him. If we are surprised, this is almost certainly because the version of Tarzan that most of us know, whether we realize it or not, is the version of the character played by Weissmuller. The six movies Weissmuller made for MGM were not the first Tarzan films in any absolute sense—that honor would go to 1918's forgettable Elmo Lincoln vehicle—but Weissmuller's performance would both reestablish the franchise and transform it. The eighty-eight feature-length Tarzan films produced between 1918 and 1999—not to speak of the many television episodes and shorts—take that version of the character as their primary point of reference, not the one imagined by Burroughs. And while the novels glorify Jane's choice of reality over fantasy, the substance of the Weissmuller Tarzan's marriage with Maureen O'Sullivan's Jane is the retreat from rational civilized society. If the novels educate Tarzan to outgrow the jungle, the films celebrate Jane's escape from the modern world, which is to say that the central crux of the post-Weissmuller Tarzan only came into existence when filmmakers and audiences learned to forget what was originally fundamental to the narrative, the imperative to live rationally and forgo fantasy.

As they did so, the franchise reconceptualized flight: post-1930s filmmakers made Tarzan fly by forgoing realism and reembracing fantasy. Before Weissmuller's first film in 1932, the cinematic version of the character was earthbound, if only for pragmatic reasons. After all, though Burroughs could easily write that the character was "far more agile than the most practiced athlete ever becomes," the kind of



arm strength and leaping ability that would be required to emulate a chimp or orangutan onscreen actually was far beyond the abilities of the actors who played him (*TA*, 57). But in W. S. Van Dyke's *Tarzan the Ape Man*, the filmmakers solved the problem by simply ignoring it, replacing Weissmuller with an acrobat on a trapeze. This solved several problems at once. An actor would need to swing one-handed if he were to lift and carry Jane out of danger—as Weissmuller would be the first to do—but while a strong athlete might be able to lift himself with one arm, it would be impossible for him to hurl himself from tree to tree with one arm while using the other to carry Jane. At the same time, in a somewhat fantastic conceit that has since become a visual cliché, there is always a vine that happens to be pulled *to* the point from which Tarzan needs to begin to swing and *away* from the point toward which he needs to go. The films are conspicuously uninterested in examining this conceit.

It is probably no coincidence that Tarzan was made to fly in the midst of Hollywood's infatuation with the aviation picture, the long post-Lindbergh period from about 1927 to 1939 in which powered flight came to be a thoroughly normal aspect of both the modern world and its realist fantasies of itself.<sup>16</sup> Yet again, what it means to fly hinges on a distinction between fantasy and reality: precisely as Howard Hughes and other directors were painstakingly working out how to bring the reality of flight to film—how to domesticate and normalize it *as* reality—Weissmuller's Tarzan went in the opposite direction, seeking to reimagine a Tarzan whose flight was spectacularly illegible in terms of the laws of physics.

This was not the most important change in the character, of course. While the original *Tarzan of the Apes* was essentially two stories in one novel (and Tarzan's "bildungsroman" among the apes is narratively quite distinct from his romance with Jane), the Weissmuller films are as categorically unconcerned with the problem of Tarzan's origin as they are with the problem of his ability to fly through the air with the greatest of ease. There were prosaic reasons for this too: the film only came into existence because MGM had asked Van Dyke to make use of leftover African footage from the previous year's *Trader Horn* (1931), and reviving the Tarzan series proved to be a way of doing so.<sup>17</sup> Spectacle rather than story seems to be the point, in other words, because it was. The story of Tarzan's early life was excised for simi-

larly banal reasons: having only acquired the rights to the Tarzan character, MGM was legally barred from retelling the copyrighted story of his origin and growth.

Yet omitting the backstory utterly transforms the narrative, its titular hero, and the sense in which Tarzan's flight is made meaningful. Burroughs's Tarzan was, as Edward Said has put it, a "walking genealogical table," and though Burroughs spends tremendous time and energy rationalizing how Tarzan "rose" to be lord of the jungle (as well as how his white skin made this ascension both natural and inevitable), the Weissmuller films both begin with an already fully formed Tarzan and leave his genealogy conspicuously unexamined.<sup>18</sup> Burroughs tells the story of a white man's growth, development, and conquest of Africa, but the post-Weissmuller Tarzans tell and retell the story of an apparent native of the jungle defending his home against white invaders. Displacing Tarzan the instinctive imperialist, Weissmuller's Tarzan becomes a reflexively anticolonial pacifist.

The meaning of flight is a function of this change and also performs it. Burroughs derived Tarzan's superpowers from his white racial superiority and almost literally defines whiteness itself by Tarzan's power to kill African animals and people (which he does, almost invariably, from above). When Tarzan first announces his presence to the party of visiting white travelers, for example, his note reads: "This is the house of Tarzan, the killer of beasts and many black men. Do not harm the things which are Tarzan's. Tarzan watches" (*TA*, 170). By this point, the novel has established that "Tarzan" means "white-skin" in the ape language, the only language Tarzan speaks (even though he has taught himself English from his father's books, he has not yet heard or spoken it). But since Tarzan learned to read and write English independently of his ability to speak the ape language, his ape name would be the one word in that note that he could never have seen written down, since he could never have learned it from his father's books. If we are to read the scene with Burroughs's attention to detail, then the only thing Tarzan could have written is his name's literal meaning translated into English. In other words, the note's meaning to Tarzan would have been: "This is the house of White-skin, the killer of beasts and many black men. Do not harm the things which are White-skin's. White-skin watches."

In sharp contrast, Weissmuller's Tarzan is a gentle pacifist who spends most of his energy confiscating and destroying the guns of

the inevitably ill-intentioned white hunters, slave dealers, and other treasure-seeking up-to-no-goods who episodically invade his jungle home. This difference was broadly understood by foreign moviegoers, who both made the films Hollywood's most successful overseas franchise and produced a variety of imitators.<sup>19</sup> As Frantz Fanon observes, for example, audiences in Trinidad devoured Tarzan movies because they saw in Weissmuller not the figure of a white man conquering Africa but the story of white invaders being repelled by a jungle "native."<sup>20</sup>

In short, the Weissmuller films worked to forget the violent white supremacy that Burroughs had sought to reason out, not merely in Tarzan's backstory but in the narrative's fascination with the question of whether a white man in the jungle would devolve downward or ascend to natural mastery. Burroughs is interested in Tarzan's origin, after all, because his early life in the jungle—representing the absence of human socialization—allows his white heredity to become the determining variable in a careful experiment in heredity: by reading environment out of the equation, Tarzan's personality and character comes to be a pure function of racial origin. And just as Burroughs's own narrative logic rests on this kind of scientific rationality, Tarzan's own human particularity gets defined as his racialized ability to be rationally scientific. In answer to the rhetorical question of what "had raised him far above his fellows of the jungle," the novel triumphantly and unambiguously answers: "that little spark which spells the whole vast difference between man and brute—Reason" (*TA*, 153).

By "reason," Burroughs means both the ability to rise above the jungle and the faculties that enable it. For a start, the white man distinguishes himself from animals (and Africans) by his ability to observe, understand, and then apply, or take what he has seen in the past, to reapply it to present circumstances, and to thereby predict and control future events. In other words, reason is a fundamentally temporal operation: since the present consistently connects the past to the future through inductively reasonable principles, a human being's rationality is his ability to determine and apply those principles from the past to the future. Burroughs makes a specific point of noting Tarzan's scientific method, from his self-taught literacy to his learning to use a vine-woven lasso and knife. But while Burroughs is at least as interested in Tarzan's flight as were the makers of the Weissmuller Tarzan movies, he approaches the problem by rationalizing how a man

might move through the treetops by starting from the presumption of superior strength and agility, then adding to it his notion of what made human beings superior to primate ancestors: reason and the ability to control fear. Although Burroughs starts from the model of primate mobility, Tarzan's aeronautics are distinctly a function of the superior courage that allows him to "leap far into space from one tree to another," which Burroughs describes as "a perilous chance which apes seldom if ever take, unless so closely pursued by danger that there is no alternative" (*TA*, 45). Although the apes are tree-bound by their fear, Tarzan's reason allows him to manfully leap headlong into the unknown; he knows how to conquer this fear because he can predict his future safe landing. Flight, as Tarzan "flies," is a human ability, demonstrating the rational self-mastery which translates (in practice) into dominion, mastery, and transcendence of nature.

Weissmuller's Tarzan, on the other hand, just is, and just flies. He is so completely composed by the dream logic of pure image stripped of (and independent of) any kind of framing context that he seems to float above it, an intentionally willful deprivileging of conscious reason in favor of unconscious reverie. In the jungle with Weissmuller's Tarzan, there is only the present, and, as in a dream, life and death simply emerge out of nowhere: a rhino can charge from the bushes and kill—as happens to the chimpanzee Cheta in Cedric Gibbons's *Tarzan and His Mate* (1934)—or new life can simply appear, as in Richard Thorpe's *Tarzan Finds a Son!* (1939) in which Tarzan's son quite literally drops out of the sky.

Jane's conflict about whether to inhabit the scientific world she returns to (in later films, by airplane) or a fantasy life of "flight" from society is therefore the same as humanity's—whether to live in the "real" world or in a world of fantasy. In the films, then, it is significant that Jane chooses to live in Tarzan's eternal, timeless present, a jungle existence defined by the supreme absence of any principle of rationally traceable causation. If the novels are all about a necessarily overdetermined telos of human mastery of nature, the films reject this teleology in favor of a desire for a random and basically underdetermined existence.

In *Tarzan and His Mate*, for instance, Cheta not only dies for no apparent reason, but this death occasions Jane's pronouncement that "not thinking about it" is the only way we can deal with the reality of an uncontrollable, unpredictable life and death. And judging from

the evidence, her perspective seems like the right one: in the world of the movie, Africa is a place where, at literally any moment, an animal could leap out of the jungle and kill either Jane or Tarzan. In the film, therefore, Jane's decision to stay in Africa with Tarzan is also a decision to give up security in or control over the future, to forgo any hope of planning for a long life. For instead of dominating nature and humankind, Weissmuller's Tarzan offers Jane "flight" as *escape*, the opportunity to be lifted up and away from both dangerous animals and the constraints of European society. And for the Jane played by O'Sullivan, this escape is an attractive choice: Tarzan's Africa is a Garden of Eden in which time does not seem to pass and in which goals or plans are hardly comprehensible, and which is threatened largely by the Africa that various white hunters, imperialists, and men of rational science try (but are foiled by Tarzan) to construct.

The narrative structure of the films reflects this disinterest in causation; to the extent that the movies even have plots, they begin with the financial speculations of white treasure hunters from the outside—men who plan to bring back both treasure and Jane—and who have to be stopped. At the same time that Tarzan's disconnection from the outside world thwarts any attempt to rationally explain him, he maintains and reinforces his disconnection by frustrating these speculations, by refusing their effort to commodify Jane and Africa. Plot is precisely beside the point, or, rather, that plot is beside the point *is* the point: just as the films (in some ways inadvertently) depart from the constraints of narrative, Tarzan's unsocialized antimodernism also represents his and Jane's escape from the narrativized constraints and responsibilities of both human society and modern capitalism. The same men who attempt to commodify the land (capitalizing on ivory, slaves, or trophies), after all, are also the men who attempt to put Jane in clothing, narrating her back into marriage and society where she belongs. And as Tarzan frustrates them, the film's *jouissance* is in the recurring failure of those narrative speculations. To put it most simply, then, if the original character "flies" within a narrative about the natural inevitability of genealogy—and his flight signifies the violent and racialized dominance to which his whiteness compels him—the character played by Weissmuller is in amnesiac flight away from both narratives. Weissmuller's Tarzan forgets his own origin in racist genealogizing in the same act of forgetting his own genealogy as a character: while Burroughs's character is a function of racial determinism, Weiss-

muller's represents the grace of transcending the burden and guilt of a whiteness understood in such terms, terms it recodes as destructive, senseless, and fallen.

If the Weissmuller films stand Burroughs on his head, they are still a function of his original vision. They employ his terms even as they contradict the sentence he made of them: as fantasies of forgetting, they still betray the origin they seek to repress. As such, the films portray less an Edenic dream of innocence than a desire for grace after a fall. I would argue that as an attempt to forget the origin of Tarzan the character, the Weissmuller Tarzan—and the genre that grew out of his films—have worked to forget the basic and inescapable racism of the original creation.

After all, Burroughs's original novel did contain the seeds of the Weissmuller fantasy. If its narrative eventually proves that white skin will ultimately triumph over a rising tide of color, it takes a very long time to get there, lingering much more tantalizingly than it needs to over the possibility that Tarzan will choose black over white. A *Pudd'nhead Wilson*-esque fingerprint test eventually proves that Tarzan does not have an ape mother, but the penultimate line of the novel, "My mother was an Ape," remains true in a way that troubles the organic neatness of the plot's resolution: Kala might not be Tarzan's birth mother, but she is certainly a mother to him in all sorts of important (and dissonant) ways (*TA*, 410). When Burroughs rhapsodizes, for instance, on "the instinct that was as dominant in this fierce female as it had been in the breast of his tender and beautiful mother—the instinct of mother love," the sentimental antiracist vocabulary of abolition wars with the racist vocabulary of plantation sentimentality, a contradiction between the suggestion that an ape could play the starring role in the cult of true motherhood and the kind of minstrel tradition from which characters like Jane's perpetually sobbing, shrieking, wailing, and groaning maidservant Esmeralda are taken (to say nothing of the viciously racist portrayals of African natives). When Burroughs argues that "the huge, fierce brute loved this child of another race . . . and he, too, gave to the great, hairy beast all the affection that would have belonged to his fair young mother had she lived," he lays the foundation for the fantasy of racial transcendence that Weissmuller would eventually extract and take up (*TA*, 40, 64).

In this sense, what survived from Burroughs's *Tarzan of the Apes*—into both the franchise as it developed and the larger superhero genre

as a whole—was less a mystery of origins to be solved than a particular American fantasy about the power of love to help us forget the entanglements of problematic origin. *Tarzan of the Apes* tells the characteristically postbellum version of the American story, taken up in texts like the classic version of *Superman*: the effort to transcend racial divisiveness not by reweaving the fabric of U.S. social life into a single multiracial hierarchical family, but to overcome race by forgetting that it ever existed. Tarzan and Superman don't ever stop being aliens, after all, nor do they ever really come to terms with that alien birth. Instead, they simply fly away.

This desire allows us to better frame the persistence of the spectacle of Tarzan's flight, which has remained the central attribute in both images of that character and in the formation of the superhero genre. Spiderman swinging above New York City, Batman keeping Gotham under surveillance from above, and Superman floating in the clouds each, in turn, escape to their public persona of flying hero from some version of the same domestic problem as Tarzan: attachment to non-*Übermensch* parents, children, and spouses, each of whom they lift from danger at one time or another. Flight represents for these characters the same fantasy of rising above "normal" life as it does for the Weissmuller Tarzan, whether that normality be the grim poverty of a midwestern farm during the Great Depression, the grinding stress of a freelancer in a big city, or the ennui and disconnection of the idle rich. Each fantasy is a version of the wish for escape that Weissmuller's blissful bower represents to Jane (which, as *Tarzan and his Mate* most clearly illustrates, seems to be an escape from predatory men). And as Tarzan, Spiderman, Batman, and Superman each descend from the heavens and lift their helpless wards out of danger, the fantasy solution being offered doesn't argue against (or rationally contradict) the underlying problem so much as it fulfills the wish that it simply wouldn't exist at all.

Furthermore, flight in the post-Weissmuller Tarzan films represents not only an attractive fantasy of escape from Tarzan's own racial origin but, by displacing Burroughs's original use of flight to represent race, it can also be seen as a flight from that *form* of flight. In this sense, while the air-mindedness of the teens indexes a particular fantasy of heavenly transcendence, a dark side to the airplane is present both in nightmarish fantasies of flight and in Burroughs's Tarzan from the very beginning: the power to kill from above. A variety of schol-



ars have usefully placed Burroughs's Tarzan within a larger cultural desire for racial improvement, but I want to emphasize that Tarzan demonstrated his superior whiteness not only by his own abstract physical perfection (by "the soft and sinuous curves of a Greek god," as Burroughs put it) but specifically by his ability to kill and destroy (*TA*, 159).<sup>21</sup> After all, if Burroughs's Tarzan was a "forest god," it was only his white friends who saw that deity as a model of Greek perfection; to the Africans he terrorized from above, he was the natural king of Africa precisely because, by being above and unseen, he could rule them through terror. If his ability to fly is a function of his racial rationality, his climb up the social hierarchy is also, in *practice*, reducible to his ability to kill.

As Bederman puts it, Burroughs's Tarzan is a "one-man lynch mob," and every stage of his development is marked by violence against Africans.<sup>22</sup> For instance, the young Tarzan first desires clothing because it is "the insignia of the superiority of MAN over all other animals" (*TA*, 97). When he succeeds in killing Sabor the lion (for her skin), he proclaims to the apes that "Tarzan of the Apes is the greatest among you," which leads, in turn, to the climactic battle with Kerchak and Tarzan's eventual kingship of the apes (*TA*, 98, 156). These battles all mark progress toward the same simple telos: killing wild animals like Sabor provides Tarzan with material demonstrations of his superiority while killing social animals like Kerchak socially validates it. But his developmental mobility is acquired by and performed through aerial mobility, and in every case he "rises above" his competitors through his ability to kill from above.

Tarzan first gets the idea to kill Sabor, for example, while he is tormenting his ape (foster) father, Tublat, with whom he has a predictably, if underdetermined, oedipal antipathy. And while he spends his childhood "invent[ing] a thousand diabolical tricks to add to the burdens of Tublat's life," his favorite trick is a kind of play-lynching:

One day while playing thus Tarzan had thrown his rope at one of his fleeing companions, retaining the other end in his grasp. By accident the noose fell squarely about the running ape's neck, bringing him to a sudden and surprising halt. Ah, here was a new game, a fine game, thought Tarzan . . . Now, indeed, was the life of Tublat a living nightmare. In sleep, upon the march, night or day, he never knew when that quiet noose would slip about his neck and nearly choke the life out of him. (*TA*, 65)

But Tarzan's use of a lynching noose isn't merely a pleasurable means of sadistically terrorizing his African foster father; here, it first occurs to him that "[i]f he could catch his fellow apes with his long arm of many grasses, why not Sabor, the lioness?" (*TA*, 65). Although his attempt to actually lynch Sabor will fail—she is too large—he eventually succeeds because of a kind of flight: he kills her with the poison arrows he confiscates from a local African village by lynching and terrorizing them from above.

When he first discovers this tribe of human beings, after all, he is able to be unseen as he takes their measure by "hovering above [them] in the trees like some malign spirit" (*TA*, 116). This aerial surveillance quickly shows him that he need not take particular account of them: "[T]hese people were more wicked than his own apes, and as savage and cruel as Sabor, herself" (*TA*, 133). And so, as he had done with Tublat, he sets out to terrorize Africans for fun and profit, lynching them from above and then taking the fear-offerings they leave him as tribute. Tarzan takes a definite sadistic pleasure in this, but the fact that he creates an exploitative colonial economy—based on his ability to kill from above and the terror he uses this to produce—needs to be reemphasized: after leaving the village "filled with terror at this new manifestation of the presence of some unseen and unearthly evil power which lurked in the forest about their village," the Africans come to the conclusion that "as long as they supplied him with arrows and food he would not harm them" (*TA*, 137, 164). They are right. And until Jane's arrival changes the course of the novel, Tarzan has settled into the routine of the terror-based political economy his flight makes possible.

What the post-Weissmuller Tarzan has "forgotten," in other words, is Tarzan's use of flight to make himself a terror-god, his ability to make flight "a miracle well aimed to work upon [the Africans'] superstitious fears" (*TA*, 137). In this sense, while critical accounts of *Tarzan of the Apes* tend to treat Burroughs's racism as a matter of racial comparison—the (considerable) extent to which Tarzan's physical and intellectual perfection are theoretically contrasted with the animalistic savagery and physical defects of the apes and Africans—the novel also systematically imagines how airpower might be used to terrorize, overawe, and subjugate primitive societies as a way of extracting wealth and resources. And it is at least an evocative coincidence that the early history of aeronautics has the same dark side, and that Burroughs began writing his first Tarzan novel only a month after the

first bomb was dropped from a powered airplane onto a colonial native uprising, Italian Lieutenant Cavotti's raid on the oases of Tagiura and Ain Zara outside of Tripoli, Libya.

It was, however, no coincidence that the first use of aerial bombardment was white men bombing Africans; pre-World War I aerial bombardment was exclusively and explicitly a system of white on black colonial governance and was understood to be such from the very start. As Sven Lindqvist exhaustively demonstrates, for example, while a variety of technologies—including poison gas, dum dum bullets, and aerial bombardment—were, from their invention, judged to be too fearful to use on civilized populations (especially civilian populations), they *were* used, consistently and with a scientific interest in the results, on “noncivilized” peoples to whom that rule did not apply. These tactics were even occasionally inscribed into official policy: the Royal Air Force (RAF) headquarters informed pilots in India that international law against the bombing of civilians did not apply “against savage tribes who do not conform to codes of civilized behavior,” a distinction that legitimized the practice, if not always the theory, of bombing colonial civilians.<sup>23</sup>

Whether or not Burroughs took any particular interest in the debate that followed the first use of air terror against African populations, his Tarzan belongs as much to this moment of cultural airmindedness as the one that followed Kitty Hawk. For if he created a flying superman amid the first flush of airminded enthusiasm for human advancement to the heavens, he also began writing about a disconcertingly bloodthirsty “Fear Phantom” less than a month after Cavotti described his raid as having “a wonderful effect on the morale of the Arabs” and after the London *Times* described the raid as opening “[t]he floodgates of blood and lust.”<sup>24</sup>

Burroughs's description of Tarzan's flying terrorism is also strikingly similar to the fantasy of colonial enforcement that imperial thinkers were imagining for the airplane, even before Cavotti put it into practice. R. P. Hearne's 1910 *Airships in Peace and War*, for example, suggested that “in savage lands the moral effect of such an instrument is impossible to conceive,” because “[t]he appearance of the airship would strike terror into the tribes.”<sup>25</sup> Just as the real power of flight was, for Burroughs's Tarzan, the fantastic terror it allowed him to create in those who, lacking reason, could not comprehend it, savage terror was the basis of military calculations on the use of the

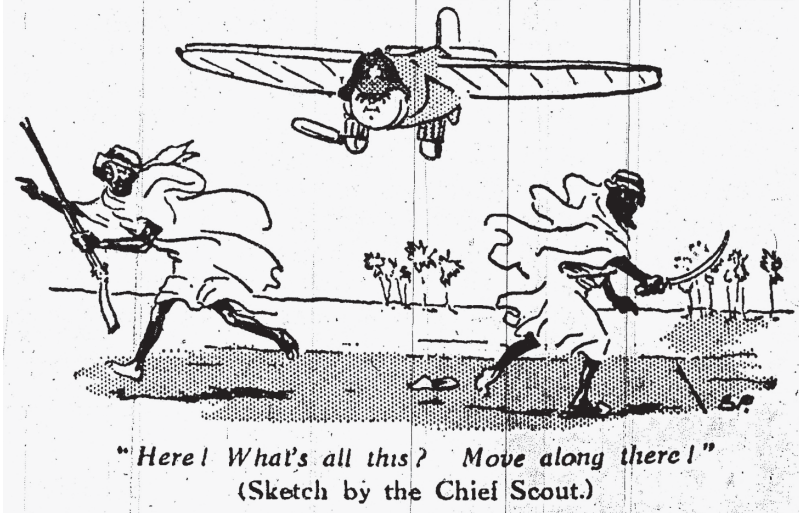
airplane from the very beginning. The airplane, as Hearne imagined it, would “enable an expedition to be made with astounding rapidity [and] create the most terrifying effect on savage races, and the awful wastage of life occasioned to white troops by such expeditionary work would be avoided.”<sup>26</sup> And in 1910, Major Baden F. S. Baden-Powell had predicted that airships would be a great asset in “savage warfare” because “the moral effect on an ignorant enemy would be great, and a few bombs would cause serious panics.”<sup>27</sup>

In reality, it would not be until well after World War I that military thinkers would have any substantial data on which to hang their projections of what white airpower would eventually be capable of. But books like Hearne's and Baden-Powell's gave, like Tarzan himself, the appearance of scientific thought to what were simply fantasies about the rational ability of humankind to create nightmarish terror among impressionable natives. The dream was, almost without exception, that creating nightmarish terror among natives would make it unnecessary to actually exert costly military force. As a British official claimed in 1914, “[I]n a few years aeroplanes or airships will be used in West Africa . . . They would be invaluable against the hill pagans, and the terror caused by them would probably do away with bloodshed.”<sup>28</sup> It is a fantasy that has endured; that U.S. imperial strategists in 2003 named the first bombing campaign in Iraq “Shock and Awe” only demonstrates the extent to which the utility of airpower is still, explicitly, its ability to create terror from above.

However, while hopeful military thinkers in the teens created the imaginative terms through which fictions of racialized airpower would be articulated for a century to come, technologies get defined both through hopeful fantasies and also through practical use. When the RAF first deployed airpower on a large scale—in Mesopotamia, present-day Iraq—they hoped it would provide the perfect solution to two different problems: on the one hand, a surge in Arab “intransigence” after World War I, and on the other, the need to quell it cheaply, since postwar demobilization of the exhausted military made resources for colonial policing extremely scarce. The fantasy, then as now, was that airpower could deter Arabs into passivity by terror, a bloodless imperial pacification that would proceed by playing on the savage inability to control their own fear, the same “wonderful moral effect” the Italians had hopefully imagined themselves to have produced in North Africa in 1912. But while RAF pilots in the colonies

were usually tasked with using airpower to create demonstrations of violent capability (so as to preclude the actual violence itself), bombing particular targets and avoiding civilian casualties was an unrealistic expectation from the beginning. Although commanding officers in the field quickly discovered that it was easiest to create terror by maximizing civilian casualties, pilots similarly discovered that precision bombing was a fiction and took to bombing whatever they could find that was large enough to be a plausible target. As colonial bombing became more deadly and explicitly geared toward total war on rebelling civilian populations, official reports on its use increasingly described a fantastically alternate reality in which airpower actually was bloodless, humane, and precise. Interwar discourse on aerial bombardment is, for this reason, a schizophrenic mix of savage violence in practice and fantasies of pacification in theory.<sup>29</sup>

Far from the colonial frontier, “civilized” populations could only understand air war through the same childish fantasies of bloodless dominance that the Weissmuller Tarzan would sanction. In 1938, for instance, in the “Boys & Girls” section of the London *Daily Mail*—in which “Chief Scout” Robert Baden-Powell, Major Baden-Powell’s brother, had a recurring feature—the founder of the Boy Scouts contributed a drawing called “Policeman aeroplanes” showing how airpower could be used to break up wars between natives (see fig. 1). Baden-Powell’s description of the incident is (as his sketch demonstrates) of a firm but gentle neighborhood cop breaking up a scuffle, and he describes the actual event as a bloodless pacification of violent natives: “[W]e heard that two of the tribes of Arabs in the district had broken out into war against each other. Before they could get very far with it, the Royal Air Force had an aeroplane hovering over them like a policeman. The aeroplane dropped notices to tell them that they were to stop fighting at once, and make peace and go home.”<sup>30</sup> However, in the London *Times* article about the incident he is most likely alluding to—or which is at least representative of the actual use to which airpower was being put—it is clear that the desired effect is something more like the shock and awe produced by destructive violence than simple dropped warnings. Explaining that “the Sei’ar tribe[’s] raiding proclivities had been a constant source of trouble,” the writer recounts how “air action was ordered, and one bombing raid by three aircraft on January 20 [1938] produced the desired result . . . The *dar* of the chief offender was completely demolished in a spectacular fashion in



**Figure 1** "Policeman Aeroplanes," drawing by Robert Baden-Powell, London *Daily Mail*, 18 March 1938, 21. Reproduced by kind permission of the Scout Association Trustees. The Scout Association does not endorse Mr. Bady's article or the use of air power against civilians. The copyright of images used is held by the Scout Association as defined in the Copyright, Designs, and Patents Act 1988.

full view of a number of Sei'aris, who were duly impressed and gave a guarantee to the Government of future good behaviour."<sup>31</sup>

If Burroughs's *Tarzan of the Apes* wasn't about airpower as such, it did crystallize a certain fantasy of white flight, using—as the airplane very soon would—the spectacle of a literal "rising above" to demonstrate the political superiority of the civilized over the savage. But in 1912, both Burroughs's portrayal of Tarzan's violent white flight and aerial bombardment were still imaginative fantasies. By the time of Weissmuller's Tarzan movies, on the other hand, the schizophrenic fiction that airpower was somehow merciful and orderly became increasingly difficult to maintain. The bombing of Guernica, Spain, in 1937 would represent a turning point, demonstrating the kind of savage horror unfettered aerial bombardment could bring to an undefended city, in many ways rendering the euphemism impossible.<sup>32</sup> Yet if total war from the air was a frightening new horror to the "civilized" world, it was only because the official narratives of air violence against natives had been so thoroughly airbrushed to remove their murderous content (even as colonial air forces honed the techniques that would soon

be redeployed in Europe itself). In a world in which white violence against colonized or subjugated dark-skinned peoples was a constant but categorically unspoken reality, Weissmuller's Tarzan too had been scrubbed clean of the kind of race war through which Burroughs had originally understood his character's relationship to Africa. Natives might occasionally molest or kidnap the helpless in those movies, but Weissmuller's Tarzan only rarely had to directly intercede. When he did, he did so just as bloodlessly as Baden-Powell's friendly copper: the sound of Weissmuller's trademark yell—like the sight of an RAF plane overhead—was usually enough to peacefully terrorize natives into flight.<sup>33</sup>

After World War II, MGM sold the Tarzan franchise to RKO, and since the war had destroyed the potential for foreign sales, the character was completely retooled to appeal to domestic patriotism. Wilhelm Thiele's *Tarzan Triumphs!* (1943) would be the most violent Tarzan movie ever made, and when Weissmuller went to war against Nazi paratroopers—invading an Africa in which Nazi Germany held no actual territory—his unprecedented burst of loquaciousness of “Now Tarzan Make War!” was reportedly greeted with massive cheers by war-ready movie audiences.<sup>34</sup> The outburst signaled the end of the wordless noble savage that Weissmuller had hitherto played, a transition (back) to the much more articulate and violent Tarzan of his origins. But the violence that had been so thoroughly structured by racism in the original was now whitewashed. The requisite white invaders of Tarzan's jungle home had become Nazis who could be killed as part of a crusade against racism. In a certain sense, the series had come full circle: the original white *Übermensch*—Johann Peter Weißmüller, an ethnic German born in Romania—would now make war on German white supremacists.

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## Notes

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- 1 See Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880–1917* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1995); Bill Brown, “Science Fiction, the World’s Fair, and the Prosthetics of Empire,” in *Cultures of United States Imperialism*, ed. Amy Kaplan and Donald Pease (Durham, N.C.: Duke Univ. Press, 1993); Eric Cheyfitz, *The Poetics of Imperialism: Translation and Colonization from “The Tempest” to “Tarzan”* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1997); Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues: The United States Encounters Foreign Peoples at Home and Abroad, 1876–1917* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000); Catherine Jurca, *White Diaspora: The Suburb and the Twentieth-Century American Novel* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 2001); David Leverenz, “The Last Real Man in America: From Natty Bumppo to Batman,” *American Literary History* 3 (winter 1991): 753–81; Ruth Mayer, *Artificial Africas: Colonial Images in the Times of Globalization* (Lebanon, N.H.: Dartmouth College Press; Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 2002); and Marianna Torgovnick, *Gone Primitive: Savage Intellectuals, Modern Lives* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1990), 42–72.
- 2 The twelve Tarzan films Johnny Weissmuller made for MGM and RKO between 1932 and 1948 are W. S. Van Dyke’s *Tarzan the Ape Man* (1932); Cedric Gibbons’s *Tarzan and His Mate* (1934); Richard Thorpe’s *Tarzan Escapes* (1936), *Tarzan Finds a Son!* (1939), *Tarzan’s Secret Treasure* (1941), and *Tarzan’s New York Adventure* (1942); Wilhelm Thiele’s *Tarzan Triumphs* (1943) and *Tarzan’s Desert Mystery* (1943); Kurt Neumann’s *Tarzan and the Amazons* (1945), *Tarzan and the Leopard Woman* (1946), and *Tarzan and the Huntress* (1947); and Robert Florey’s *Tarzan and the Mermaids* (1948).
- 3 See, for instance, Anthony Easthope, *What a Man’s Gotta Do: The Masculine Myth in Popular Culture* (London: Routledge, 1990).
- 4 For example, some of the most offensive dialect was removed; the word “Negro” was capitalized (and the word “nigger” excised); and anti-Semitic characterizations in *Tarzan and the Golden Lion* were rendered as “German.” All changes were at the level of word choice; no significant plot elements were substantively changed. For specific details, see Jerry L. Schneider, “Tarzan the Censored,” *Erbville: The Home of the Public Domain Stories of Edgar Rice Burroughs* (2000), [www.angelfire.com/zine2/erbville/erbpdf.htm](http://www.angelfire.com/zine2/erbville/erbpdf.htm) (accessed 24 October 2010).
- 5 The original Superman could not fly, in fact; he was simply able to “leap tall buildings in a single bound.” Over the first two decades of the character’s existence, his aeronautics gradually (and without explicit acknowledgment) became more and more dramatic until it simply became canonical that the character could fly “like a bird.” The fact that his flight is not only never explained but actually unacknowledged underscores the importance of the fantasy being incomprehensible.

- 6 George Leybourne, "The Flying Trapeze" (1868), in Jean Harrowven, *The Origins of Rhymes, Songs, and Sayings* (London: Kayne and Ward, 1977), 26.
- 7 "Tarzan of the Apes" was first published in *All Story Magazine*, October 1912, 241–372; the novel was first published as *Tarzan of the Apes* in 1914 (Edgar Rice Burroughs, *Tarzan of the Apes* [New York: A. C. McClurg]). Further references to the novel are to this edition and will be cited parenthetically in the text as *TA*.
- 8 On "airmindedness," see Joseph J. Corn, *The Winged Gospel: America's Romance with Aviation, 1900–1950* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1983); Richard P. Hallion, *Taking Flight: Inventing the Aerial Age from Antiquity through the First World War* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2003); and Robert Wohl, *A Passion for Wings: Aviation and the Western Imagination, 1908–1918* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1994).
- 9 Corn, *The Winged Gospel*, 8.
- 10 Lindbergh and other aerial pioneers were occasionally presented with quite literal requests from pious admirers to be transported directly to heaven (Corn, *The Winged Gospel*, 13).
- 11 Tami Davis Biddle, *Rhetoric and Reality in Strategic Air Warfare: The Evolution and Reality of British and American Ideas about Strategic Bombing, 1914–1945* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 2002); Malcolm Cooper, *The Birth of Independent Air Power: British Air Policy in the First World War* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1986); Hugh Driver, *The Birth of Military Aviation: Britain, 1903–1914* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1997).
- 12 See John Taliaferro, *Tarzan Forever: The Life of Edgar Rice Burroughs, Creator of Tarzan* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1999), 78.
- 13 Those who do address the unhappy ending tend to emphasize the fact that Tarzan has himself misled Jane: by this point in the novel, Tarzan knows who his parents are, but he chooses not to tell her. Alex Vernon reads Tarzan's choice to let Jane marry his cousin as a "selfless sacrifice . . . signaling his arrival into full, civilized manliness—into his whiteness," while Bederman reads the scene "as an indictment of civilization's effeminacy, an elegy for the doomed primitive rapist in the civilized man" (Vernon, *On Tarzan* [Athens: Univ. of Georgia Press, 2008], 72; Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, 230).
- 14 In *The Return of Tarzan*, Jane closes her eyes in expectation of death as a lion is about to eat her, but when she opens them—having in the interim been saved by Tarzan—she asks herself, "Could she be dreaming?" (Edgar Rice Burroughs, *The Return of Tarzan* [New York: A. C. McClurg, 1914], 298).
- 15 In *Tarzan the Untamed*, Tarzan is shown to have a plantation in British East Africa, and he flies an airplane in *Tarzan and the Ant People*.
- 16 Robert Wohl marks the beginning of Hollywood's love affair with the avia-

- tion picture in 1927—the year the first Best Picture Academy Award went to William Wellman's *Wings* and the year of Charles Lindbergh's transatlantic flight—and traces its culmination in the cinematic-aeronautic complex of Howard Hughes as its culmination (*The Spectacle of Flight: Aviation and the Western Imagination, 1920–1950* [New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2005], 3).
- 17 Taliaferro, *Tarzan Forever*, 247.
  - 18 Edward W. Said, "Jungle Calling," in *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 2000), 331.
  - 19 For the best resource for Tarzan's overseas reception, see Vernon, *On Tarzan*, 33–58.
  - 20 Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Richard Philcox (1952; reprint, New York: Grove Press, 2008), 131.
  - 21 For example, see John F. Kasson, *Houdini, Tarzan, and the Perfect Man: The White Male Body and the Challenge of Modernity in America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2002).
  - 22 Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, 223.
  - 23 Sven Lindqvist, *A History of Bombing*, trans. Linda Haverty Rugg (New York: New Press, 2000), 45.
  - 24 *Ibid.*, 33.
  - 25 R. P. Hearne, *Aerial Warfare* (New York: John Lane, 1909), 183.
  - 26 *Ibid.*, 184–85.
  - 27 Major Baden F. S. Baden-Powell, "How Airships Are Likely to Affect War" (lecture), 8 December 1909, *Journal of the Royal United Service Institution* 54 (1910): 555–81; quoted in David E. Omissi, *Air Power and Colonial Control: The Royal Air Force, 1919–1939* (Manchester, Eng.: Manchester Univ. Press, 1990).
  - 28 *Ibid.*, 6.
  - 29 As Priya Satia has written of RAF air power in the Middle East, "proponents of air control frankly admitted that terror was the scheme's underlying principle—and the source of its humaneness ("The Defense of Inhumanity: Air Control and the British Idea of Arabia," *American Historical Review* 111, no. 1 [2006]: 18).
  - 30 London *Daily Mail*, 18 March 1938, 21; reprinted in Brett Holman, "Ello, Ello, Ello, What's All This Then?," *Airminded* (blog), 20 July 2007, [airminded.org/2007/07/20/ello-ello-ello-whats-all-this-then/](http://airminded.org/2007/07/20/ello-ello-ello-whats-all-this-then/).
  - 31 London *Times*, 5 April 1938, 27.
  - 32 Ian Patterson, *Guernica and Total War* (London: Profile Books, 2007).
  - 33 The sound was *literally* trademarked, in fact, at one point; according to the United States Patent and Trademark Office, it was registered to Edgar Rice Burroughs, Inc., on 15 December 1998.
  - 34 Vernon, *On Tarzan*, 38.