

# PAL: Perspectives in American Literature - A Research and Reference Guide - An Ongoing Project

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## Chapter 7: Edgar Rice Burroughs (1875-1950)

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### Primary Works

*Tarzan of the apes*. NY: Ballantine Books 1976, 1939. PS3503 .U687 T32

*A princess of Mars*. NY: Ballantine Books, 1963. PS3503 .U687 P75x

*A Princess of Mars*. Bradbury, Ray (introd.); Schoonover, Frank E. NY: Modern Library, 2003.

*Brother Men: The Correspondence of Edgar Rice Burroughs and Herbert T. Weston*. Cohen, Matt (ed. and introd.). Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2005.

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Berglund, Jeff. *Cannibal Fictions: American Explorations of Colonialism, Race, Gender and Sexuality*. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 2006.

Brady, Clark A. *The Burroughs Cyclopedia: Characters, Places, Fauna, Flora, Technologies, Languages, Ideas and Terminologies Found in the Works of Edgar Rice Burroughs*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1996.

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Holtmark, Erling B. *Tarzan and tradition: classical myth in popular literature*. Westport, Conn: Greenwood, 1981. PS3503.U687 Z7

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Zeuschner, Robert B. *Edgar Rice Burroughs: The Exhaustive Scholar's and Collector's Descriptive Bibliography*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1999

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### A Student Project by Robert Brogdon

Edgar Rice Burroughs is a dynamic author with a staunch sense of humor and a rebellious streak. He was not afraid of controversy yet had a great love for animals and the great outdoors. He often made fun of his failures early in life as a student and businessman. His legacy lives on today as is evident in the new Walt Disney movie based on a character Burroughs created 78 years ago.

Edgar Rice Burroughs was born to Major George Tyler Burroughs and Mary Evaline Burroughs on September 1, 1875. Burroughs was the youngest of four brothers, George, Harry and Frank. Burroughs grew up in a "three-story brick house on the West Side of Chicago" (Porges 9). Burroughs attended many different schools over the course of his education due to poor performance, illness and lack of discipline. In 1895 Burroughs graduated from the Michigan Military Academy after being asked to withdraw from Phillips Academy two years earlier. This instability would become a pattern for his entire life. One of Burroughs career goals was to attain a commission as an officer in the U.S. Army, which he would never attain. He did serve with the 7<sup>th</sup> calvary, as an enlisted man, for two years enduring hard labor. Upon returning home to work with his father Burroughs faced a crucial point in his life.

On January 30, 1900, Edgar Rice Burroughs married Emma Hulbert, a childhood sweetheart. They would go on to have two children, Joan and Hulbert. Burroughs, still searching for a job, stumbled into his destined career as he explains in his own unpublished autobiography...

Evidently there was not a job to be had in Chicago. I got writers cramp answering blind ads and wore out my shoes chasing after the others. Then, somehow, I got hold of a few dollars and took an agency for the sale of a lead pencil sharpener and borrowed office space from a friend of mine, Bert Ball, who was a corset jobber with an establishment at the corner of Market and Monroe Streets in Chicago.

I would not try to sell the lead pencil sharpeners myself, but I advertised for agents and sent them out. They did not sell any sharpeners, but in the leisure moments, while I was waiting for them to come back to tell that they had not sold any, I started writing "A Princess of Mars," my first story. (Porges 108)

During this time Burroughs worked with his father at the American Battery Company, which he despised. In an effort to escape this situation Burroughs moved to Idaho with his wife where he worked a variety of jobs including, a railroad policeman, door-to-door salesman, and a stenographer for Sears and Roebuck back in Chicago.

Burroughs submitted the first half of his novel to Argosy Magazine who, in turn, published it in 1911. This launched Burroughs writing career and in 1912 Burroughs published *Tarzan of the Apes*, one of his greatest contributions to American literature. In 1913 Burroughs began selling his stories into newspaper syndication. Burroughs sold the movie rights to *Tarzan* and was utterly disappointed with the completed project. Trying to remedy the situation he attempted to exert some control on the movie but learned that he had no power over what was done with the rights to the movie. During World War One Burroughs tried to become a war correspondent, unsuccessfully. In 1942, however, he did become a correspondent of the Second World War in Hawaii.

In 1934 Burroughs divorced Emma due to her alcoholism. Four months later he married Florence Dearholt who had been

a friend of the family. In an ironic twist of fate, Florence divorced Burroughs in 1941 due to his alcoholism.

Burroughs wrote in several genres including science fiction, adventure, western, mystery, plays, poetry, articles, newspaper columns, and political cartoons. Burroughs has a significant presence on the World Wide Web with well over 4,500 web sites attributed to him. Almost all of his books are available to be read on the Internet.

"On Sunday, March 19, 1950, Ed finished his breakfast and sat in bed, reading the comic pages. He was alone, and death came to him suddenly and quietly" (Porges 699). According to his desire, Burroughs was cremated and buried under a large walnut tree just outside his old office in Tarzana, California. "Never a believer in organized religion, Burroughs did, a short time before the end, give some indication of what he thought or hoped might follow: 'If there is a hereafter, I want to travel through space to visit other planets.'" (ERB, 699)" (Holtsmark 15). Edgar Rice Burroughs has been met with great enthusiasm by readers of all ages since his first book was published in 1912. Despite this enthusiasm, reviewers and academic critics have dismissed Burroughs, until the last 15 years, because he was not considered to be true literature.

### Primary Works

Tarzan of the Apes, 1914; The Return of Tarzan, 1915; The Beasts of Tarzan, 1916; Tarzan and the Jewels of Opar, 1916; A princess of Mars, 1917; The Son of Tarzan, 1917; Tarzan and the Jewels of Opar, 1918; The Gods of Mars, 1918; The Warlords of Mars, 1919; Jungle Tales of Tarzan, 1919; Tarzan the Untamed, 1920; Thuvia, Maids of Mars, 1920; Tarzan the Terrible, 1921; The Mucker, 1921; At the Earth's Core, 1922; The Chessmen of Mars, 1922; Tarzan and the Golden Lion, 1923; Pellucidar, 1923; The Land That Time Forgot, 1924; The Cave Girl, 1925; The Eternal Lover, 1925; The Mad King, 1926; The Moon Maid, 1926; The Outlaw of Torn, 1927; The Monster Men, 1929; The Oakdale Affair, 1937; The Lad and the Lion, 1938;

### Works Cited

Holtsmark, Erling B. Edgar Rice Burroughs. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1986.

Porges, Irwin. Edgar Rice Burroughs: The Man Who Created Tarzan. Provo, UT: Brigham Young UP, 1975.

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