Flickers of Desire
Movie Stars of the 1910s

EDITED BY
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Each volume in the series Star Decades: American Culture/American Cinema presents original essays analyzing the movie star against the background of contemporary American cultural history. As icon, as mediated personality, and as object of audience fascination and desire, the Hollywood star remains the model for celebrity in modern culture and represents a paradoxical combination of achievement, talent, ability, luck, authenticity, superficiality, and ordinariness. In all of the volumes, stardom is studied as an effect of, and influence on, the particular historical and industrial contexts that enabled a star to be “discovered,” to be featured in films, to be promoted and publicized, and ultimately to become a recognizable and admired—even sometimes notorious—feature of the cultural landscape. Understanding when, how, and why a star “makes it,” dazzling for a brief moment or enduring across decades, is especially relevant given the ongoing importance of mediated celebrity in an increasingly visualized world. We hope that our approach produces at least some of the surprises and delight for our readers that stars themselves do.

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The rise of Douglas Fairbanks (1883–1939) in the late 1910s was nothing short of spectacular. In a variety of films for Triangle, Artcraft, and United Artists, Fairbanks played cheery, athletic young men who bounded their way over obstacles and rivals to get the girl and the prize. His first film debuted in September 1915, but in a fan survey three years later, Fairbanks already ranked third in a long list of popular stars behind Mary Pickford and Marguerite Clark (Motion Picture Magazine, September 1918, 6). By the end of the decade, after only four years in the industry, Fairbanks was the most popular male star in Hollywood, second only to Pickford in fame and fortune. Among the reasons for this quick ascent we can count a successful filmmaking formula that displayed Fairbanks’s sound business sense and his ability to surround himself with top talent, as well as a well-oiled publicity machine that kept him constantly in the public eye. We can also count hard work: from the fall of 1915 to the end of 1919, Fairbanks made nearly thirty films, published two books and countless articles, formed his own production company, criss-crossed the nation several times selling Liberty Bonds for the war effort, and co-founded United Artists. We must also not underestimate the vigor and flexibility of the Fairbanks persona, which he trained and developed on Broadway, adding bulk, definition, and endurance in Hollywood. Everybody liked “Doug,” it seemed, and this amiability was certainly a key to his success. But there was something deeper and more meaningful in the Fairbanks persona. Perhaps this energetic, even indefatigable star became so popular because he projected an image of Americans as they wanted to see themselves, and as they still want to see themselves: as youthful and athletic, optimistic and adventurous, decisive and democratic. Ultimately, at a crucial point in the nation’s entry on the world stage, Fairbanks gave his domestic and worldwide audience a pleasing vision of what it meant to be American.

Surveying the films and press about Fairbanks reveals a remarkably consistent picture, an almost seamless identity between private actor and public character. To be sure, this is the goal of all early star discourse—to present the actor as the embodiment of his or her roles, and to emphasize the compatibility of these roles with the “real” life of the actor (see Cordova). In Fairbanks’s case, however, the discourse is unusually consistent in this regard. Even from his days on the theatrical stage, reviewers noted that “off the stage, one imagines. Mr. Fairbanks must be very much the sort of young man he is called upon to play” (New York Times, 23 August 1908, 9). When plays were written especially for him, as in this case, we can imagine this fit to be particularly apt, but throughout his career Fairbanks insisted that he was not a great actor, instead emphasizing the importance of “personality” for his success. Early serial characters were often named after the actors who played them (Kathlyn Williams in The Adventures of Kathlyn [1913], for example) in order to stress the identity of actor and character; in an interesting twist on that strategy, many of Fairbanks’s early films have characters with such obviously contrived names (Sunny Wiggins, Passin’ Through, Steve O’Dare, Blaze Derringer) that it has the same effect, with a sly, satirical wink: Fairbanks is just playing himself.

For our purposes, this “self” is, ironically, an effect of his representations in film and in the written discourse about him. Any screen persona is an amalgam of different qualities in various measures. If we were to melt down
and separate Fairbanks’s winning alloy, forged by his numerous appearances onscreen and in the press, we would find at least four distinct but related elements. Foremost, the films and publicity emphasize his youthfulness. Even though he was thirty-two years old when he started making films, he is nearly always portrayed as carefree and adventurous, as someone who brings boundless enthusiasm and energy to whatever tasks he faces. Gaylyn Studlar argues persuasively that there is something Peter Pan—like in this fantasy; Fairbanks’s boyishness means that he was never weighed down by commitments or responsibilities (This Mad Masquerade 50). Work is not work for Fairbanks or his characters—it is play. This manifests itself most obviously in his extraordinary athleticism. Fairbanks runs, leaps, rides, tumbles, and climbs his way through his films as if they were pentathlons. Every piece written about him stresses his incredible physical prowess, and his sheer joy in physical activity is palpable on screen. Physical vigor is more than a healthy attitude for Fairbanks; it is a moral imperative akin to (even borrowed from) Theodore Roosevelt’s concept of “the strenuous life.”

Yet he does it all with a smile so infectious that they called him “Old Doc Cheerful.” His smile, like Buster Keaton’s lack thereof, is a trademark. It signals his ready optimism, his confidence, and his good humor. “Doug” lets nothing get him down. There is a purity to this optimism, a straightforwardness, and a guilelessness that allows him to be comfortable in any situation. Whether in the East or in the West, with men or with women, at a society dinner or in a working-class pub, Fairbanks is at home. One commentator wrote, “Take my word for it, he is every inch all that he looks . . . a regular fellow, one who ‘belongs’ in any company” (Moving Picture World, 24 June 1916, 2213). This ability to belong in any social situation is absolutely central to the Fairbanks persona. He is able to move freely among the classes, as if he belongs to all of them: he has a uniquely unlettered social mobility. Confidence is not his only means here; there is something inherently democratic about the Fairbanks persona. Fairbanks is represented as transparent, sincere, and unpretentious—he is just a “regular fellow.” Yet he is also often represented as a member of the upper classes. This dual citizenship is not contradictory or adversarial in his films. The true democrat presumes equality wherever he goes, and this is exactly the Fairbanks attitude. It is not simply that he has the equipment and background to move freely among different social milieux—although he does, as we shall see. Unique among the characters in any of his films, Fairbanks has skills that accommodate—or as Studlar argues, reconcile—opposite worlds. He can ride a horse with as much assurance as he wears a tuxedo, and he can do both better than anybody else in the film. But, again, the “democratic” aspect of his persona depends not on confidence alone—it would be more accurate to say that barriers between milieux mean nothing to him. Anyone who has seen a Fairbanks film knows that fences are for leaping over; he vaults social barriers with equal grace.

Fairbanks represents a boyish fantasy of mastery, which no other star of his day put over with as much pluck and skill. All these qualities—youthfulness, athleticism, optimism, and a democratic instinct—were in place by the time Fairbanks left the stage in 1915. Despite Alistair Cooke’s claim that Fairbanks’s “theatrical record had very little to do with his starting Hollywood fame and with the creation of the screen character ‘Doug’” (13), the opposite is true. Limiting an assessment of his persona to his film work disregards the ten years or more he spent crafting and developing this marketable “personality” on stage. This is not to say that his persona did not adjust to motion pictures. On the contrary, his extraordinary success is due as much to his ability to modulate his stage persona to the new medium as to his likeability. Unlike many of his Broadway colleagues who were not able to navigate the transition, and true to his persona, Fairbanks was as comfortable on a Hollywood backlot as on a New York stage.

**Broadway**

Fairbanks came to the stage at a fairly young age. He grew up in Denver, Colorado, where his father apparently enjoyed reading Shakespeare to his children and Douglas, in turn, enjoyed reciting soliloquies in school as another way—besides acrobatics and practical jokes—to be the center of attention (the best-researched account of Fairbanks’s early life is Vance). While he was in high school, Douglas also attended drama school in Denver, so when he was expelled from high school for a prank shortly before his sixteenth birthday, he felt he was not without options. Soon thereafter, he met Frederick Warde, a prominent British actor-manager, who was in Denver for a week-long engagement. Impressed by the boy’s personality and determination, and with the mother’s blessing, Warde hired Fairbanks for his traveling company. Fairbanks made his stage debut in 1900 in Richmond, Virginia, but stayed with the company only briefly, since he was apparently not a very good actor. Even so, Fairbanks moved to New York with his mother and made his Broadway debut in February 1902 with a small part in *Her Lord and Master* (Vance 12–16).

Not yet nineteen years old when he got his Broadway start, Fairbanks naturally attracted juvenile roles. But this was not the only reason that critics emphasized his youthfulness in their reviews. They consistently mentioned his appealing, lighthearted personality. By 1906, critics were
already noting a pattern as he played “his now familiar, breezy, attractive youth” (New York Times, 5 December 1906, 11). Audiences and critics loved this combination of youth, energy, and enthusiasm: “His genial boyishness and merry suggestion of irresponsible impudence are quite irresistible,” wrote one critic (Boston Daily Globe, 21 September 1910, 9). Early in his career, “boyishness” became a trope to describe Fairbanks, and when he was in his late twenties, “the casual observer might mistake him for thirty. That is, while he is silent. Everyone looks older when his features are in repose. But when the Fairbanks smile is turned on full power—the sudden, illuminating, sincere smile, which makes friends and keeps them—and the black eyes sparkle with Fairbanks fun and enjoyment of living, the Fairbanks arms fling about in their vigorous fashion, the most casual might suppose him twenty-two. Youth is a dynamic state” (Theatre Magazine, November 1911, 178). This description contains many of the themes common to his publicity during his Broadway days, which would carry over to his film career: the focus on youthfulness, optimism, enthusiasm, athleticism, sincerity—all signaled by his high-wattage smile.

Fairbanks began to attract critical notice in 1905, with his role as Benjie the bellhop in the short-lived but acclaimed A Case of Frenzied Finance; critics said he played his part with “animation, glibness and assurance” (Theatre Magazine, May 1905, 110). More parts followed, and in December 1906 he was cast in the political melodrama The Man of the Hour, which was a big hit. During this play’s run, Fairbanks courted and married (in July 1907) Anna Beth Sully, daughter of “Cotton King” Daniel J. Sully. With Sully he had his only child, Douglas Jr. (born 1909). His first starring role was in All for a Girl in the fall of 1908, after which he co-starred in another huge hit, The Gentleman from Mississippi. This ran for a couple of years, until he snagged the starring role in The Cub in 1910. He toured and played in revivals for the next two years until he starred in a string of successes: Hawthorne of the U.S.A. (1912), The New Henrietta (1913), He Comes Up Smiling (1914), and The Show Shop (1915). By the time he left for film, he was considered one of the top light-comedy actors of the stage, having worked in theater continuously from 1902 to 1915.

Fairbanks’s “boyishness” also referred to his acrobatics, which were on display even in the theater. His manager and producer, William Brady, recalled a rehearsal of The Cub, during which Fairbanks elected to jump and climb up a two-level set rather than run up the stairs—a decision that “made a tremendous hit with the audience” (Vance 19). Publicity pieces at the time also emphasize his athleticism: “He can box, row, swim and ride, all in championship form” (Boston Daily Globe, 2 March 1908, 12). Or gossip columns might tell stories about his over-enthusiastic participation in a fight scene (Los Angeles Times, 29 August 1912, 3:4). Fairbanks was indeed portrayed as a “big” personality whose energy spilled off the stage into a thrilled and grateful audience.

But throughout this period, the publicity, reviews, and interviews all insist that there is something more to Fairbanks than boyish athleticism. Yes, he can box, row, swim, and ride, but wait, he can also cook, and “his cooking has been elevated to the dignity of a fine art. If Mr. Fairbanks ever desires to abandon his tricorne endeavors he can always play a successful engagement as a French chef” (Boston Daily Globe, 2 March 1908, 12). Similarly, he often tells the story of taking time off from the stage to work in Wall Street, whether as a clerk or another minor position (see Theatre Magazine, November 1911, 178, or Boston Daily Globe, 9 April 1913, 17). The number of times this story surfaces in interviews speaks to its importance in establishing his ability to straddle boundaries between apparently opposing worlds. He is not just an actor but a businessman, not just an athlete but a chef.

Despite this duality, Fairbanks plays his roles, as critics often noted, “without artifice” (Theatre Magazine, November 1908, 288). Fairbanks’s democratic instinct, his ability to move easily between worlds, is often framed in terms of his “sincerity,” and in this publicity piece: “There is nothing ‘stagey’—nothing artificial or affected about this young American player. . . . He is not addicted to mannerisms, he does not cultivate any eccentricities, nor get rid of his talent to make room for his temperament. He is just a sincere, natural, good-natured Frank, young man with gracious manners and an air of being always at ease in any situation” (Theatre Magazine, April 1913, 116). “Sincerity,” then, is the glue that binds actor and character into a seamless unit and allows Fairbanks to move freely between opposing worlds without the penalty of affectation. Moreover, to be “at ease in any situation” requires an honesty and democratic sensibility that, in Fairbanks’s case, is tagged early on as uniquely American. Indeed, during this period commentators start to connect his optimism, honesty, and youthful demeanor to an American outlook, as in this early review: “Mr. Fairbanks, the star of the occasion, symbolizes the very best type of clean-limbed, well-bred American young man, wholesome, self-reliant, and ingratiating” (New York Times, 25 August 1911, 7).

Nowhere is this connection between Fairbanks and Americanism more explicit than in the reviews and publicity for Hawthorne of the U.S.A. This play, which anticipates His Majesty the American (1919), his first film for United Artists, tells the story of a young American tourist who stumbles into the aristocratic plots of a decaying Balkan monarchy and “by the introduction of American methods and money, effect the rehabilitation and
“Doug” leaps over all obstacles with equal ease. Courtesy of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

development of a decadent nation” (Washington Post, 20 October 1912, M52). Broadway audiences reacted positively to this idea of rehabilitating decadence through “American” methods. The New York Times declared, “And in it Douglas Fairbanks, that young man with a smile that invites confidence and muscles that enforce it, finds himself perfectly suited as the conquering young man from America” (7 November 1912, 13), while Theatre Magazine exclaimed, “The star is Douglas Fairbanks, and he enacts the title role with rollicking good nature, dramatic fire, and true American hurray!” (December 1912, 164). With Hawehorne, a familiar pattern emerges: Fairbanks represents the best America has to offer, or, more precisely, he represents how America wants to represent itself.

Already by 1912 Fairbanks had spent ten years on Broadway and, with the help of a press agent, was becoming quite adept at garnering and directing his publicity. He solidified his persona as a youthful, athletic, light-comedy actor whose optimistic and unaffected personality uniquely represented American sensibilities. He was doing quite well with this approach. So when Harry Aitken, the founder of Triangle Films, approached Fairbanks in 1915 with an offer of $2,000 a week to star in films, Fairbanks was initially hesitant. It was, after all, the movies, which were not a thrilling prospect at the time for an established stage actor. But $100,000 a year can buy a measure of legitimacy, and motion pictures presented new possibilities; they represented “wide open spaces,” economically, socially, and aesthetically. And Fairbanks was prepared: he had a press agent, a marketable persona, and years of experience managing that persona in the public eye. Now it was just a matter of adapting his “personality” to film.

Triangle and Artcraft

Fairbanks was not the only stage star to sign with Triangle Film Corp. in 1915, nor was his high salary exceptional. Harry Aitken, flush with Wall Street cash for his new company, wooed as many as sixty stage actors, including Billie Burke, Frank Keenan, H. B. Warner, comic opera star DeWolf Hopper, and the British Shakespearean Sir Herbert Beerbohm-Tree. Aitken spent flamboyantly in order to attract a more genteel crowd to his films. The high salaries offered to stage actors were part of a strategy—which included bringing directors D. W. Griffith, Thomas Ince, and Mack Sennett together under one corporation; securing top theaters exclusively for Triangle films; and charging higher admission prices—to make films “for the masses with an appeal to the classes.” This project failed miserably. By mid-1917, Triangle’s books were hemorrhaging red ink, Griffith and the others had fled, and most of the theatrical imports found themselves back on Broadway (King; Slide). Of all of Triangle’s stage stars, Fairbanks made the most significant impact on the movie-going public. With his emphasis on youth, action, and movement, his stage persona was certainly more screen-ready than that of, say, Beerbohm-Tree. But Fairbanks was also willing to adjust his stage style to the screen. Rob King argues persuasively that part of the problem with Aitken’s stage-stars experiment lay in “the difficulties
Triangle’s producers encountered in harmonizing the performances of the stage stars with existing filmmaking practice” (12). For example, to accommodate hyperbolic, mannered, theatrical acting styles, Triangle directors found themselves relying on static long takes and sluggish editing, which were a disappointment to movie audiences already accustomed to the more up-tempo styles of Ince and Griffith.

Fairbanks, on the other hand, demonstrated a savvy cinematographic presence as early as his first feature, The Lamb (1915). Here he plays Gerald the Lamb, an eastern mama’s boy with a crush on a well-bred young lady. During an outing to the beach, his party comes across a drowning woman and, in a moment of weakness and indecisiveness, Gerald is shown up by his rival—a tough, “cactus-fed” westerner—who saves the woman and wins Gerald’s beloved. Determined to win her back, Gerald starts a physical training regimen and then follows her and his rival to Arizona, where he is comically out of place and subject to predators of all sorts. But Gerald’s good nature disguises an inner grit that comes handy when he and his young lady are captured by renegade natives; Gerald wreaks havoc on the enemy camp, rescuing and winning her back. The climatic scenes feature Fairbankian acrobatics and a last-minute, Griffithian cavalry rescue, complete with parallel editing. Just as impressive, however, is his nuanced performance for the camera. The film includes a number of medium shots and Fairbanks knows what to do with them: his unassuming, slightly unsteady characterization of Gerald recalls Charlie Chaplin’s similar gestures as the Little Tramp. For someone new to film, Fairbanks was a quick study. Critics appreciated his talents as well: “A new star has appeared in the motion-picture constellation, a comedian who wins through interesting personality and delightful characterization. . . . He holds the eye so strongly, and without apparent effort, that he is the whole film from beginning to end” (Moving Picture World, 9 October 1915, 233). Fairbanks was not a great actor, by any means, but unlike some of his Broadway colleagues, his acting style perfectly suited motion pictures, both in its attentiveness to small gestures for the camera and in its rousing displays of athleticism. With its up-to-date filmmaking techniques and its thrills, The Lamb was a hit that set the stylistic pattern for later Fairbanks films.

The Lamb established another pattern as well. Five of his Triangle films were set in the West or had significant western themes. These included The Lamb, Double Trouble, The Good Bad Man, The Half-Breed, and Manhattan Madness (all 1916). (From summer 1915 to December 1916, Fairbanks made twelve features and one short for Triangle, a pace that even Moving Picture World thought was record-breaking [22 April 1916, 624].) Two of these, The Good Bad Man and The Half-Breed, are straight-up westerns, the first a tale of cowboy vengeance and the second a sensitive drama of racial hatred, with Fairbanks playing a mixed-blood Indian outcast. There is a distinct tendency toward duality in Fairbanks’s films, characters, and persona. If The Good Bad Man is about cowboys, The Half-Breed is about Indians (and The Half-Breed, of course, makes duality an explicit theme). This penchant for dual personalities is especially pronounced in The Lamb, Double Trouble, and Manhattan Madness. In The Lamb, as we have seen, Fairbanks’s character is quite meek until he finds his spine out west, as if drawing gumption from the land itself. In Double Trouble, Fairbanks plays an eastern loo who, after a blow to the head, becomes an outspoken, rowdy mayoral candidate for a western boomtown. In Manhattan Madness, the duality is expressed in more subtle ways: Fairbanks plays Steve O’Dare, a former New Yorker who returns from Wyoming to sell horses, only to be bored by the big city. His friends oblige by concocting a thrill-packed mystery. O’Dare has two worlds: he is equally comfortable in the exclusive clubs of Manhattan and on the range in the West, but he clearly prefers the latter. This duality extended even to Fairbanks’s production schedule; he traveled back and forth between Hollywood and New York, eventually making nine films in California and four in New York. Perhaps because of this bi-coastal schedule, a number of his films draw a sharp distinction between East and West (Tibbetts and Welsh).

But this distinction was also a shrewd publicity move. Like his hero, Theodore Roosevelt, who transformed his public image from a “Jane-Dandy” New York assemblyman to a manly “Rough Rider” by going west, Fairbanks also sought to realign his persona by emphasizing his investment in the region. If we believe his publicity, his move to California was not just a business trip, but also a journey of rejuvenation, an educational rite of passage that amounted to his personal “Grand Tour” of the West. Taking his cues from Roosevelt, Frederic Remington, and Owen Wister, Fairbanks painted his move to Hollywood as a story of masculinity reborn (White, Eastern Establishments; Studlar, This Mad Masquerade). Fairbanks achieved this revitalized masculinity primarily by renouncing his Broadway career—as if his success in film depended on it. With the righteousness of a new convert, he proselytized for the Cowboy Way, which was presented as synonymous with Hollywood. “Fairbanks really is the Fairbanks of Manhattan Madness,” reported the Los Angeles Times, “that is, he prefers a wild horseback trip through the mountains of Wyoming to a wild night on New York’s Broadway” (8 October 1916, 3:20). The New York Times agreed that his move to cinema meant more elbow room: “The movies were made for the great outdoors; so was Mr. Fairbanks. The four walls of a studio cramp the cinematograph; the four
walls of a theatre cut into Mr. Fairbanks's activities" (10 October 1915, 100). And so, given the insistent contrast between theater/the East/indoors and film/the West/outdoors, Fairbanks made his choice: "Asked as to the possibility of his return to the stage, both hands go up. 'I've ducked the stage forever,' he replies emphatically. 'And I'm goin' to have a ranch'" (Moving Picture World, 24 June 1916, 2213), just as Roosevelt's purchase of a spread in South Dakota changed his image forever.

This "strenuous life" of the cinema plunged Fairbanks into "one joyous round of assault and battery from beginning to end" (George Creel. "A 'Close-Up' of Douglas Fairbanks," Everybody's Magazine, December 1916, 733). Hardly a feature story on Fairbanks forges mention of his main participation in onscreen brawls: "We had some professional 'pugs' in the making of that picture," he says. "I told the boys in the beginning it was going to be real fighting, nothing easy about it at all. Nor was there. I got a bit gouged up myself." But if this meant that he had to give up his "soft" life as a Broadway actor, so be it: "No more for me the old days in New York—get up late in the morning, a stroll around to the Lamb's, a ride in the park, a nap in the afternoon, then the theater and supper afterward. Now I am called at 5 o'clock, see the doctor and get bandaged up; then out on location. If by luck we escape the doctor and ambulance it is dinner between 5 and 6 and then to bed" (Moving Picture World, 24 June 1916, 2213). The Fairbanks publicity portrays moviemaking as a rough-and-tumble occupation akin to cow-punching or log-bucking. Even when not on set, he revels in what he considers the biggest benefit of working in film: the great outdoors. One article tells a story of Fairbanks on location in the woods of northern California: For the Half-Breed. "He was never seen around the camp except when actually needed by the camera man. Upon his return from these absences, it was noticed that his hands were usually bleeding, and his clothing stained and torn. 'What in the name of mischief have you been doing now?' the director demanded on a day when Fairbanks's wardrobe was almost a total loss. 'Trappin',' chirped the star. And what was he 'trappin'? "Bobcats," of course ("A 'Close-Up' of Douglas Fairbanks," 735).

Not all his films for Triangle were westerns, but the stories about his enthusiasm for the danger and hardship of the West perform important work for Hollywood and for his persona. First, they paint a picture of filmmaking as real, mainly work at a time when the industry was especially sensitive to charges of decadence and excess (in this respect, the publicity about Fairbanks is not entirely unique). Second, they reflect the characterization of acting as soft and self-indulgent to Broadway and the East. Third, they make sure that Fairbanks is on the correct side of this equation. But Fairbanks and Hollywood walked a fine line here. On one hand, the discourse on actors at this time worked hard to differentiate film acting from stage acting by emphasizing "work" and "manliness." On the other hand, this discourse also played up the fantasy of "regular fellows" earning millions, owning mansions, and living the high life just for "being themselves." So the alliance with the values of the West is never complete; there is always some part of the ideology that craves the wealth and stature associated with the East. Much of the time Roosevelt spent on the "ranch" was actually spent living in New York; likewise, the split in Fairbanks's films and persona is not merely convenient or deceptive, but structural, a part of the fantasy itself. Fairbanks works this split explicitly into his filmmaking practice and his characters. And, like Roosevelt, he allegorically balances or synthesizes the "manliness" of the West and the "civilization" of the East (see Bederman; Studlar, This Mad Masquerade).

Indeed, if we look closely, the features of Fairbanks's stage persona are not eradicated, only adjusted. If he was always known for his athleticism, then his move to Hollywood only shifted the terms of that motif from polo and rowing to fistfights and rodeos. Athleticism was still a key element of his star persona, only now it was directed toward more "manly" (that is, filmic) pursuits. Similarly, the emphasis on honesty and sincerity in his Broadway persona finds a new angle in film: realism and authenticity. One article elegantly articulates his new athleticism and authenticity: "The slapstick comedian knows how to 'break' a fall and to continue nimbly about his business, but not so with Douglas. He falls hard; he lands squarely; he gives and takes a left swing that rattles the molars like dice" (Motion Picture Classic, July 1916, 18). He falls hard and he lands squarely—the connection between physical action, filmic realism, and Fairbanks's personal honesty could not be more explicit, nor the repudiation of Broadway: "In nine cases out of ten, the 'legitimate' star, going over into pictures, evades and avoids the 'rough stuff.' But not Fairbanks, who is "one of the few movie heroes who have never had a 'double'" ("A 'Close-Up' of Douglas Fairbanks," 733). Not having a stunt double apparently means submitting oneself to the "true" demands of the camera. The camera's gaze is a test of authenticity and stout character, as Harry Aitken explains: "In the speaking drama, make-up and footlights change and hide, but not the least flicker of expression is lost in the picture. It's a test of realism, and it takes a real man or a real woman to stand it." Of course, this configuration of filmic realism, personal integrity, masculinity, and personality also neatly explains away Fairbanks's limited emotional range and acting skills; he just plays himself. But in the end, his authentic "personality" is precisely the source of his
appeal. Everybody loves "Doug" as just a "regular guy," not as an "actor." For example, Fairbanks recruits for his films "riders and ropers and cowboys of the old school. 'He men'—every one of them, and for a time they looked with dislike and suspicion upon the 'star,' but when they saw that Fairbanks did not ask for any 'double,' and took the hardest tumble with a grin, they received him into their fellowship with a heartfelt yell" ("A 'Close-Up' of Douglas Fairbanks," 735). Even the toughest among us cannot resist his down-to-earth optimism and honesty.

This portrayal of Fairbanks as a man's man definitely fits into larger cultural trends expressing the anxieties of white, middle-class males at the turn of the century, as Studlar argues (see also Lear). But for Fairbanks there was a personal stake in this portrayal as well. At a moment when Triangle was trying unsuccessfully to sell stage stars to the masses, Fairbanks differentiated himself from his theatrical colleagues by adjusting and emphasizing certain aspects of his established persona in order to appeal to movie-going audiences. Even though he returned often to New York, he made it clear through his movies and press that he preferred California. He forsakes the soft life of the stage for the hard, strenuous life of film. He turns his considerable athletic talents toward exuberant and authentic fight scenes for the benefit of a thrill-seeking audience. He makes sure that this audience sees and knows exactly who he is—a straight shooter who would never lie or use a "double." This adjustment was wildly successful. In fact, at the end of an interview one journalist laments, "I could not help but wish, after spending an hour and a half with Mr. Fairbanks, that there were more real red-blooded actors like him on the screen and less dolled-up beauties with neatly pressed suits and a 'How charmed' expression" (Motion Picture Magazine, December 1916, 68). And as George Creel would conclude, "Let no one quarrel with this popularity. It is a good sign, a healthful sign, a token that the blood of America still runs warm and red, and that chalk has not yet softened our bones" ("A 'Close-Up' of Douglas Fairbanks," 738). In the Aircraft era, from 1917 through 1918, which coincided with U.S. involvement in World War I, Fairbanks would indeed become the symbol of "red-blooded" Americanism. During this period, other aspects of his persona also became prominent. Although he still alternated his western-themed films with modern comedies, the discourse around Fairbanks emphasized roles other than rowdy cowboy: businessman, author, popular philosopher, patriot. Youthfulness and optimism were emphasized more in the feature stories and films than his western-edged manliness. This western masculinity did not disappear, but the investment in it was not quite so insistent or obviously compensatory. Youthfulness and optimism, of course, were impor-

Fairbanks was the foundation of the alliance between "The Big Three": Mary Pickford, Fairbanks, and Charles Chaplin on location during the filming of Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm (1917). Courtesy of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

tant facets of his persona since his Broadway days, but those characteristics took on a special resonance as Fairbanks's health, success, and sunny determination were mobilized in service of wartime "preparedness."

By the end of 1916, the writing was on the wall at Triangle. Aitken's enthusiastic spending was catching up to him and the receipts from his
company's films, even including the Fairbanks features, were not nearly enough to soak up all the red ink. Fairbanks left for New York in mid-December 1916 and it was fairly clear that he was not coming back to Triangle. The publication that month of two high-profile feature stories on him now looks less than coincidental—he was probably promoting himself in preparation for free agency, even though he was making $10,000 a week with Triangle. Sure enough, in early January he sent out press releases indicating he was dissatisfied with his Triangle contract and was opening the bidding for his services, aiming for a phenomenal $15,000 weekly salary (Variety, 12 January 1917, 1; Moving Picture World, 27 January 1917, 537). His existing contract posed less of a problem than one might expect, since the agreement stipulated that D. W. Griffith would "supervise" all the Fairbanks films and it was easily proved that Griffith had nothing to do with them. Assured that he was on safe ground legally, he was ready to strike out on his own, advised by the savvy Mary Pickford. They had met in New York in 1915 and now Fairbanks shared her business model exactly: he set up his own production company and negotiated a distribution deal with Adolph Zukor's Famous Players--Lasky under the Artcraft label, which had been established in July 1916 to distribute Pickford's films (New York Times, 7 February 1917, 11; Variety, 9 February 1917, 18). After a final brief legal back-and-forth with Triangle, Fairbanks was making his first film for Artcraft by the beginning of March.

At Artcraft, Fairbanks continued to enjoy a bi-coastal lifestyle that allowed him to make most of his films in Hollywood while returning to New York occasionally to make one or two. In fact, even though the West played an important role in shaping his film persona, most of his features were modern urban comedies. In these, Fairbanks plays two types of characters. In films such as The Habit of Happiness, Reggie Mixes In, The Matrimoniac, The Americano (all Triangle, 1916), or Down to Earth and A Modern Musketeer (both Artcraft, 1917), Fairbanks plays a "regular fellow": a capable, exuberant young man who is presented with a problem and sets about solving it with pluck and resolve (see Thompson, "Fairbanks"). Unlike many of his western-themed films, in which the contrast between East and West is written into the character's eventual transformation, there is very little duality in "Sunny Wiggins" of Habit or "Ned Thacker" of Musketeer. Instead we have, in such cases as Sunny and Ned, a character whose main traits are optimism, youthful athleticism, determination, and an ability to move freely among vastly different social milieux. Sunny Wiggins, for example, comes from a wealthy family but rejects the exclusivity of the upper class—the film opens with him sharing his bedroom with a dozen or so homeless men he ran into the night before. Sunny is something of a professional optimist who believes that anyone's life can be improved by the power of laughter. He tests his theory successfully at a flophouse, and is eventually engaged to cheer up a morose industrialist. Meanwhile, he uses his good humor to quell a potential riot in a company town. Sunny's success among the different classes rests with his disarming smile: it is his main tool in attaining his goals and deflecting class hostility. Habit's Sunny thus sets a pattern for many of Fairbanks's later goal-oriented protagonists.

In films such as His Picture in the Papers, Flirting with Fate, American Aristocracy (all Triangle, 1916), or Reaching for the Moon (Artcraft, 1917), Fairbanks plays another kind of character, one who possesses many of the same traits discussed above, but with a subtle duality similar but not identical to that found in Gerald of The Lamb. Here the character starts off not weak or foppish, as Gerald is, but instead distracted or directionless. Sometimes the character is obsessed with something, such as self-help books or his possible royal lineage in Reaching. At other times, as in Picture, he is just bored, especially with corporate culture (Osterman). In Picture, Fairbanks plays Pete, the son of Proteus Prindle, a publicity-friendly health-food mogul and producer of "Prindle's 27 Vegetarian Varieties," such as "Prindle's Macerated Morsels," "Prindle's Perforated Peas," or "Prindle's Dessicated Dumplings." Pete has a job with the company, but he is unhappiest about selling the Prindle line or buying the Prindle philosophy. Instead, he enjoys sleeping until noon and taking a cocktail or steak on the side. If he wants the girl, however, her father demands that he have half-interest in the Prindle company; in order for him to get that company interest, Prindle the elder demands that young Pete stir up some good publicity. The rest of the film reveals Pete's unsuccessful attempts to get "his picture in the papers." There are plenty of occasions for the usual Fairbanks stunts, but ultimately he gets the girl and the attention he needs by winning a boxing match against "Battling Burke" and by overpowering a group of ruffians who have plotted against the girl's father. In Picture, Reaching, and others, the Fairbanks character displays dissolution or distractedness that is transformed into focused and relentless determination, another common pattern in his films. In fact, Fairbanks's films of the teens—whether western or eastern, Triangle, Artcraft, or early United Artists—mix and match different character traits and narrative trajectories established in his first films for Triangle, The Lamb, His Picture in the Papers, and The Habit of Happiness.

We should also note Picture's parody of publicity and the health-food craze, a gentle satire of modern fads that would continue with some of the Artcraft films, especially those written by Anita Loos and directed by John
Emerson, Emerson and Loos worked on Picture while they were employed at Triangle, and Fairbanks enjoyed collaborating with them. Loos wrote seven of Fairbanks's thirteen Triangle films and Emerson co-wrote and directed three of those seven. In late 1916, after their work on his final Triangle feature, The Americans, Fairbanks announced that he would demand that Loos write the titles for all his films (Moving Picture World, 2 December 1916; 1337). At that point, of course, he was almost done with Triangle, but he was able to keep his promise when he created his own production company. He signed Loos and Emerson immediately (although he had to buy out Emerson's Triangle contract) and the three of them collaborated on four of his first five features for Artcraft. Loos was known for her witty titles and satirical stories, which sometimes even poked fun at the Fairbanks persona—Doug was never one to take himself too seriously. Emerson and Loos left the Fairbanks company in late 1917 (Moving Picture World, 29 December 1917; 1948), but the collaboration produced some of Fairbanks's most memorable early films. Perhaps the best example of a film that simultaneously promotes and parodies the Fairbanks persona is Wild and Woolly (1917). Fairbanks plays Jeff Hillington, a rambunctious easterner with an enthusiasm for the Wild West. The son of a New York-based railroad tycoon, Jeff enjoys the trappings of upper-class life, but he wants none of the corporate culture that makes it possible. Instead, he likes camping with a teepee and saddle—in his bedroom. The residents of Bitter Creek, Arizona, are so eager to get a railroad spur through their town that they transform their modern village into a replica of the Old West just to please Jeff, who visits as the railroad's emissary. Recalling Manhattan Madness, the townspeople give Jeff a hero's role to play, a mystery to solve, and, thankfully, a gun loaded with blanks. When local villains cause the plan to go awry, Jeff is ready with western skills and a suitcase full of real bullets. Part of the film's considerable charm comes from the pleasing echo between Jeff's role in the town's plot and Fairbanks's movie stunts: both Jeff and the stunts have been set up to succeed, but still require real talent to pull off in the end.

Similarly, in Reaching for the Moon Fairbanks plays a sincere young man inspired by self-help books and taken with his quasi-aristocratic heritage (his mother was a member of the banished court of fictional Vulgaria). Fairbanks was intrigued by royalty and this is the first film of many to flirt with the idea of Doug-as-monarch. In Reaching, royal genealogy turns out to be a dream, but the fantasy will recur in later films and publicity in the 1920s. The earnestness with which Doug's character takes advice from self-help books is especially fun, particularly since early in his Artcraft era Fairbanks developed another dimension of his persona: author and popular philosopher of precisely these kinds of motivational volumes. Probably again inspired by Roosevelt, who was a prolific author, Fairbanks published two titles in quick succession: Laugh and Live in April 1917 and Making Life Worthwhile in 1918. These books outline, in Fairbanks's voice, his recipe for success and his personal philosophy of life. Laugh and Live was particularly popular, reportedly selling 400,000 copies in a year (Moving Picture World, 2 November 1918; 607). These were not the first words to appear under the Fairbanks name, however. As early as 1912 he had been publishing stories and articles from his point of view (see "Those Guileless Ruralites," Green Book Magazine, August 1912, or "Styles in Farce," Theatre Magazine, January 1913). After the move to Artcraft, the number of essays and columns published under his name steadily increased. Most Fairbanks biographers agree, however, that he could not sit still long enough to read a book, much less write one, and that the articles and books were the work of his trusted secretary, Kenneth Davenport (Schickel, His Picture 48; Vance 42). Nevertheless, the books provide an even more interesting view of the Fairbanks persona, since now we can hear them as the voice of someone who imagines who "Doug" is. That is, if "Doug" is an entity comprising all the representations of Fairbanks, then the ghostwritten articles and books neatly fit that category.

They also neatly fit the war effort. Indeed, Fairbanks was one of the most prominent and most frequently called-upon celebrities in the effort to stir up money and domestic fervor for an initially unpopular conflict. Behind this we can count his own enthusiastic patriotism, but also his connection to George Creel, a journalist who wrote an important early feature article on Fairbanks ("A 'Close-Up' of Douglas Fairbanks") and who became one of the chief architects of the domestic propaganda machine in his capacity as chairman of the Committee on Public Information (see also Creel, How We Advertised America). Fairbanks worked especially hard as a fund-raiser for the war, first by sponsoring a number of rodeos around the West designed to raise money for the Red Cross, and second as an active member of the "Liberty Loan" tours, during which he became acquainted with Secretary of the Treasury William McAdoo, one of the other principal planners of the domestic effort (see Kennedy 98–106). Fairbanks also made films to advertise the Liberty Loan bond drives: Swat the Kaiser and Six 'em, Sam (both 1918) were allegorical shorts starring Fairbanks and his crew. In addition, his first Artcraft film, In Again—Out Again (April 1917), toyed with wartime themes (such as pacifism and munitions-factory sabotage), even if it is the only Fairbanks film to do so. So the appearance of Laugh and Live in April 1917 not only coincides with—and is intended to publicize—his
Artcraft debut; it also coincidentally performs the same promotional work for the entry of the United States into the war that same month.

Or perhaps it was not so coincidental. By April 1917 there had already been an active and public debate about the extent of America's involvement in the European conflict. Ex-president Theodore Roosevelt, for one, was a vigorous spokesman for military "preparedness." Indeed, "preparedness" is a prominent theme in Laugh and Live, but not in terms of the military. Instead, "Doug" argues that if we commit ourselves to "good health and good minds," then "all we need to do is to go about the program of life cheerfully and stout of heart—for now we are in a state of preparedness" (Fairbanks 19, emphasis in original). "Preparedness" for what? Success, naturally—as in all books of this genre, the actual goals are left vague in order to match those of the reader. But the Fairbanks keys to preparedness and success—"Living in the open air, sleeping out of doors, taking the proper exercise, looking wholesomely upon life, believing in ourselves," and so on and so on—are also ways to counter fears of degeneration and weakness. According to "Doug," "Sturdy qualities are the necessary ones. Over-refinement leads to the softer life and oftentimes to degeneracy. Exalted ego is an indication of degeneracy and may have been inherited" (52–53). Like Roosevelt before him, Fairbanks prescribes "good health," "vigoruous exercise," and "the will to do" as antidotes to generational decay and feminization (see Herman; Bederman; Dyer, Theodore). If Roosevelt spoke of preparedness in terms of military vulnerability and war or empire as the remedy for decadence, then Fairbanks borrowed this rhetoric for the more modest, but not incompatible, goal of self-improvement. We see this same rhetoric in some of his films. In The Lamb and The Mollycoddle (1920), Fairbanks's character descends from a long line of stalwarts, which ends, comically, in a whimper of a man. In both films, an encounter with the great outdoors of the West reverses this decline. In his third Artcraft film, Down to Earth, he plays a regular fellow whose beloved has a taste for the cloistered life of high-society parties. After she has a nervous breakdown and checks into a sanitarium, Fairbanks buys the clinic (!) and tricks the patients (all with such "modern" ailments as neurasthenia or hypochondria) into a trip to a "desert island," where he forces them to sleep out of doors, take the proper exercise, and so forth until they are cured. Fairbanks was practically the poster boy for the anti-degeneration crusade.

During the Artcraft era, certain aspects of the Fairbanks persona were adjusted and became prominent. His youthfulness and athleticism were adapted to stress good health, exercise, and clean living, while his optimism was easily translated into good humor in the face of obstacles. This was accomplished mostly in print. A series for the Los Angeles Times, titled "I'll Tell You How to Live," explained his philosophy of exercise and cheerfulness. Timed to coincide with the third Liberty Loan tour, the series promotes the tour and implores the reader to "meet your troubles with a smile" (1–4 October 1918, 14, 15, 14). Another feature presents Fairbanks as "A Shining Example of the Value of Exercise" at a time when, reportedly, "Uncle Sam [is] turning down five out of every six would-be volunteers because of inability to pass the physical examination" (Los Angeles Times, 8 May 1917, 3:1). It is remarkable how easily his persona could be accommodated to the wartime emphasis on hygiene, determination, and sacrifice.

☆☆☆☆☆ United Artists

The Liberty Loan tours also prepared the American public for events other than the war: the union of Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks, on one hand, and on the other, the union of those two and Charles Chaplin in a business venture called United Artists. These three had been connected in the press by virtue of their enormous celebrity status and even more enormous salaries (see, for example, "Three Film Stars Get $1,000,000 a Year Each," New York Times, 27 May 1917, 62). Chaplin and Fairbanks had been good friends since Fairbanks arrived in Hollywood, and Doug and Mary were becoming notoriously closer—the third Liberty Loan drive in April 1918 was marred by Beth Sully's unexpected announcement that she and Fairbanks were separated, citing an unnamed woman whom anyone over the age of ten could probably name (Chicago Tribune, 12 April 1918, 10). Sully received a divorce from Fairbanks by the end of the year (Los Angeles Times, 1 December 1918, 15), and his Artcraft contract expired in early 1919, so Doug could look forward to new ventures in the coming decade (Curtis; Vance). The immediate impetus for United Artists was the rumor of a merger between two industry giants, the First National exhibitors circuit and Famous Players-Lasky, which was the largest producer of films (and would later become Paramount). After ten years of the star system, industry leaders were troubled by high salaries and rising production costs; they were eager for an industry realignment that would put executives back in control (see Balio 3–29). Such a merger would have limited opportunities for production and distribution, so these three, along with D. W. Griffith and, at first, William S. Hart, banded together to protect their interests and autonomy; they signed the agreement on 15 January 1919. From the beginning, Fairbanks was instrumental in the formation of the alliance. Not only was he a mediating influence between Pickford and
Chaplin, Fairbanks, Pickford, and Griffith sign the United Artists articles of incorporation. Courtesy of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

Chaplin, who were always rather cool to one another, but his Liberty Loan connection brought William McAdoo aboard as company counsel and McAdoo’s long-time assistant, Oscar Price, as the company’s first president. The McAdoo-Price experiment failed after one year, but as Chaplin later admitted, they were brought in to lend prestige and legitimacy to the company, not film industry savvy (Balio 35). He also carried United Artists for its first year; because the other three were still tied to contracts with other companies, Fairbanks made the company’s first films in 1919, His Majesty the American (released in September) and When the Clouds Roll By (December).

United Artists was, in many respects, the next logical step for “The Big Four,” since each had been taking strides toward greater autonomy. For Fairbanks, this autonomy and success brought changes in his persona as well. On one hand, in the immediate postwar era, his status as an icon of Americanism was completely secure. For example, in January 1919 Fairbanks received a telegram from the Office of the President and the Liberty Loan people asking him to make another film that would be “used as propaganda to stem the tide of popular criticism” of the administration after the war. Fairbanks was instructed to be a “foolkiller,” who would give critics “a lecture on real Americanism and then wallop them as you did the Kaiser [in 1918’s Swat the Kaiser]. . . . This request goes to you alone” (Los Angeles Times, 10 January 1919, 2:8). This was to be one in a series of pictures by Fairbanks that would boost morale and promote four principles: “Purity of purpose,” ‘cheerfulness,’ ‘steadfastness,’ and ‘willingness to sacrifice’” (Moving Picture World, 25 January 1919, 456). There is no indication that these pictures were ever produced, but the government’s faith in Fairbanks’s image was clear. Even His Majesty the American was initially planned to extol President Woodrow Wilson’s famous 14 Points for prosecution of the impending armistice, but that plan was changed in production when the Senate refused to ratify U.S. membership in the League of Nations (Vance 78). All this led one fan magazine writer to remark, “Restless endeavor, energetic ambition, indefatigable energy, whether for work or play, pictures or politics, humanity or himself, these are the things Douglas Fairbanks typifies. He is typically American—the Fairbanks scale of Americanism is 100 per cent perfect” (Motion Picture Magazine, February 1919, 32).

But his first films for United Artists also hint at changes to his persona that would become dominant in the 1920s. With the reputation of the new company on the line, Fairbanks spared no expense to mount the largest productions of his career to date; His Majesty cost $175,000 to produce, for example. When the Clouds Roll By included the most spectacular effects and set pieces in his films so far, such as a scene in which Doug walks on the ceiling of a room (à la Fred Astaire in Royal Wedding [1951]) and a conclusion that featured an actual flood! These two films were only tastes of what was to come—in the 1920s, Fairbanks’s films would become larger, more expensive, and more grandiose, to the point that the discourse on Doug as producer almost eclipsed the discussion of his star persona.

In the same way, His Majesty the American hints at a new trend in the Fairbanks persona: Doug’s aristocratic leanings. Like Reaching for the Moon, His Majesty tells the story of an energetic American who finds that he has blood ties to royalty in a fictional Balkan state. Looking forward, this fascination with nobility is a strong theme in his films and persona of the 1920s. After his marriage to Pickford, they were crowned Hollywood royalty and their home was often a way station for visiting dignitaries and aristocrats. His swashbuckling characters of the later films were usually noblemen intent on helping the common man. In fact, it could be argued that the tension between aristocracy and Americanism that the title of His Majesty the American implies has always been in the Fairbanks oeuvre in some form or another. After all, nearly all his characters from the teens are...
comfortably middle or upper class. In the 1910s, Fairbanks negotiated this tension in a uniquely American way. Just as nineteenth-century western heroes achieved manliness by being “like” their Indian counterparts while remaining unmistakably white, the Fairbanks character achieves a democratic effect by being “like” his plebian compatriots while remaining unmistakably noble. He replaces the racial politics of the western hero with class politics, while maintaining the familiar pattern of “simultaneous kinship and superiority” (Bederman 173). In the 1910s, Fairbanks put considerable effort into maintaining this kinship. In His Majesty, his highborn character goes out of his way to entertain the chambermaids and smoke a cigar with the hansom driver, actions perfectly in keeping with the character’s “American” roots. But as the 1920s wore on and Fairbanks became the unrivaled “King of Hollywood,” this democratic kinship would give way to something more like noblesse oblige. Making only one huge film a year, traveling around the world for months at a time, greeted by crowds of fans the world had never before witnessed, it would be harder and harder for Douglas Fairbanks to pretend to his audience and to himself that he was just a “regular fellow.”

NOTES

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1. In an 1899 speech, Theodore Roosevelt advocated “the strenuous life” as an antidote to individual and national “over-civilization” and effeminacy. Roosevelt contrasted “timid peace” with the “virile qualities” required for the nation to take its place on the global stage. Hence “the strenuous life” was originally linked with Roosevelt’s imperialism, but by the mid-1900s it had become more broadly associated with any ambitious masculine endeavor. See Roosevelt Strenuous, and “Mr. Roosevelt’s Views on the Strenuous Life,” Ladies’ Home Journal, May 1906, 17.

2. The range of abilities in stories such as this may also be another Rooseveltian influence, since Roosevelt was often portrayed as a “renaissance man” of many talents. In any case, as Vance notes, “Doug” was an invention—even Douglas Jr. said of his father. “He designed the living of his life, almost from the start, coloring it as he went along. He did it so successfully that his best friends and biographers were seldom able to see him accurately” (Vance 6). We should look at all Fairbanks stories, interviews, and films equally as fiction—not as a judgement on their validity or truth value, but as works to be read for unifying patterns.

3. In her autobiography, Loos claims that she and Emerson split with Fairbanks because Doug was jealous of the critical attention they were receiving (Loos 178). There may be some truth to this, since critics did indeed lavish praise on Loos’s contributions, especially, and lamented her later absence from Fairbanks’s films.

4. For an interesting discussion of Wild and Woolly as an example of early Hollywood narrative, see Bordwell 166-68, 201-04.

5. Fairbanks also published Youth Points the Way in 1924 in association with the Boy Scouts of America. Some historians have listed other titles, such as Taking Stock of Ourselves, Initiative and Self-Reliance, or Prufiting by Experience, but these were merely excerpts from Laugh and Live reprinted and sold in pamphlet form.

6. Fairbanks is also credited with a number of scenarios for his films, which no one disputes, since his films were very collaborative ventures and he was acknowledged to be the guiding hand behind them. For a humorous parody about his scenario-writing skills, see “Doug’ Writes Plays,” Los Angeles Times, 19 August 1917, 33.