Fairbanks made a couple of minor films in the 1930s, but his heart was not in it—it finally gave out completely in 1939. Perhaps it was clear to him, as it was to almost everyone else, that his reign as King of Hollywood lasted only as long as the last decade of the silent film and his happy collaboration with Mary Pickford.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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NOTES

1. I do not want to give the impression that the Fairbanks persona was the only or even dominant factor in framing this publicity—Pickford's persona certainly played a role as well. But since this is an essay on Fairbanks, the focus is on him.

2. The Scrapbooks are located in the Douglas Fairbanks Collection, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Beverly Hills. The clipping file is in the Biographical clipping files in the same institution.

3. We mustn't forget the importance of Doug's publicist, Bennie Zeidman, in orchestrating the receptions that the couple received. He accompanied them on their European honeymoon and made sure that crowds knew where to find them and that the press was there to witness it.

4. In fact, in 1922 Fairbanks and Pickford hired Lubitsch to be their director, testifying to Fairbanks's admiration of these films and his plans for the genre. Lubitsch ended up making only *Rosita* (1923) with Pickford. See "Lubitsch to Direct Doug," *Los Angeles Times*, 29 November 1922, 2:1.

5. On Fairbanks as "First Citizen" of Beverly Hills, see Scrapbook #1, Douglas Fairbanks Collection, AMPAS, or "Will Rogers Chosen Mayor," *New York Times*, 13 December 1926, 29. For his work for the Olympic Committee, see the same scrapbook or "'Doug' Boosts Olympics," *Los Angeles Times*, 1 April 1928, A7.

6. On the early history of the Academy, see Sands. On that history from the point of view of the guilds, see "The Academy Writer-Producer Agreement," *Screen Guilds' Magazine* (October 1935), 1–3; and Frank Woods, "History of Producer-Talent Relations in the Academy," *Screen Guilds' Magazine* (November 1935), 4, 26–27.

2

Buster Keaton

Comic Invention and the Art of Moving Pictures

CHARLES WOLFE

Buster Keaton's career covered nearly seven decades, but he produced his most striking and enduring work in the 1920s, a period in which comedian-centered, physical comedy was widely regarded as a vibrant American film genre and Keaton himself was in his physical prime. In 1920 Keaton assumed the starring role at the Comique Film Corporation, an independent production company established by Joseph M. Schenck for comedian Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle three years earlier. The company was renamed Buster Keaton Productions in 1922, and Keaton would continue to make comedies under this banner until 1928. He was among a handful of silent comedians schooled in vaudeville knockabout who in the 1920s came to exercise substantial control over the production of their films, made a successful transition from short comedies to features, and achieved international stardom on a scale that would not have been possible on the stage. He was regularly profiled in fan magazines, newspapers, and the trade press on topics of both professional and personal interest. Like his two principal rivals, Charlie Chaplin and Harold Lloyd, he attracted the attention of trade journalists and critics who were tracking changes in the form, style, and tone of motion picture comedy in the 1920s, and he became a focal point for discussions about the contribution of physical slapstick to the "mechanical" art of the screen.

Keaton's fortunes would change dramatically at the end of the silent era. Signing on as a contract star at MGM during the transitional years to talkies, he found himself increasingly constrained by studio policies and practices. Personal setbacks—a painful divorce from Natalie Talmadge, whom he had married in 1921 when his stardom was in ascent, and a debilitating drinking habit—also took a toll. By the mid-1930s he had settled into a steady stream of less celebrated roles in low-budget comedy shorts, cameo roles in features, and work behind the camera, chiefly as a gag writer and comedy advisor. In the 1950s and 1960s, he added television, commercials, and industrial films to the mix and, drawing on skills honed as a child star in vaudeville many decades before, occasionally appeared in stock company theatrical road shows and in circuses in France and Belgium. To a modest degree, then, Keaton remained in the public eye. But the reputation of his silent comedies depended fragilely on rare screenings of a few surviving films at the Museum of Modern Art and other art film venues in the United States and abroad.

This situation would change in the 1960s and 1970s, thanks in large measure to the efforts of entrepreneurial film collector Raymond Rohauer. Entering into a financial agreement with Keaton, Rohauer acquired and assembled prints of nearly all of the nineteen short and ten feature-length comedies Keaton made between 1920 and 1928, some of which Keaton himself believed to be lost. With this collection in hand, Rohauer organized a series of highly successful Keaton retrospectives, first in Europe, then in the United States (McGregor 32–33). These screenings generated a wave of new critical writing and popular commentary on Keaton's early movie comedies, the first European stirrings of which surfaced in the years just prior to his death in 1966. By the time of the first U.S. retrospectives in New York and Los Angeles in the early 1970s, his silent screen persona had gained new currency and definition as the "Great Stone Face," emphasizing the figure's silent stoicism and reserve, and in short order Keaton's standing rose as a neglected American artist of the first rank. Yet even as these comedies came under renewed scrutiny, the history of their initial production and reception—of films made, publicized, viewed, and reviewed in the 1920s—remained a remote and vaguely formulated backdrop to most critical accounts.

This essay examines the history of Keaton's star image as it emerged and developed during the course of the 1920s. I begin, however, with a broader frame, placing details of Keaton's biography within the context of early-twentieth-century debates about American art and technology, the terms of which illuminate aspects of Keaton's professional training and experiences, and have a bearing on the critical vocabulary and concepts through which his comedies were assessed, both in the short and long term. In an essay on the history of the mischief gag in American silent comedy, Tom Gunning has proposed that the romance of Keaton's characters with "devices of a heroic but already fading age of machines and energy (the locomotive, the steamboat)" are exemplary of silent comedy's inheritance of a nineteenth-century "operational aesthetic," in which pleasure is derived from the demonstration of mechanical processes (Gunning 100). In a complementary formulation, Noël Carroll has suggested that Keaton's comedy served a compensatory function for viewers in the 1920s, allowing renewed pleasure in acts of everyday, practical intelligence in an era when the economic value of such skills had eroded (Carroll 63–71). Testing propositions of this sort require that we consider Keaton's reputation in relation to historical evidence of different kinds and on different scales: biographical accounts, institutional discourses close to the production and distribution of the films, and cultural criticism that unfolded across regional and national boundaries and over time. Of particular concern here are the ways in which commentaries on Keaton's comedies became enmeshed in conversations about the power of motion pictures as a modern art form—perhaps *the* modern art form—an idea in circulation far in advance of Keaton's revival in the 1960s and 1970s, and with more intricate implications for his star image than a rudimentary picture of a "Great Stone Face" conveys.

Technological Aesthetics and the Mechanics of Film Comedy

In an effort to define a distinctively American approach to art, cultural critics in the United States during the interwar years identified a national tradition of artful craftsmanship that emphasized the beauty of everyday objects and the technical ingenuity of the ordinary worker. American art, viewed in this light, took its most characteristic forms within the context of various functional applications: in the clarity of plain, colloquial language; in the simplicity of Shaker furniture and music; in the geometry of rural barns and urban bridges; in the movement of clipper ships, steamboats, and railroad locomotives; and in precision hand tools that were practical, free of ornamentation, and widely accessible. Equating engineering with creativity, the ideal of a vernacular aesthetic tradition based on principles of technological design was thought to connect art with public life in a more robust and democratic way than did genteel forms of literature or painting or concert music, fine art reserved for the museum or upper-class drawing room and set apart from worldly, material concerns (see Mumford *Sticks*, *Brown*; Pupin; Rourke; Kouwenhoven).

At the same time, the notion of an aesthetic of technological craftsmanship had to be reconciled with changing modes of commerce and a burgeoning consumer culture ushered in by the second industrial revolution. By the end of the nineteenth century, the broadening scale of industrial design and accelerating pace of technological change called into question the role of the imaginative inventor or mechanical tinker who, either individually or in collaboration with others, crafted solutions to local problems with the materials at hand. Funded by corporate capital, industrial research and design provided a new model for technological experimentation and innovation, with individual performance measured by standards of productivity and efficiency established for the operation of the system overall. The "beauty" of the assembly line production methods introduced by Henry Ford in 1907, commentators frequently noted, resided not in any single activity, human or mechanical, but in the conceptual logic of a rationalized, fully integrated economic operation. So too the public space of the city was imagined as a place in which private interests competed for control of vertically tiered spaces and required complex systems of transportation that carried mobile workers in carefully timed, coordinated patterns not wholly visible to the human eye (see Hughes, *American* 184–248; Smith, *Making* 15–158).

For many European intellectuals attuned to these changes in the early twentieth century, an older myth of an American Arcadia was now complicated by a new myth of the American Metropolis. In common parlance "Americanism" came to represent an ethos of accelerated, aggressive technological change, a primitive energy that seemed to leapfrog civilized habits and customs on its way toward a future of unprecedented velocity and power. In some quarters the future this portended was embraced. In the early 1920s artists allied with the Bauhaus in Germany drew upon American tenets of industrial efficiency in formulating new principles of design for mass-produced goods. The work of American engineers in part inspired the new International Style of architecture—clean, hard-edged, and angular—made famous by Walter Gropius (of the Bauhaus), Le Corbusier, and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe. In the USSR social planners wedded Frederick Taylor's principles of scientific management to scientific Marxism in the design of a newly centralized economic and political system. Shorn of any rational economic application, an American machine aesthetic also was celebrated by avant-garde artists in Italy, Russia, France, and Germany for the radical break it offered with bourgeois customs and norms. At the same time, critics of industrial modernity, in the United States as well as Europe, lamented the apparent liquidation of western traditions by the juggernaut of American technocratic culture, calling attention to contemporary social pathologies—alienated workers, urban poverty and disease, psychological disintegration and neurosis, class conflict and war—which seemed to belie the political logic by which economic and technological innovations frequently were justified. How reasonable, after all, were processes of corporate rationalization that fragmented human activity and ruptured community ties? If new technologies promised enhanced utility and power, critics asked, utility and power for whom? And at what cultural, psychological, or ethical cost (see Gramsci; Marcuse; Jay 173–218; Hughes, *American* 249–352; de Grazia)?

Patterns of economic and social development in the United States, however, were far more variegated than the equation of "Fordism" with "Americanism" suggests. The accelerated growth of modern industry in the 1910s and 1920s was limited largely to the northeast corridor and upper Midwest, with small pockets of rapid urban development in cities in the West and South. Vast stretches of farm and ranch land across the Great Plains and Deep South were cut off from electricity until the introduction of federal rural electrification programs in the mid-1930s. As Susan Hegeman has argued, regional differences of this kind help to explain conspicuous anomalies in linear historical accounts of America's cultural modernization in the putative "Jazz Age," including the flight of American expatriate writers to Europe, the anti-technological fervor of the Southern Agrarians, William Faulkner's imaginative commitments to rural Mississippi and Willa Cather's to the prairie lands and desert, Georgia O'Keeffe's abandonment of Manhattan for Taos, New Mexico, and the fascination of ethnographers and artists with craft traditions of Appalachia and the indigenous culture of the America Southwest. While the association of industrial modernity with America may be part of the mythology of modernism that we have inherited, Hegeman proposes, these provincial interests point to a more historically embedded, geographically variegated modernism in which urban centers operate in tension with outlining sectors, across regional and national boundaries, and contemporary social articulations are informed by provincial and transnational circumstances and inflected by the deep pull of the past (21–24). Although early cinema, including early cinema comedy, has in recent years often been linked to the rise of industrial modernity, understanding the emergence of Buster Keaton as a film star requires attention to these more variable, regional concerns.

Keaton arrived on the scene of these wide-ranging changes neither a social thinker nor a self-conscious artist but rather a comic performer and filmmaker whose activities are illuminated by contemporaneous cultural debates. His temperament and training were in accord with the nineteenth-century tradition of technological ingenuity, of practical invention and creative problem solving in local or regional settings. At the same time, his career trajectory through vaudeville and motion pictures brought him into contact with the full force of industrial modernity in an accelerated phase. As a young child Keaton briefly traveled a rough-and-tumble medicine show circuit with his parents, a life of itinerant comic performance and provisional social relations pursued through territory that only a few years before had defined for an expansionist nation notions of an American "frontier." But medicine show vagabondism by the Keaton family gave way to a modern form of regulated, urban entertainment, with schedules organized by powerful vaudeville booking offices and made possible by a network of railroad lines connecting dispersed cities and towns. Vaudeville promised unprecedented publicity for the once backwater Keaton family, and elevated Buster as a child performer to stardom at a very young age, but it also imposed new constraints that his father, known for a roughneck manner, openly resisted, at times in violent ways (Keaton 87–88).

Performance in moving pictures complicated this dynamic. Upon first joining the Comique Film Corporation in March 1917, Keaton later recalled, he was excited and fascinated by the studio environment, as well as by the mechanics of the camera in which Roscoe Arbuckle quickly schooled him (Keaton 91–93). In a 1958 interview, Keaton claimed that "the first thing I did in the studio was to want to tear that camera to pieces. I had to know how that film got into the cutting-room, what you did to it in there, how you projected it, how you finally got the picture together, and how you made things match" (Franklin and Franklin 67–68). Moviemaking at Comique offered the possibility of creative work with fellow actors, writers, and technicians in an intensely collaborative environment. Here a performance, no longer an ephemeral theatrical event, could be recorded, edited, and organized on film as a fixed work of fiction. Motion pictures also greatly expanded the audience for Keaton's comic skills. In 1908, the Keaton family performed briefly in England, the single exposure of foreign audiences to the child star during his early years on stage (Keaton 51–63). Two decades later the replicable image of "Buster" was recognizable to moviegoers around the world.

Throughout his long career, however, Keaton was averse to the trappings of stardom, deriving pleasure principally from private hobbies and retreats, apart from the world of show business and celebrity. From childhood on he was fascinated by mechanical devices and gadgets, designed and operable by hand. During his teenage years in vaudeville, he delighted in summers spent at Bluffton, a performer's colony near Lake Michigan, where practical jokes—a trick-wire fishing pole, a fly-away outhouse—could be rigged in wide open spaces (Blesh 64–76; Keaton 39–42). A Browniekar roadster, bought off the floor of Macy's department store in 1909, inaugurated Keaton's life-long ownership of eccentric mechanized vehicles, ranging in size from miniature trains to a thirty-foot motorized "land yacht" that in the early 1930s briefly doubled as his home (Blesh 69–70, 329–30). At the height of his fame, Keaton preferred an unpretentious California bungalow to the ornate "Italian Villa" favored by Natalie, the middle sister of Norma and Constance Talmadge, both stars in their own right, and both also under contract to Schenck, and at the time Norma's husband. In his last years, with his third wife, Eleanor, he settled comfortably into a modest San Fernando Valley home, nestled between a cornfield and a horse ranch, with its scattered barnyard animals, hen house, bunkhouse, vegetable garden, orchard, and saloon-style bar, a semi-rustic retreat he referred to as a "thinking man's farm."[1] Here he continued to tinker with gadgets, contraptions, and toy trains, the late comic designs of a tirelessly inventive mind.

As a working comic actor and filmmaker in the 1920s, Keaton found a haven of a kind in his own production company under the corporate supervision of Schenck. Upon advancing Keaton to the lead position at Comique, Schenck negotiated a distribution deal with Metro, a firm recently strengthened through its purchase by the entertainment powerhouse, Loews, and managed by Schenck's brother, Nicholas. Keaton was cast in a lead role in an upcoming Metro feature, *The Saphead* (1921), which served to get his name into wider circulation. Shot in the spring of 1920, the film's release the following February helped to establish his credentials as a legitimate movie star (Krämer *Saphead*). For the production of his own short comedies, Keaton moved into Charlie Chaplin's old Lone Star studio, a small facility in Hollywood that Metro had taken over after Chaplin departed, and located on a city block adjacent to Metro's more expansive, factory-like complex. By 1922 the sign above the main office at 1025 Lillian Way read "'Buster Keaton' Comedies." Here he was able to exercise principal control over the writing, directing, and editing of his films, even as Schenck took advantage of the industrial clout of Metro—and for eleven of the short films, First National—in the marketing and distribution of these comedies. Deeply engaged by the craft of filmmaking, Keaton entrusted financial concerns to Schenck, an arrangement that served Keaton well until he joined MGM as a contract star in 1928.

Had he not been born into a theatrical family, Keaton later speculated, he might have found his calling as a civil engineer (Keaton 24). His penchant for comic performance, we can infer, drew on an engineer's imagination, but one freed of wholly practical demands, allowing Keaton the luxury of playing with the very notion of functional planning and design in non-utilitarian ways. Screenwriter Anita Loos, close friend of the Talmadge sisters in the 1920s, recalls visiting the Italian Villa at the time of Keaton's mounting estrangement from his socially ambitious in-laws and discovering him working outdoors alone. He "was digging a tiny ditch in which water trickled aimlessly," she reports. "Buster was as intent as if he were constructing the Panama Canal. When I asked what he was doing, he replied, 'Just having fun! I can make my little ditch go anywhere I choose . . . to the right . . . or left or straight ahead.' He paused to sigh in satisfaction. *'I sure have authority over my little creek'*" (Loos 116). Loos's recollection condenses several familiar strands of biographical commentary: Keaton's tendency to retreat from the social orbit of the smart set; his delight with pseudo-practical projects, at once directed and aimless; and behind the self-deprecating humor his edginess about matters of authority or control.

Within the framework of a fictional scenario, the authority to shape the course of comic events could be equally absorbing. Friends and colleagues frequently noted that Keaton brought to all his creative projects in the 1920s formidable powers of concentration and a fierce attention to detail. We get a sense of this from Keaton's own retrospective lament for the disintegration of the family's vaudeville act in the winter of 1916–1917, undermined by his father's intemperate drinking and a taxing schedule of three performances a day at second-tier theaters on the West Coast. Keaton recalled for Rudi Blesh: "What a beautiful thing it had been. That beautiful timing we had—beautiful to see, beautiful to do. The sound of the laughs,

solid, right where you knew they would be. . . . But look at what happened—standing up and bopping each other like a cheap film" (81). Playmaking for Keaton, in short, required discipline. In contrast, a crude bop on the head, straight up—that is to say, not properly *set up*—was degrading, devoid of craft. On similar grounds he expressed dismay at the cavalier approach to moviemaking of sound-era comedy teams such as Abbott and Costello and the Marx Brothers, whom he advised in later years (Markle 161). The control or mastery to which Keaton was committed, however, was something other than the rationalizing force of corporate systems. Rather, it involved a careful, at times mathematical, approach to comic choreography, capable of incorporating surprising trajectories and playful detours.

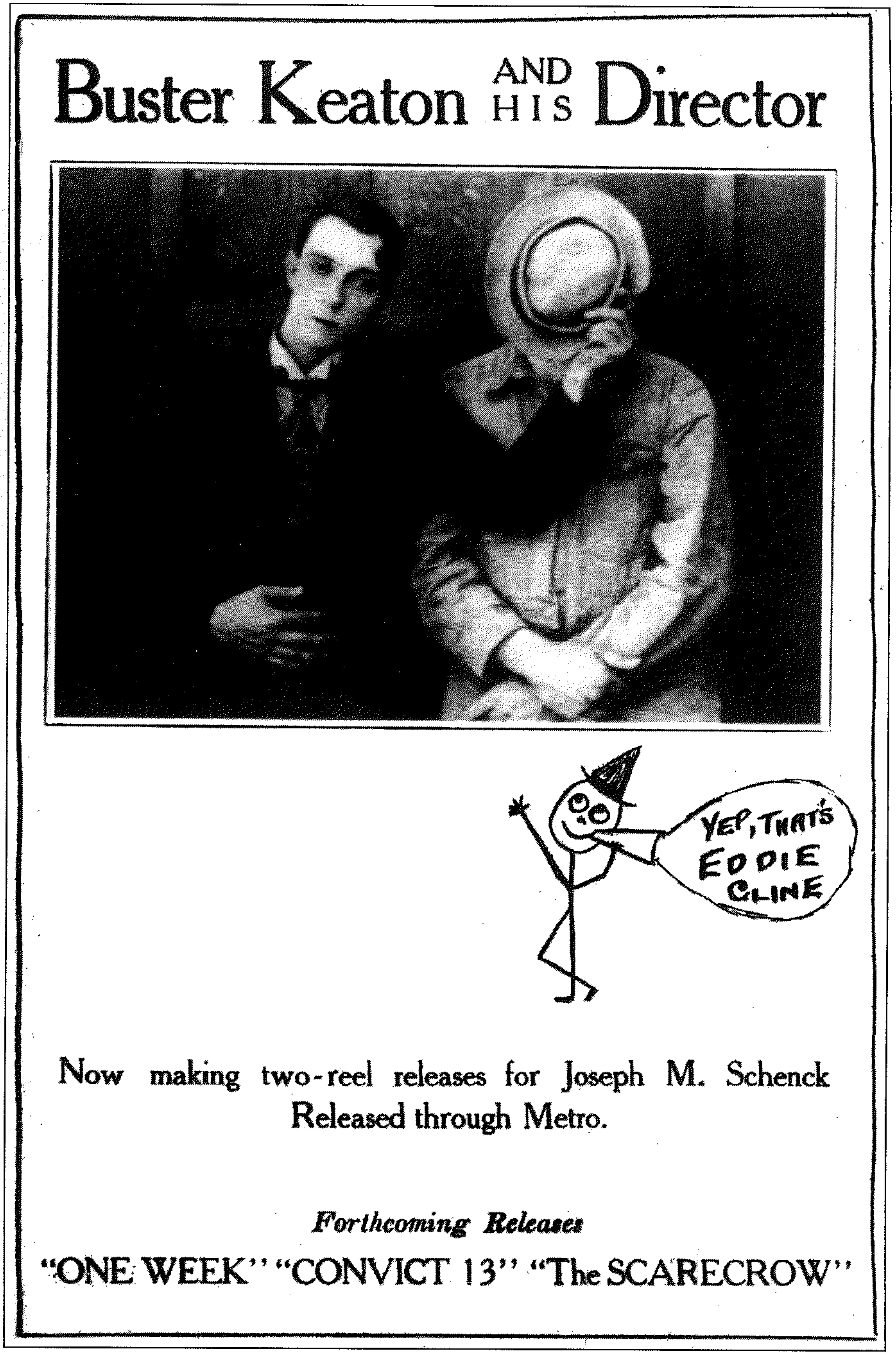
Filmmaking under Schenck's loose supervision allowed Keaton and his collaborators—studio manager Lou Anger; co-writer-director (on the shorts) Eddie Cline; cinematographer Elgin Lessley; technical director Fred Gabourie; and writers Clyde Bruckman, Jean Havez, Joe Mitchell, and others on many of the features—time to discover and elaborate comedy business before the camera, to eliminate mistakes or revise dull action, and to assemble pieces of celluloid in a precise way. Repeated for the camera, extended or compressed, edited to different rhythms and in relation to different sequences, comic performances provided the raw material from which new plastic and kinetic forms could be constructed. Comic films, from this angle, might be thought of as complex arrangements of movable parts: the gag as gadget, the plot as a system of finely tuned levers, pulleys, springs, trip wires, and traps. To study film technique, in this broader sense, was to explore the central mechanisms of movie comedy—its familiar gags and large-scale structures; its recurring characters, settings, and themes—in search of new contexts for the engagement of a comic performer with the physical world.

The Invention of Buster Keaton

Publicity materials produced by Comique and Metro to launch Keaton's career as a solo film comedian in the fall of 1920 highlighted not only his physical agility and resiliency—key attractions of his athletic style dating back to his years as a vaudeville performer—but his experience, judgment, and authority as a craftsman of comedy. The cover story of Metro's press book accompanying the release of his first short, *One Week*, in October 1920 sketched a narrative of Keaton's personal and professional maturation. On the brink of motion picture stardom, he had "graduated" twice over, first from training onstage by his parents, then from mentorship in movies by Arbuckle. Tapped to succeed Arbuckle at Comique, the young star was now embarked "on his larger career for the screen."[2] A second press book item, designed for publication in local newspapers, reminded readers that audiences for the Keaton family vaudeville act had "marveled that Buster didn't have every bone in his precious young body broken in the pursuit of his theatrical career." Having earned his stripes as young vaudevillian, he then entered the field of movie comedy where his work with Arbuckle "astonished and pleased motion picture fans throughout the world." All of which led to the present moment, in which Keaton's responsibilities had expanded and his commitments deepened. "Buster Keaton's heart and soul are in his new productions," the article explained. "To show how much in earnest he is about being funny, he himself wrote and directed 'One Week,' in association with Eddie Cline."[3]

In its report on the release of *One Week,* the exhibitor's trade journal *Moving Picture World* immediately picked up the themes outlined by Metro, stressing Keaton's fame as a knockabout performer in vaudeville, his selection as Arbuckle's successor in two-reel comedies, and his partnership with Cline in the writing and directing of the films in which he now appeared (2 October 1920, 671). The last point was reinforced two months later when, reporting on the success of Keaton's debut short, *Moving Picture World* again stressed that "Keaton collaborates with Eddie Cline in the authorship and direction of his comedies" (4 December 1920, 633). In an ad in the 1920–1921 edition of *Wid's Year Book* (370), Comique went so far as to poke fun at its promotion of Keaton and Cline's collaboration, while also acknowledging a lack of parity to the partnership. Under the title "Buster Keaton and his Director," a photo showed the two sitting side by side. Adopting the demeanor of his screen persona, Keaton covers Cline's face with a rumpled version of Buster's familiar porkpie hat. An oval within an oval, its light-colored fabric matching that of the director's coat, the hat is perfectly angled to double as Keaton's face in abstracted form. In a dialogue balloon a cartoon stick figure reveals what the hat hides—the identity of Cline. Drawn with bright eyes and a broad grin, the stick figure also stands in stark contrast to the photograph of Buster who, unsmiling, looks blankly if somewhat dreamily in the direction of the camera, assuming a mock-formal pose. Keaton is depicted here in comic character, but the ad also humorously points up his emerging role as a director as well as a movie star.

As a child star onstage, it is important to note, Keaton had not been regarded exclusively as a sober-faced comedian. In 1901 the *New York Dramatic Mirror* described the youngest member of the Keaton family act "a


Buster Keaton AND HIS Director

Now making two-reel releases for Joseph M. Schenck
Released through Metro.

Forthcoming Releases
"ONE WEEK" "CONVICT 13" "The SCARECROW"

Keaton as star and co-director: an ad in *Wid's Year Book, 1920–21.*

healthy, roguish child with a lively dash in him that is irresistible" (6 April 1901, 18). According to reviewers, he also on occasion punctuated his otherwise solemn acrobatic performances with a smile. The Metro advance story for *One Week* emphasized this, observing that in the act with his father Buster "landed on every part of his anatomy, but always came up smiling, so that it looked as if he were made of rubber instead of flesh and bones." As Peter Krämer suggests, these smiles, as well as press comments about the smiles, may have been designed to allay fears that the boy had suffered injury, buffering objections to the roughhouse act ("Battered Child" 258). In addition to his athleticism, moreover, Keaton was known onstage for his skills as a vocal performer; reviewers lauded his ability to deliver comic banter, recitations, monologues, and songs. An Akron, Ohio, newspaper reported in 1907 that Buster's rendition of "No, No, Never, Nox" on the local stage "brought down the house."[4] In 1909 the *Dramatic Mirror* declared Buster's singing of "Father Brings Home Something Every Day" the "big hit of the act," and predicted that by "working along this line he should develop into an excellent comedian, singer and possibly a monologist" (30 October 1909, 19). Furthermore, Keaton did not wholly abandon an exuberant performance style when joining Arbuckle in 1917. In the early two-reel comedies at Comique he occasionally laughs, smiles, recoils, grimaces, and weeps, to broad comic effect.

Beginning with his solo efforts in 1920, however, Keaton's style of acting acquired new discipline, and his sober expression became a fixed trait. In an era when a virile, vibrant masculine personality was associated with the smiling countenance of the equally athletic Douglas Fairbanks, and when the fan magazine *Photodrama* published a series of articles, credited to movie star Wallace Reid, modeling and extolling the virtues of the "smiling habit" (Barbas 52), Keaton's elimination of a smile from his actor's toolkit was considered worthy of note. Reviewers of his short films labored to find fresh ways to describe this distinctive aspect of Keaton's screen demeanor. A reviewer of *One Week* found him to be "as sober as a judge" (*Exhibitors Herald*, 2 October 1920, 85); of *Cops*, "a somber blue note in a bedlam of jazz" (*Moving Picture World*, 11 March 1922, 198); of *The Boat* (1921), possessing "the gravity of a church beadle or an undertaker's apprentice" (*Exhibitors Herald*, 22 April 1922, 31). Keaton's resolutely sober expression was especially a topic of interest to journalists assigned to interview him. Some reported him ready with a smile, others as unwaveringly solemn, but the question of the relation of his screen image to his authentic personality remained central to most profiles of the comedy star.[5] The fact that Keaton did not broadly announce or underscore a gag through facial expressions, moreover, contributed to a general impression among trade press and newspaper reviewers that his physical comedy was innovative and clever, admirably lacking in "hokum"—overused or overdone gags or bits of comedy associated with older and cruder forms of slapstick. "Keaton is as a rule original," commented *Exhibitors Herald* concerning *The Paleface* (1922), "and his solemn mien gets laughs where no amount of comedy hokum would" (25 February 1922, 61).

From early on Comique and Metro saw benefits in linking the seriousness of Keaton's comic persona with his labors behind the scene. Waxing enthusiastic about Keaton's prospects, Metro president Richard A. Rowland told *Moving Picture World* in 1920 that "this young comedian has the priceless gift of gravity so pronounced, for instance, in the work of Chaplin and other great funmakers. Without ever smiling himself, he is able to convulse audiences in a manner that would be another impossibility to the comedian who wears a grin" (11 December 1920, 751). The studio's efforts to read the sobriety of "Buster" in terms of Keaton's conscientiousness proved to be shrewd. Exploiting popular interest in the biographical figure behind the mask, it directed attention toward the professional arena in which he now competed for attention with other gifted comedians. "Buster Keaton Can Smile After Business Hours," announced the headline to an interview by Dorothy Day published in the *New York Telegraph* in October 1923, the text of which made clear that Keaton's "business hours" encompassed his work behind the camera as well as before it. Given the friendliness with which he had greeted her, Day reported asking, why did Keaton not smile on screen? To which he replied, he "didn't consider his work a joke."[6] Reiterated in press accounts throughout the 1920s, this theme at times took slightly mannered form, as when the *Los Angeles Times* reported that "the serious business of making pictures is engrossing the attention of Buster Keaton. He is daily becoming more frozen-faced, working out the details of the plot of his next feature comedy, now in the continuity stage" (10 May 1925, 18). Conceits of this kind allowed the studio, in alliance with a cooperative press, to keep Keaton's double role as comedian and writer-director in the public view.

In assessing Keaton's short comedies, reviewers often explicitly translated questions of control and craftsmanship into a vocabulary of "mechanics." The metaphor no doubt seemed pertinent given the displays of engineering in the early films, including a build-it-yourself house in *One Week*, trick gallows in *Convict 13* (1920), a cottage filled with convertible appliances in *The Scarecrow* (1920), complex backyard rigging in *Neighbors* (1920), and an arcade shooting gallery and a Victorian home with trick walls and floorboards in *The "High Sign"* (1921). On the occasion of the release of *The Electric House* in October 1922, trade reviewers found ample opportunity to compare the electronic appliances on display in the film with Keaton's comic strategies (*Moving Picture World,* 28 October 1922, 804; *Exhibitors Herald,* 4 November 1922, 60). Describing the film as "charged with dynamic sparks which generate large amount of humor," Laurence Reid of *Motion Picture News* went on to secure the analogy by conflating Keaton's comic persona with the creator of the comedy. "Keaton is a fellow ever in search of novelty," Reid wrote. "You never find him repetitious. This time he is not only a funmaker but an ingenious inventor. . . . Keaton's inventions would make Edison look worried whether someone had stolen his stuff" (4 November 1922, 2316). Not simply a function of the presence of gadgets in the films, Keaton's "mechanical" ingenuity was understood to reflect a comic attitude, a disposition toward objects, actions, and events pervading the film overall.

Notions of "mechanical comedy" also carried negative connotations when associated with gags or situations that seemed formulaic, externally imposed, or otherwise contrived—in a word, *mechanized.* Here again, the inclusion of visible gadgetry in Keaton's comedies offered an entry point for comment. Reviewer P. W. Gallico for the *New York Daily News* found the opening to *The Electric House* the "funniest part of the picture," but judged that the remainder was "more a comedy of mechanical surprises" (quoted in *Exhibitors Herald,* 28 April 1923, 30). Noting that Keaton's balloon trip in *The Balloonatic* (1923) featured "some clever situations," C. S. Sewell reported in *Moving Picture World* that "the mechanics of some of the scenes, however, are quite evident and tend to destroy the illusion" (17 February 1923, 706). Even when employed more descriptively than prescriptively, a distinction between mechanical and more "natural" forms of comedy was on occasion drawn. *Moving Picture World* differentiated between the "ingeniously contrived comedy situations and stunts" provided by the script to *The Playhouse* (1921), in which Keaton played multiple roles, and "a wealth of fun that springs from more natural sources" (14 January 1922, 206). In an interview with Keaton in *Picture-Play Magazine,* titled "Low Comedy as High Art," Malcolm H. Oettinger praised the originality of Keaton's gags and his mastery of comic form, observing that Keaton's "art is to work up a situation deliberately, to build it logically and systematically as a carpenter builds a house," citing *One Week* and *The Boat* as examples. "But can Keaton 'transcend' artful mechanical comedy?" Oettinger asked. He went on to express concern that "though one of the most adroit technicians of comedy, Buster fails to reach the heart." His conversation with the star, moreover, had failed to convince him that Keaton considered himself "anything more than a trouper" able to dress up "hokum" by "draping it different styles" (1 March 1923, 59–60).

The New Features of Buster Keaton

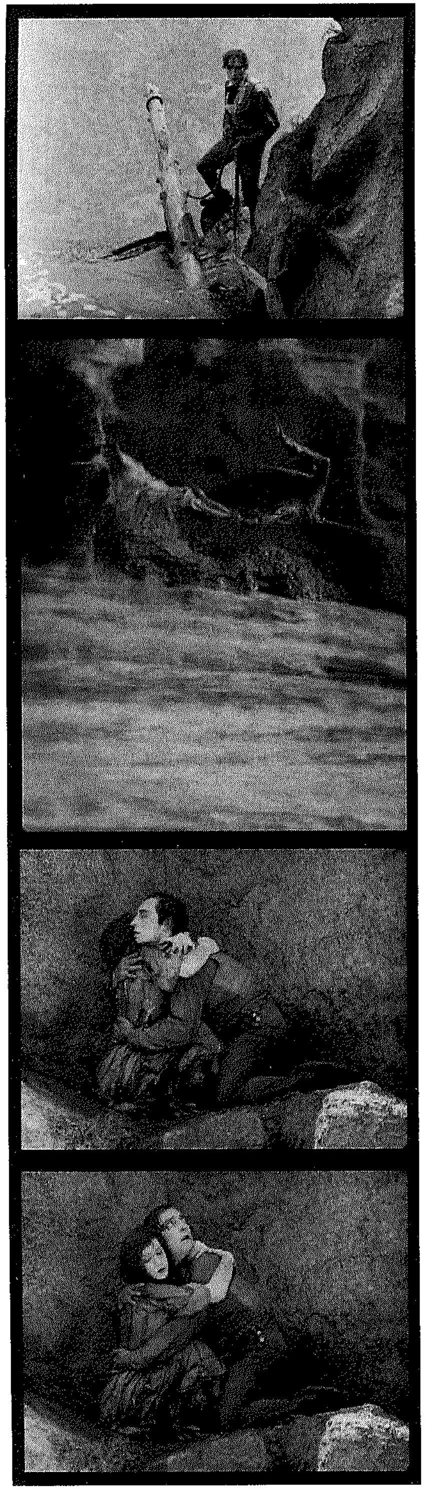
While the terms of Oettinger's argument concerning "higher" forms of film comedy were familiar ones in the 1920s, his account of Keaton's view of his own profession was atypical. When speaking with the press about questions of craft, Keaton often displayed keen interest in the future of film comedy and an understanding of changing industry standards and differences in audience taste. For the *Los Angeles Times* in May 1922, he described how, in contrast to slapstick methods in vogue when he first entered motion pictures, producers of comedy shorts now worked under new constraints: "comedy must be clean and wholesome," "the comedian must be neat," and "gags . . . must be original" (26 May 1922, 3:5). In an interview with Gertrude Chase, on the eve of the production of his first feature film in the fall of the same year, he spoke about the challenge of devising comic action that "will be appreciated outside of New York and Chicago," while at the same time appeal to more sophisticated viewers (*New York Telegraph,* 8 October 1922, 2). His experience in feature filmmaking appears to have quickened this concern. Prior to beginning production on *Seven Chances* (1925), perhaps with the assistance of Harry Brand, Keaton offered a detailed account of his efforts to craft a new kind of slapstick film. Film comedy based simply on "stunts" was nearly exhausted, he explained. He now sought to apply "principles of conventional picture comedy to a story that is good enough to stand on its merits." This entailed awareness of the expectations of different viewers, since comedy films should "be broad enough to please the large body of the public" but also "have enough subtle satire to satisfy the most critical, discriminating person in the audience." Reconciling the demands of "highbrows," who would be "antagonized by nothing but hokum," and "the overwhelming majority who insist on being made to laugh no matter what methods" was a problem he was "bothered with day and night."[7]

If exhibitors' trade press reports are a reliable guide, the reactions of exhibitors to Keaton's first feature, *Three Ages* (1923), may have raised concerns at the studio on this score. Predicting that *Three Ages* would attract a wide audience, Mary Kelly in *Moving Picture World* took pains to ground this optimistic assessment in an appreciation of the varied tastes and expectations of viewers, and the unusual structure of the comedy, which intercut three parallel stories across different time periods. "The choice of original subject-matter and a clever treatment of it should insure the picture's appeal with the discriminating patron," noted Kelly. "At the same time, those who are partial to slapstick will not be cheated" (8 September 1923, 155). However, comments by local theater managers indicate that this ambitious goal had not been met. In their reports to the trade press, some managers explicitly contrasted their own favorable reactions to *Three Ages*, or that of "high brow" patrons, with the responses of most patrons. "Personally I consider this one of the best feature comedies ever produced," wrote the owner of a small-town theater in Wellington, Ohio, "but I found after showing it that I was somewhat in the minority" (*Exhibitors Herald*, 6 September 1924, 24). An exhibitor in Tombstone, Arizona, reported, "While some of our people wonder what it was all about, the highbrows thought it was the best thing, satirically, we have ever shown. . . . Just a question of mixed audiences getting its points" (*Exhibitors Herald*, 13 September 1924, 63).

Laments for Keaton's abandonment of a two-reel slapstick format recur in exhibitors' reports throughout the 1920s, but they wane in number from mid-decade on, as new criteria for evaluating the box office appeal of his longer-format films come to the fore. Keaton's second feature, *Our Hospitality* (1923), a comedy-drama set in the Old South, represents a turning point in this regard. Exhibitors frequently identified the film's two major set pieces—a train trip aboard the Old Stephenson "Rocket" and a climactic river rescue—as prime attractions, the former for its novelty, the latter for its suspense. "Old train [is] the real 'puller' and bound to cause some comment," observed a North Loop, Nebraska, manager (*Exhibitors Herald*, 20 September 1924, 63). "Some of the comedy kidding the south is a bit subtle," wrote another, from Grand Haven, Michigan, but "a thrilling finish made up for this" (*Exhibitors Herald*, 2 August 1924, 241). According to the operator of a large, "mixed classes" theater in Harlan, Kentucky, *Our Hospitality* was a "picture made to order for my town. Good action with other merits make this one good entertainment for any patronage. Everybody satisfied" (*Moving Picture World*, 26 July 1924, 273). An exhibitor in Rochester, Indiana, reported, more telegraphically: "Unlike any other Keaton picture. Was humorous and serious. Everybody pleased" (*Moving Picture World*, 21 June 1924, 723). Viewers less engaged by the movie's more subdued passages, these reports suggest, had incentives to stay with the story as it unfolded.

Commentary on *Our Hospitality* by regular reviewers addressed more directly a point only implicit in these comments by local theater managers. At issue was not simply the running time of shorter or longer comedies, but Keaton's ability in *Our Hospitality* to meld different kinds of attractions—physical comedy, romantic comedy, and dramatic suspense—into a feature-length fiction with broad appeal. While a few critics thought the very effort to mix elements of slapstick with historical drama misguided, most considered *Our Hospitality* a successful if not landmark effort. "It has about everything in it an audience seeking an enjoyable hour's diversion wants," wrote C. S. Sewell in *Moving Picture World*. "There is straight drama, melodrama, farce, and comedy, all in high order" (8 December 1923, 53). "The usual low comedy and slapstick allotted to Buster have been modified and woven into a consistent story that is as funny as it is entertaining," asserted the reviewer for *Variety*. "It marks a step forward in the production of picture comedies and may be the beginning of the end of the comedy picture without a plot or story that degenerates into a series of gags" (13 December 1923, 22). Less than a year after its release, a plot synopsis and analysis of *Our Hospitality* also was included by Scott O'Dell in his screenplay handbook, *Representative Photoplays Examined*, set forth as a model for the effective integration of comedy and pathos in a feature-length movie. "If the subject is treated as burlesque," O'Dell concluded, "the plot structure is just as striking and close-knit as in straight drama" (301). To follow these remarks is to observe the emergence of a new critical template for discussing physical comedy within the conventions of classical cinema.

In certain respects this shift in critical discourse parallels commentary during the same period on "sophisticated comedy," definitions of which, as Lea Jacobs has demonstrated, was also premised on a distinction between "naïve" and "sophisticated" viewers (Jacobs 79–126). Key elements of the genre identified by Jacobs—understated dramaturgy, economy of narration, efficient direction, a limited use of intertitles, and comic structures based on a misapprehension of events—are also found in *Our Hospitality*, as well as other Keaton features to follow. Slapstick comedy in the Keystone style, critic Gilbert Seldes proposed in 1924, was "one of the few places where the genteel tradition does not operate, where fantasy is liberated, where imagination is still riotous and healthy." In language that echoed discussions about an American technological aesthetic in other quarters, Seldes added: "In its economy and precision are two qualities of artistic presentation; it uses still everything commonest and simplest and nearest to hand; in terror of gentility, it has refrained from using the broad farces of literature—Aristophanes and Rabelais and Moliere—as material; it could become happily sophisticated, without being cultured" (32–33). But, then, how to make it so? Keaton's feature films constituted a possible answer, offering



Blending acrobatics and dramatic acting: Keaton in the rescue sequence in *Our Hospitality* (1923). Frame enlargements.

what James Agee would later describe as "dry comedy" (144), a combination of understated humor, physical action, and craftsmanship not bound by conventional distinctions between "genteel" and "slapstick" comic forms.

With the shift to features, new appraisals of Keaton's comic persona surfaced as well. Although most closely identified throughout the 1920s with the porkpie hat, clip-on tie, vest, wide pants, and slap shoes that he donned in most of his short comedies, he abandoned this outfit in many of the features as he assumed a much wider range of fictional roles. The embedding of the familiar figure of "Buster" in different narrative contexts fostered increased appreciation among critics for his skills as an actor and greater sensitivity to the "authentic" or "human" qualities that he brought to different roles. Keaton's familiar trick of acting serious hence was rethought in relation to his abilities as a serious actor. The 1924 Metro press book for *Sherlock Jr.* promoted criticism of this kind by recalibrating the studio's maturation narrative in terms of Keaton's acting style:

> The reason Keaton has been able to graduate from the field of oldtime slapstick into the more ennobling realm of suggestion is because he knows how to put his "gags" over. He gets the most out of any part he plays. He never registers "hate," "love," "arrogance" or "fear" but rather suggests them by the way he deports himself in the scene. He is like Chaplin in this respect. . . . The frank way in which he impersonates the parts assigned to him brings a quick response from the audience. He does not try to exaggerate any emotions or play up gags till they lose their point, but rather leaves it to the imagination to build upon the delicate slapstick he portrays.[8]

Reduced affect, from this perspective, was not a prompt for laughter but an invitation to the viewer to project emotions upon the character, granting a figure psychological depth. Closely following developments in feature comedy in the mid-1920s, Edwin Schallert of the *Los Angeles Times* praised this new direction in Keaton's work. "The laurels are again going to the comedians," he reported at the time of the release of *The Navigator* in November 1924, "and this time it appears as if Buster Keaton were the special victor. . . . There is a much more human note in the production . . . one does not feel the creak of so much machinery as is used to put over some of his productions" (11 November 1924, C33). With Keaton's shift to features in 1923, New York critic Robert Sherwood, who consistently lauded Keaton's "amazing ingenuity" throughout the decade, expressed regret that the "humbler days" of Keaton's two-reelers had been exchanged for features in which the physical comedy was dispersed and thinner (*Life*, 10 April 1924, 24). By the time of the release of *Steamboat Bill Jr.* in 1928, however, he viewed the transition in a more favorable light. "While in *One Week* and *The*

Electric House Keaton relied almost entirely on mechanical gags and ingenious contrivances," Sherwood observed, "lately he has been going in more for dramatic art and has developed into an extraordinarily good actor. The merit of *Steamboat Bill Jr.* depends not on premeditated gags, but on the individual and unaided work of Keaton himself" (*Life*, 31 May 1928, 23).

Responses to Keaton's comedies by artists and cultural critics in Europe in the 1920s provide yet another perspective on these developments, one at a remove from the institutional concerns of the studios, the trade press, fan magazines, and exhibitors. The showcasing of Keaton's films in art cinema houses helped to blur distinctions between high and lowbrow tastes and fostered new ways of thinking about his silent comedy in relation to experimental art practices. Between 1924 and 1927, three of Keaton's feature-length films—*Our Hospitality*, *The Navigator*, and *Go West* (1925)—were screened at the leading art cinema house in Paris, the Théâtre de Vieux Colombier, where they shared billing, as did comedies by Chaplin and Lloyd, with the films of the European avant-garde (Friedberg 206–08). Upon its founding in 1928, the Cineclub Español in Madrid likewise incorporated American silent comedies into its programs, most notably in a session organized by Luis Buñuel on May 4, 1929, in which excerpts from thirteen comedy films—including Keaton's *The Navigator*—were shown, with Rafael Alberti reading poetry inspired by the films of Chaplin and Lloyd as well as Keaton at the intermission (Aranda 52–53; Morris 80–111, 121–39). Homages to Keaton also can be found in literary works by poets Paul Nougé and Federico Garcia Lorca, who composed surrealist film scenarios in which imagery from Keaton's film was prominently featured.

Concern for a possible drift in American slapstick away from more aggressive forms of knockabout is occasionally registered by these commentators, although for different reasons than those expressed in the pages of the exhibitors' trade press in the United States. Surrealist poet Robert Desnos, an early admirer of slapstick, and author of an essay for *Le Soir* titled "Mack Sennett, liberateur du cinéma" (166–68), became alarmed at the changes he discerned in the feature-length films of Keaton, Chaplin, and Lloyd, arguing that the precision and self-conscious craftsmanship of these movies had robbed them of the freer imagination on display in the slapstick shorts. From the point of view of technique, Desnos contended, *Our Hospitality* was an admirable success, but one achieved at the expense of the more radical playfulness and eroticism of a less assuming comedy such as *Convict 13* (117–18). Other critics, however, saw in the more classically structured features evidence of a new aesthetic, born of the relationship between physical comedy and the substratum of technical elements and genre patterns that supported it. They stressed the salutary, invigorating aspects of Keaton's mastery of the techniques of the medium, on occasion contrasting the frenetic quality of early Keystone to the dreamlike composure of Keaton's films and its power to freshen perception anew.

For example, Robert Aron, French critic and co-founder of the avant-garde "Théâtre Alfred Jarry," proposed that films like *The Navigator* and *Steamboat Bill Jr.*, while devoid of overt artistic or social pretension, plumb the constraints of both social and narrative forms. In the process they registered disturbances that the work of avant-garde filmmakers—consciously committed to a cinema of revolt—failed to tap. "Liberated from tradition," Buñuel wrote of *College* in 1927, "our outlook is rejuvenated in the youthful and temperate world of Buster, the great specialist against all sentimental infection." *College*, Buñuel claimed, was "as beautiful as a bathroom," an analogy that echoed Marcel Duchamp's submission of a porcelain urinal as a "ready made" art work to the 1917 Society of Independent Artists Exhibition in New York, repositioning a mass-produced American object from a "low" cultural space so as to challenge conventional conceptions of art and artists, and where one goes to find them. Keaton's performance style, Buñuel asserted, was attuned to the "rhythmic and architectonic gearing" of cinema and hence distinctly cinematic (Aranda 272–73). The same year French critic Judith Érèbe made a similar point in a wide-ranging essay for *Crapouillot*, arguing that Keaton's films could productively be thought of as ensemble pieces in which all the parts meshed. However sad or melancholic a dramatic moment, the action in Keaton's film drew the viewer's attention to a broader canvas alive with unexpected harmonies, rhythms, and striking pictorial effects.[9]

Keaton's preoccupation with mechanical objects as props strengthened the connection critics drew between the style of his comedies and the refinement of a new cinematic aesthetic: dynamic, constructive, reproducible for a mass audience, highly accessible yet irrepressibly modern. For these European observers, his films revealed a distinctly American sensibility at work, perceptible, Érèbe claimed, in the interplay between a "lunar" and a "practical" dimension to Keaton's comedy, a sense of fantasy that was also mathematical. Érèbe thought this traceable in American letters back to the fiction of Edgar Allan Poe (11). Buñuel linked Keaton's performance style to an "American school" of acting, vital and free of cultural tradition, and contrasted it with a "European school," exemplified by German actor Emil Jannings, that was mannered, sentimental, and bound by the prejudices of conventional literature and art (Aranda 273). In a review of *Camille* published around the same time, Buñuel explicitly contrasted Keaton's performance style with a growing sentimentality in Chaplin's work. "Remember the Christmas Eve sequence in *The Gold Rush*," Buñuel advised. "In this sense Buster Keaton is superior" (Aranda 268–69). For these commentators, Keaton's modernity as a comic performer was bound up with his emotional reserve, a compelling refusal to amplify or exaggerate psychological states for the purpose of a dramatic effect. Hence, precisely at the historical moment when Hollywood turned to European actors, directors, and cinematographers to enhance the cultural value of their product—in fact, ironically, at a time when Jannings, brought to Hollywood by Paramount, was presented with the first Academy Award granted a movie actor—these European critics praised Keaton's cooler, introspective style and practical route to dreamlike states.

Prospects: Keaton as Comic Artist

Keaton's star image took shape and evolved in the 1920s through this interplay of screen performances, studio publicity and promotion, journalistic reportage, and critical commentary. While there were broad areas of agreement concerning the distinctive aspects of Keaton's comic persona and his style of comedy, assessments of their significance varied. Publicity material generated by the producers and distributors established a framework for the description and evaluation of Keaton-as-star in newspapers, fan magazines, and the trade press. Published remarks by journalists that fit this framework were on occasion quoted in studio advertising, establishing a circular loop in the marketing of the man and his films. But responses to Keaton and his style of comedy exceeded the studio's range of control. At a regional level, this is evident in exhibitors' reports, which often included pithy summaries of audience reactions by theater managers who were acutely aware of variations in their patrons' tastes, and whose role in their communities depended on their connection to, and filtering of, the product distributed by Hollywood. Circulated widely, Keaton's comedies were also analyzed and appropriated in cultural contexts far removed from these root economic concerns. Different standards of evaluation colored commentary on "Buster Keaton" at every stage.

This was true of stars associated with other genres, but may have especially been the case for leading performers of slapstick comedies, which attracted spectators of different cultural backgrounds and dispositions, and with different investments in the modern experience of moviegoing. Slapstick proliferated in diverse formats in the 1920s; even as major stars such as Chaplin, Lloyd, and Keaton moved into feature filmmaking, low-budget slapstick shorts remained a staple item throughout the decade. Multivalent works, slapstick comedies were valued for multiple and sometimes conflicting reasons: falls and chases that triggered boffo laughs, stunts that generated thrills, star comedians with intriguing personalities, wildly implausible scenarios, stories told efficiently and clearly, the evoking of dream-like states, social critique. The national and international circulation of Keaton's films offers a window on the changing contours of comic stardom in the 1920s in this regard.

Still, beginning with the initial efforts of Comique and Metro to establish Keaton's credentials as a seasoned comic craftsman, through the cross-cultural speculations of European critics concerning his sensibilities as an artist, we can discern a line of thought attentive to recurring stylistic or thematic patterns in Keaton's work. Emerging across these various discourses was a set of precepts for imagining another "Buster Keaton," an "authorial" Keaton, based on an impulse to identify and personify a wider frame for the ensemble of performances on the screen, and attributing traits of personality to the distinctive manner in which his films were collaboratively composed. In 1929 French critic J. G. Auriol asserted that "we can speak of 'the films of Buster Keaton' because all the stories in which he appears are marked from beginning to end by his fascinating personality." There existed a distinct "Keaton atmosphere," evident in the response of other performers to Buster, "this man whose eternal gravity soon makes you a little grave yourself," and in possession of "the most moving face in cinema" (*La Revue du cinéma* 15 October 1929, 68–69; translation mine).

As fate would have it, Auriol's comments came in response to the release of Keaton's second and final silent feature at MGM, *Spite Marriage* (1929), just as the contract star was in the process of losing control over his own productions. Keaton's career and popular reputation proceeded to take a radically different turn, with his silent slapstick sometimes remembered, in patronizing fashion, as the quaint antics of a fading, sad-faced clown. Occasional screenings of *Sherlock Jr.*, *The Navigator*, and *The General* at the Museum of Modern Art, however, allowed for earlier impressions of Keaton's mastery of comic forms to take root, impressions that resurfaced in the writings of James Agee, Walter Kerr, and Rudi Blesh after World War II. Moreover, new critical paradigms emerged to lend greater specificity to earlier claims for Keaton's artistry as a visual stylist. Influenced by the writings of French critic André Bazin, Eric Rohmer, under the pseudonym Maurice Sherer, brought critical consideration to bear on Keaton's long shots and long takes—scenes filmed without cutting—with the activity of the director understood as an act of keen attention to the relation of actors to objects and landscapes.[10] By the time of the new wave of Keaton criticism in the 1960s, the critical concept of an authorial signature—as evident in the particular visual strategies a film director employed—had sufficiently taken root in French and Anglo-American film criticism so as to grant greater specificity to the connections made between the figure of the comic actor and a comic artist with the machinery of cinema at hand. Thus the tendency of Keaton's films to frame comic action in long shot has been likened to Buster's "frank" gaze (Robinson 61), and geometrical compositions and shifting narrational perspectives have been traced to the specific ways in which Buster moves or behaves on screen.[11] In this regard, European responses to his silent film work came to inform new critical writing on Keaton in the United States as well. Following the pathways of this criticism is instructive, for it helps to explain the logic of the route by which Keaton's films were revived in the 1960s, when retrospectives in Europe paved the way for the rise in Keaton's reputation and his recognition as an American artist *par excellence*.

NOTES

1. See Dick Williams, "Buster Keaton Looks to Life of Rural Bliss," *Los Angeles Mirror* (1 November 1960), Keaton Clipping Microfiche #3, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Beverly Hills; and Dean Miller, "Here's Hollywood," WNBC-New York (10 August 1961), transcribed in *The Keaton Chronicle* 4:3 (Summer 1996), 1–3.

2. "Treating Your Patrons to a Live One," *One Week* Pressbook, Buster Keaton Clipping Microfiche #1, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Beverly Hills.

3. "Arbuckle Cloak on Buster Keaton," *One Week Pressbook*, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Beverly Hills.

4. "At the Casino," unsourced newspaper, Akron, Ohio (4 June 1907), Myra Keaton Scrapbook 30, Buster Keaton Collection, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Beverly Hills.

5. See Gertrude Chase, "Buster Keaton Can Smile and Yawn, Too, If He Wishes," *New York Telegraph* (8 October 1922), 2, and at http://www.public.asu/~bruce/Taylor68.txt, accessed 6 July 1998; Willis Goldbeck, "Only Three Weeks," *Motion Picture* 22:9 (October 1921), 28–29, 87, and at http://www.public.asu/~bruce/Taylor68.txt, accessed 6 July 1998; Mulligan; and Werner.

6. Dorothy Day, "Buster Keaton Can Smile after Business Hours," *New York Telegraph* (31 October 1923) and at http://www.public.asu/~bruce/Taylor68.txt, accessed 6 July 1998.

7. Buster Keaton, "Originality—Comedy's Salvation," unsourced publication date 16 August 1924, MFL/x/n.c./1473, Billy Rose Theatre Collection, New York Public Library.

8. *Sherlock Jr.* Pressbook, MFL/+/n.c./187/#5, Billy Rose Theatre Collection, 3, New York Public Library.

9. Érèbe 10–13.

10. Sherer 6–7.

11. See Mardore 34–37; Martin 18–30; and Perez 113.

3 ☆☆☆☆☆☆★★★★★

The Talmadge Sisters

A Forgotten Filmmaking Dynasty

LEA JACOBS

Constance and Norma Talmadge. Courtesy of the Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research.

Norma and Constance Talmadge were among the most important stars of the 1920s. Not only do many contemporary fan magazines and industry publications, and more recent memoirs, attest to their popularity and renown but, given their family connections, it is clear that they occupied the highest social echelons in the small community of Hollywood (Talmadge; Loos; de Groat). Until her divorce in the late 1920s, Norma was married to Joseph M. Schenck, independent producer, partner and eventually chairman of the board of United Artists, and brother to