

## Brno Lecture 4

### Shirley Temple, Glamour and the Innocence of Popular Culture

It is a fact now largely neglected in the construction of American cultural history that Shirley Temple was a major cultural phenomenon of the 1930s. She was, variously, the most prominent media personality, the most photographed celebrity, “Public Favourite No. 1,” the top Hollywood box-office star for the four years between 1934 and 1938 as the American economic and political system emerged from the nadir of the Depression. Her movies made more money than those of any other individual star in the second half of the 1930s, and more money than the *Paramounts on Parade*, the *Broadway Melodies* or the Busby Berkeley musicals at Warners. Musical performance was central to Shirley’s appeal, so that it is also true to say that Shirley Temple was the biggest musical star in Hollywood in the 1930s—bigger, in box-office terms, than Bing Crosby or Rudy Vallee or Janet Gaynor, bigger than Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers put together—and, to gratuitously paraphrase Albert Finney in *Gumshoe*, they were never put together like her. In 1934 sheet music sales of “On the Good Ship Lollipop” broke previous records, selling 400,000 copies. Shirley spawned an unprecedented industry in the merchandising of ancillary goods and the commercial licensing of her image on products from breakfast cereals to cigars. In 1936 she earned \$200,000 from licensing her image on merchandising—three times her salary from Twentieth-Century Fox—and by 1941 \$45 million dollars-worth of Shirley Temple dolls had been sold in the US. Her special Oscar award in 1934

declared that she had brought “more happiness to millions of children and millions of grownups than any child of her years in the history of the world.” If we are studying popular culture as an historical phenomenon, the serious consideration of Shirley Temple as both screen and musical phenomenon requires no defence.

“Never before the advent of the movies had any one conceived the scheme of ingratiating into the affections of the public the personality and mannerisms of an everyday child without rank or fortune. And only in the past few years have the film magnates themselves fully realised how profitable such exploitation might be. ... Mothers in Austria and Australia, as in Tampa and Tacoma, are twisting their babies’ hair into curls like Shirley’s, teaching their children Shirley’s little songs, dressing them in copies of her frocks. ... In lofts and factories and shops uncounted adults owe their jobs to the vogue for imitating Shirley’s clothes, underwear and furniture, on which, it is said, her own royalties alone amount to \$100,000 a year.” *New York Times, October 1936*

Shirley was an international phenomenon.

As both the other people who have, in the last twenty years, published essay-length pieces on Shirley Temple have remarked, perhaps the more striking point to be observed is that so little critical or historical attention has been paid to her. It is, I suppose, a matter of taste—Shirley is an aesthetic embarrassment—but it is unfortunate that in this instance as in so many others, questions of critical taste should be allowed to obscure even the most prominent features of the historical topography of popular culture.

I have been worrying about Shirley Temple for years, and my worries have lately been increased by my own increased sentimental concern with the concept of innocence. Temple concerns me in part because I think she poses a significant problem in the process of recovering and reconstructing the historical reception of movies and their representations. For a variety of reasons, Shirley's movies are now quite difficult to watch, and the interpretative framework within which we view them is radically different from that which pertained at the time of their original release.

Here, for example, are two Republicans dancing:

**Video: "We should be together" – two Republican politicians in the making.**

Repeatedly in her movies, Shirley performs a romantic duet of this kind with the movie's male star—a number which establishes their compatibility both through the lyrics of the song and through the synchronisation of their dance performance, comparable to, for instance, Astaire and Rogers performing "Let's Call the Whole Thing Off" in ..... Through such musical performances, in many of her movies, Shirley enacts the conventions of the formation of the couple with the male star. In all her movies after 1934, Shirley is the dominant female character, and particularly in her earliest starring vehicles, she is often represented as being in competition with the female romantic lead for the attention of the male star (eg, with Dorothy Dell for Adolphe Menjou in *Little Miss Marker*, with Carole Lombard for between Gary Cooper in *Now and Forever*.) These conflicts are resolved, and in later movies they are avoided, by Shirley's work to construct the adults as a couple, in order that Shirley can become their child.

The problem of historical reception with which I'm particularly concerned has to do with how we interpret these performances of romance: as guileless imitation, as subversion, as parody, as pastiche? What is at stake in that act of interpretation is an understanding of Shirley's "innocence," and with it an understanding of the "innocence" of the popular culture, and in particular the popular music, she constructed.

**Shirley's star** persona had to negotiate a discursive contradiction between her embodiment of the concept of the innocent child and the glamorised role of the female star. Contemporary attempts to explain her popularity invariably emphasised her innocence, her spontaneity, her efficacy as a channel through which joy could be communicated: according to a *Vogue* article: "she is less an artist than a touchstone, less an actress than a world-wide emotion."

(Vered, p. 56), while the Great American Patriarch himself, FDR, observed in 1934 that "It is a splendid thing that for just fifteen cents an American can go to a movie and look at the smiling face of a baby and forget his troubles."

**Charles Eckert** has elaborated on the escapism proposed in these comments by suggesting that Shirley's well-rounded exuberance reveals her as the opposite of one of the persistent images of the early Depression: the starving child. But Shirley's innocence was complicated by **the discourses of glamour** and stardom, and studio publicity played overtly with contradictions inherent in the representation of a female star who was also a child. For example, Shirley published first autobiography in *Pictorial Review* in July 1936, when she was actually eight, and according to the studio, she was only seven: it was entitled "My **Life and Loves.**" In 1938, *Modern Screen* published a two-page photo-essay called "The Men in Shirley Temple's Life," and fan

magazines and studio publicity repeatedly reported that she and her male co-stars were “in love,” using the same descriptors of her “irresistible” appeal that they applied to their accounts of sexually desirable female stars. (Vered, p. 56)

There is a comparable play in elements of her performance, in which she reconfigured romantic genres of popular song. *Poor Little Rich Girl* (1936) provides a particularly **explicit example**:

### **Video: The song for Daddy**

There are, I think, three things we can do with this kind of material. We can treat it as “cute,” by which I mean that we can assert her innocence of the meaning of her words—as manifested by TV shows like *Kids Say the Cutest Things*—and thus we can assert the innocence of the representation.

Alternatively, we can treat the problematic of Shirley’s representation as explicitly evoking and provoking a sexualised understanding of these images and dialogue, and the context that surrounds a contemporary interpretation makes it difficult to avoid emphasising the troubling sexual element in the assumption of an adult relationship here. In *from Reverence to Rape*, Molly Haskell describes Temple as “one of the great vessels of virgin worship in this period of sexual latency ... an ideal post-Production Code sex kitten, her attraction politely shrouded in the natural interplay of family feeling.”<sup>1</sup> This interpretation received its most notorious expression in Graham Greene’s 1937 review of *Wee Willie Winkie*, in which he observed that:

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1. Haskell, p.123.

infancy with her is a disguise, her appeal is more secret and more adult ... watch the way she measures a man with agile studio eyes, with dimpled depravity ... Her admirers—middle-aged men and clergymen—respond to her dubious coquetry, to the sight of her well-shaped and desirable little body, packed with enormous vitality, only because the safety curtain of story and dialogue drops between their intelligence and their desire. <sup>2</sup>

Temple and her studio, Twentieth Century-Fox, successfully sued Greene and the magazine, *Night and Day*, for libel in the British Courts, a verdict that rendered Temple's sexuality literally unspeakable, and rendered Temple a perfect post-Production Code sex object because neither her producers nor her consumers could admit that that was what she was, if that was what she was: she attained the peculiar status of representing the unrepresentable.

More recently, Valerie Walkerdine has elaborated on this account of Temple in her book *Daddy's Girl*, describing her as the object of “a suppressed but none the less ubiquitous erotic gaze” (142) that is, crucially for Walkerdine, not the perverse preserve of Greene’s “clergymen” but part of “the complex construction of the highly contradictory gaze at little girls ... as at once threatening and sustaining rationality, little virgins that might be whores, to be protected yet to be constantly alluring.” (171) ... “The idea of a sanitised natural childhood ... becomes not the guarantor of the safety of children from the perversity of adult desires for them, but a huge defence against the acknowledgement of those, dangerous, desires on the part of adults. ... massive fantasies carried in the culture, which are equally massively

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<sup>2</sup>. Christopher Hawtree, ed., *Night and Day*, p.204.

defended against by other cultural practices, in the form of the psychopedagogic and social welfare practices incorporating discourses of childhood innocence.” (182)

It is not, in fact, particularly difficult to find supportive material for such an interpretation in Hollywood’s 1930s output. On occasion in the early 1930s, Hollywood movies used children to render sexual desire simultaneously explicit and comic:

**Video: *Footlight Parade*: “Honeymoon Hotel”**

This bizarre character also leers his way through the “Pettin’ in the Park” number in *Golddiggers of 1933*. And Temple, of course, was not separated from this discourse. **Her first extant performance**, aged 4, involved her imitating Dolores del Rio in *What Price Glory*, dressed in an off-the-shoulder Mexican blouse, diaper and garter:

**Video: War Babies**

*War Babies* was one of six *Baby Burlseks*, produced by Educational Studios in 1932, all featuring Temple prominently. In *Glad Rags to Riches* she imitated Mae West as “La Belle Diaperina,” a Gay Nineties chanteuse singing “She’s Only a Bird in a Gilded Cage.” **In *Polly-tix in Washington*** she played a golddigger, costumed in black lace underwear designed and made by her mother, and in ***Kid 'n' Hollywood***, she performed an imitation of Marlene Dietrich’s role in *Morocco*, playing a character called Morelegs Sweetrick:

**Video: Morelegs**

It is also not the case that such images were completely unremarked at the time. **Some time** after the Educational short had been released, the Catholic journal *Commonweal* editorialised,

“Why do they permit children to be exploited in sophisticated roles? Specifically, on what conceivable theory of taste or morals did they allow two children recently to give a rendering of a scene from *Diamond Lil*, in which the chubby girl, scarcely more than a baby, with all the convolutions of hip and torso that made the original line famous, invited an equally small boy to ‘Come up and see me some time?’”<sup>3</sup>

In August 1935 the PCA received a complaint from Warner Bros. about **cuts demanded in one of their shorts**, called *Kiddie Review*, which read, “I cannot understand how you can take exception at a small child in a picture doing the hula and rumba. If it were a grown up you might have some reason to object.” Production Code Administrator Joseph Breen responded that, “hardly anything that has occurred in pictures has provoked more bitter reaction, especially among women,” than such scenes, and he cited one instance, in April 1934, in *George White’s Scandals*, in which a six-year-old girl did a fan dance and sang the song, “Oh, You Nasty Man.” Temple had unsuccessfully auditioned for the part. In early 1936, the Mothers Club of America previewed *Captain January* and protested that Shirley’s hula dance was “immoral.” According to Temple’s own account the scene was deleted and replaced with her “dressed this time in tight-fitting trousers with flared bottoms, doing a sailor’s hornpipe.” (Temple p. 128) (Shirley had danced a hula already in *Curly Top*) So when the London magazine *Night and Day* publicised its October



1937 issue, containing the Greene review, with posters headlined, “Sex and Shirley Temple,” they were not significantly out of keeping with an existing discourse in fan magazines and studio publicity.

While acknowledging the disturbing accuracy of much of what Walkerdine argues, I want to negotiate a third position between these two accounts of innocence, one which is itself more “innocent”—or perhaps less guilty—than Walkerdine’s, while recognising that much of the pleasure in Temple’s movies is generated by the many occasions on which she says things she can’t mean, in which her knowing wink at the camera informs us that her knowingness is merely mimic, that she can’t really mean what we think she means. What we witness in Temple’s movies is a very knowing performance of “innocence”; what we have trouble with is the nature of the knowingness of Shirley’s “innocence.” Who knows what about Shirley, and what does Shirley know about what she does?

Many stories circulated about Shirley. One studio executive’s wife, for instance, reported being asked by no less a figure than the Pope whether it was true that she was in fact a midget, and Temple herself reports a similar incident with a correspondent of the official Vatican newspaper (183). By 1938, Shirley’s persona had incorporated these popular discourses on her phenomenal status: in *Little Miss Broadway*, a midget impersonates her.

Although Shirley performs the conventions of the formation of the couple, what she does, narratively, is to create couples, promiscuously and in profusion. Invariably, the central couple she creates becomes her own family—she invents her father and mother, but she also frequently invents

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<sup>3</sup> *Commonweal*, 23 February 1934, pp. 452.

another, older couple, uniting her imaginary grandparents into an extended family, focused on her. In twenty movies between 1934 and 1939, she creates a couple in thirteen, preserves one in two, creates a family in two and only fails three times, once because Gary Cooper dies and the other two times because the male star is too old for romance. About half of her movies involve legal battles over possession of Shirley, and most of these conclude with courtroom scenes settling ownership of Temple.

Almost invariably, the couples she invents cross class boundaries. Temple represents what Kathy Merlock Jackson calls the 'fix-it child' of late nineteenth-century sentimental literature, whose work is to re-establish domestic balance between parents or generations, a literary version of what Viviana Zelizer calls the "sentimental child," removed from the labour force and compensated with an endowment of increased sentimental value.

**These** narrative and performative patterns generate several issues, but I want to concentrate here on the question of glamour and the distinction between Shirley's narrative and performative roles. Shirley persistently plays an orphan. In her twenty movies, her father is dead in nine and dies in two; her mother is dead or unmentioned in thirteen and dies in two. Sometimes—for instance in *Poor Little Rich Girl*—she is in fact the daughter of a millionaire, but she pretends to be an orphan. As Walkerdine suggests, the orphan girl is a class-specific figure, and narratively, Shirley is consistently placed in a working-class environment (*Baby Take a Bow*, *Little Miss Broadway*, *Captain January*, *Dimples*). Most frequently, she plays an entertainer, a role that is identified as class-specific: in *Little Miss Broadway*, Jimmy Durante defines himself and the other performers as the "hoi polloi." Narratively, Shirley's

function is, as Charles Eckert has argued, to cross class barriers and heal class divisions, which she does not only through the formation of the couple but by overcoming a class-based bourgeois or aristocratic opposition to entertainment and entertainers, negotiating her own paradoxical position as child labourer representing the sentimental child.

But there is a clear contrast between the narrative role Shirley plays and her performance. Performatively, Shirley is always the bourgeois child, and her own persona was clearly labelled as bourgeois. *A Motion Picture Magazine* article written by her teacher in June 1935 called "Movie Children Are Smarter," was at pains to emphasise the educational benefits Shirley received from her career, as well as the fact that "her diet, exercise and living conditions are supervised by experts ... the care which is taken makes it virtually impossible for anything to impair her health ... Every precaution is taken to keep her from becoming spoiled or conceited ... she is not allowed to associate with adults outside of the studio unless they are considered 'safe' by the studio heads. Thus, she meets only the best of people who will exert a good influence on her." (pp. 37, 73). Shirley, the bourgeois entertainer, was being differentiated from the children she represented; Shirley, for whom acting was "play," was only "playing" at being *working-class*. And because Shirley was understood, as a child, not to "act," Shirley the bourgeois child always "sparkled" through her performances. This contradictory representation of class, this gap between narrative and performance, was understood to be part of her appeal, in contemporary commentaries that described her "the kind of child that every mother would dream of having."

The bourgeoisification of Temple's characters increased as the decade progressed, in line with a general tendency in Hollywood. In fact, Temple's career in this respect quite closely parallels that of Ginger Rogers, who mutated from "Anytime Annie" in *42<sup>nd</sup> Street* ("The only time she said 'no' she didn't understand the question") to becoming quite explicitly a virgin mother in *Bachelor Mother* in 1939. Like Rogers, Shirley shed her working-class indices as the decade progresses. Shirley, in many of her movies, is an immaculate conception, a child apparently not of woman born. She not only has no mother, some of her movies find maternal absence so unremarkable that they do not even remark on it. Shirley is never in search of her mother, but she is often in search of her father. As Walkerdine argues, while Temple's character may be "coded as working class, she actually has no past, no history, no family and no community. The way out for her is not to re-find those things, but to strive to enter the bourgeoisie" (105)—to which, as Shirley the transparent performer, she already belongs. Repeatedly, then, Shirley's movies describe a narrative in which she resumes her proper place in the social order by constructing or reconstructing a bourgeois family for her to belong to, and she achieves this, above all, by persuading an adult male to assume the place of the father. She transforms male desire into paternal, patriarchal desire, and she creates the element of permanence in male desire by providing gamblers and playboys with already-constructed families.

From this perspective, Shirley's persistent adoption of a father and creation of a family can be seen not as a repressed form of "dimpled depravity" so much as the recreation of patriarchy as a system of domestic order. In early 1930s America, the figure most visibly in crisis was "the

forgotten man,” whom *Motion Picture Herald* editor Terry Ramsaye identified in 1932 as “the All-American Dad”—the male head of the working-class family. This is the figure that Shirley addresses and re-empowers, though the power of her innocence. And this is, perhaps, the reason why a narrative that Walkerdine identifies as particularly the concern of working-class girls becomes so prominent in the mid-1930s.

Among other manifestations of the crisis was a dramatic fall in the birth-rate during the Depression. Shirley, who according to her studio was born in 1929 and who consistently played children two years younger than her alleged age, represented **the glamorous, idealised postponed** child of literally millions of procreatively conservative Depression families.

Shirley offers herself as a voyeuristic spectacle (Temple is offered as a voyeuristic spectacle), and moreover takes pleasure in doing so, and moreover declares that pleasure and that spectacle to be “innocent.” The question, I think, of crucial importance is, to whom did Temple offering herself as a voyeuristic spectacle?

**Shirley’s audience** was made up not of Greene’s clergymen but predominantly of women and children. Despite her characters’ apparent disregard for their mothers, she was, her publicity repeatedly declared, “every mother’s ideal child,” an object desired by the maternal audience.

Her movies also appealed predominantly to a non-metropolitan audience, to the tastes that *Motion Picture Herald* had described in 1932, when it editorialised that:

The sophisticated type of motion picture, however smart it may be, however much of clever, even brilliant dialogue it may contain,' may be successful in the largest metropolitan centres, but it ... cannot draw audiences to the box office window at the theatres of the larger body of subsequent-run theatres. These exhibitors, whose potential audience does not have the same variety of taste found in the large city, cannot realize a reasonable profit, if any at all, from the presentation of the sophisticated film ... On the other hand, the truly unsophisticated, homely type of simple, and perhaps romantic film story, is not only greatly desired by the smaller community exhibitors, but is the sort of film from which they derive their greatest profit, which will draw their particular audience to the box office, and which send that audience from the theatre with a definite feeling of satisfaction.<sup>4</sup>

Undoubtedly, Shirley represents a male-dominated industry's understanding and articulation of a female fantasy: according to Temple, Darryl Zanuck issued instructions to "Keep her skirts high. Have co-stars lift her up whenever possible to preserve the illusion now selling so well. Preserve babyhood." But her appeal was not, as Greene claimed, "more secret and more adult." Rather, as Margaret Thorp wrote in *America at the Movies* in 1939, she embodied:

all the dreams of all the parents who have transferred their reveries from themselves to their children. The woman who has abandoned hope of any glamorous existence of her own can still escape from reality by identifying her drab-haired offspring with the happy creatures that flit across the screen (p55)

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<sup>4</sup> MPH, 16 April 1932, p. 9.

And in this context, finally, I think, we have to reconsider the idea of **glamour, as it applies to Shirley Temple**. Annette Kuhn indicates some of the characteristics of glamour as implying :

a sense of deceptive fascination, of groomed beauty, of charm enhanced by means of illusion ... beauty or sexuality is desirable exactly to the extent that it is idealized and unattainable.

Kuhn, however, understands glamour as “a notion applied almost exclusively to women,” and directed primarily at the male spectator. For women, she suggests, the desire for perfection is displaced onto desire for the products advertised or connoted by the glamorous bodies:

As far as the film industry is concerned, to place the consumer of the films themselves in a constant position of desire is to bring him or her back to the cinema time and time again, to seek an unattainable fantasy life. ... representations of women became the commodities that film producers were able to exchange in return for money.<sup>5</sup>

But film producers also exchanged representations of men and children for money. These images, too, operated according to the structures of desire and displacement that circulated around idealised, unattainable representations. I want to understand glamour here not as a veiled or attenuated sexuality, but as a consistent ingredient in a system of representation—that is, is a set of codes of representation: of lighting, of non-diegetic music, of composition and camera movement and of performance. Shirley’s body is glamorised, and her glamorous body is on display, but the

Temple phenomenon was too large, too culturally consequential, for **all these women** to have been (unconsciously) pandering their daughters to the paedophile desire of Greene's clergymen. What makes Temple such an interesting limit case in the construction of glamour is that her glamorised body is on display primarily as an object of **maternal desire**, a desire that includes a restitution of a patriarchal domestic order.

The point about glamour as a system of representation—as, for instance, a kind of light—is that Hollywood can do it to anything, and does so, indiscriminately.<sup>6</sup> **In *The Little Colonel***, for example, Shirley is glamorised, Bill Robinson is glamorised, and slavery is glamorised. Shirley and Robinson are dressed down but lit up and made up. These representations are profoundly contradictory: Shirley was the better-paid half of the movie's first inter-racial dance partnership, but as Karen Vered has described, Robinson's presence was simultaneously suppressed. According to Temple's own account, her pairing with Robinson was originally suggested by D.W. Griffith, writing to Sheehan in 1935: "There is nothing, absolutely nothing, calculated to raise the goose flesh on the back of an audience more than that of a white girl in relation to Negroes."<sup>7</sup> But the performances in *The Little Colonel* explicitly deny any such suggestion: again, according to Temple, "to avoid social offense and assure wide distribution"—especially in the South—"the studio cut

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<sup>5</sup> Frances Borzello, Annette Kuhn, Jill Pack and Cassandra Wedd, "Living Dolls and 'Real Women,'" in *the Power of the Image: Essays on Representation and Sexuality*, (London: Routledge, 1985, pp. 12-4.

<sup>6</sup> "Glamorlight" is, according to John Alton, "indirect, almost no light; it is soft, and no matter where it comes from, will do the face no harm. ... In 'Gl'amour light', all faces look well (low light is no light)." (John Alton, *Painting with Light* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), pp. 174, 180)

<sup>7</sup> Temple, p. 90



scenes showing physical contact” between her and Bill Robinson, when they touched fingers during the staircase dance.<sup>8</sup>

In Temple’s performances, Shirley articulates glamour as a “sophisticated” “innocence,” a knowing innocence, just as Ginger Rogers does. Like the representation of Robinson, it is a thorough self-contradictory condition, in which the movie denies its content, but this was a condition widely arrived at in Classical Hollywood, where what Ruth Vasey has called the “principle of deniability” provided a means by which the same movie could provide entertainment for both the sophisticated and the “innocent” viewer at the same time - in pictures which, as *Film Daily* put it, “won’t embarrass Father when he takes the children to his local picture house”. In asides such as this the true concerns of patriarchy revealed themselves. The idea that movies would teach daughters things only their fathers should know was concisely expressed in a 1933 memo from Ray Norr, one of the Hays Office staff:

The very man who will guffaw at Mae West’s performances as a reminder of the ribald days of his past will resent her effect upon the young, when his daughter imitates the Mae West wiggle before her boyfriends and mouths “Come up and see me sometime”.<sup>9</sup>

Late 30s movies achieved a particular “innocence” because they acted as a foil to a secondary “sophisticated” narrative constructed within the imagination of some viewers. In Shirley’s case, the result is a reinvented, “sophisticated” innocence, the constructed innocence of the Production Code

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<sup>8</sup> Temple, p. 98

<sup>9</sup> “*Baby Face*”, note 97

which can differentiate between suggestive six-year-olds dancing hula and Shirley's innocent deployment of strategies of double meaning. Innocence was both a commodity in Shirley's movies and a guarantee, an endorsed and asserted interpretative strategy. Shirley's "innocence" is a magical power—the magical power of incoherence possessed by entertainment—that allows her to unite opposites.

This “innocence” permitted contradictory representations not only of sexuality but also of race and class. In her Show Business movies, Temple inhabits a space that is marked as both working-class and classless at the same time. As a child performer, she’s working class. But the theatre, or the performance space, is also marked as one in which class barriers can be crossed. Shirley succeeds in providing a sufficiently bourgeois performance—she performs the sentimental child—to seduce the bourgeoisie into accepting the theatre as both a respectable place in itself and as a respectable place from which a bourgeois man can take a working woman. Through Temple’s performance, class is enacted and denied, expressed and repressed, enunciated and disavowed. Shirley’s “innocence” is a magical power—the magical power of incoherence possessed by entertainment—that allows her to unite opposites. So, in the final scene of *Little Miss Broadway*, reminiscent of the reconstructions of space of Berkeley numbers Shirley disrupts and reconfigures the space of the courtroom, the institutions of authority, and relations between classes, but she does so in the name of entertainment and through the magical, entertaining power of her own, constructed “innocence.”

Shirley was the third successive top female box-office star who played working-class characters—Dressler and West. If we think of class issues in relation to 1930s female stars, we also have Harlow, Bow, Crawford, Davis in what made her successful, Gaynor, and the phenomenon of “marrying up”—and the unpopularity of Hepburn, on a class basis. So there is a persistent narrative image/narrative discourse about women and class, and about the orphan child, as working-class figures.

Shirley reveals—and her performances with Robinson reveal, that anything can be glamorised, including slavery and the fear of miscegenation—if only it’s made up and lit up.

This is alarmingly contradictory, and also inevitably contradictory—the movie denies its content. Zanuck was a past-master at this strategy:

Zanuck had not yet given up, and continued to deny Joy's claims:

If it is impossible for us to tell a story of a boy who has a love affair with a girl - gets tired of the girl - avoids her, and then in a drunken argument causes an accident to occur to her, then illegally operates to save her life and instead causes her death, we might just as well quit making motion pictures ... The trouble, if I may be permitted to say so in this case, is whoever has been handling this script with you is reading between the lines and reading in conditions which cannot possibly prove to be facts ...

Instead, production of the dichotomous text meant that they could make movies that “sophisticated” and “innocent” audiences alike could watch at the same time, without realizing that they were watching different movies - and this capacity was constructed into the movies as a necessity of their commodity function, to sell the same thing to two audiences at the same time.

Thus I want to argue that Shirley’s knowledge is innocent. Innocence is both a commodity and a guarantee. Innocence is “cuteness”—as manifested by TV shows like *Kids Say the Cutest Things*—and that commodity of behaviour (innocence) is packaged in the Temple movies. Because it is “innocent,” its intent is also innocent, so the imitation of adult behaviour is an innocent

imitation. The intent is transmitted to the producers, and also to the consumes, which may be why no-one worried about it.

This starts to map out a viewing position, in which Shirley's persistent adoption of a father and creation of a family can be seen not as a repressed form of "dimpled depravity" so much as the recreation of patriarchy as a system of domestic order. In early 1930s Hollywood, the economic and political crisis is most frequently represented as a crisis in sexual and domestic order [See *Baby Face*] In this process, causal relations are reversed. But both in representation and reality, the figure in crisis is "the forgotten man," whom Terry Ramsaye identified in 1932 as "the All-American Dad"—the male head of the working-class family. There is much sociological evidence that this figure was in both actual and representational crisis in the early 1930s ["Usable Bounds"]. Successful patriarchs are absent from early 1930s movies, and the figure is reinstated from 1934 onward—*It Happened One Night* and *Temple*. This is the figure that Shirley addresses and re-empowers, though the power of her innocence. And this is the reason why a narrative that Walkerdine identifies as particularly the concern of working-class girls becomes so prominent in the mid-1930s.

Temple's is a world in which male desire has become patriarchal. Temple creates the family, and she creates the element of permanence in male desire—eg in *Little Miss Marker*, Sorry desire for Bangles—as she also creates two fathers: Sorry and the Charles Bickford character.

Shirley as the glamorous, idealised, unattainable child of the Depression – the child, perhaps, that Paul Muni's James Allen never had in *I Am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang*.

Temple in performance is Temple herself—a *Vogue* article: "she is less an artist than a touchstone, less an actress than a world-wide emotion." (Vered, p. 56). In performance, she is distanced from her character because she can't/doesn't "act." The distance between Temple and her character is often one of class. This is enacted in *The Little Princess*, where her class status is arbitrarily abolished half-way through the movie. But consistently, Temple performs bourgeois in working-class parts, and, just like Ginger Rogers, she sheds her working-class indices as the decade progresses.

Shirley's career actually parallels that of Rogers, from "Anytime Annie" to Virgin Mother (in *Bachelor Mother*). Shirley, in many of her movies, is a child apparently not of woman born. She not only has no mother, some of her movies find maternal absence so unremarkable that they do not even remark on it—*Poor Little Rich Girl* ("I have no mother," and the nurse who is run over just disappears—is she dead?), *The Little Princess*. Shirley is never (almost never) in search of her mother, but she is often (always) in search of her father. But Shirley, as the ideal child—as "every mother's ideal child" (Vered)—is the object desired by the maternal audience. The absence of mother allows the female audience to desire directly, uninhibitedly.

*Stand Up and Cheer* script: "This is the kind of child that every mother would dream of having." According to Jane Withers, mothers took their children to Shirley movies to persuade them how to behave. a 1935 survey of girls

suggested that the person most girls wanted to be like was Temple, followed by Amerlia Earhart and Eleanor Roosevelt.

No-one was irredeemable to her.

Shirley's circumstances were explicitly compared to "the days when Jackie Coogan was making *The Kid*." (73) Shirley's protection from her fans was itself justified according to a psycho-educational scheme: "In order that she will not realise how great is the public interest in her ... all contacts that might be harmful are carefully avoided. Even movies are taboo, and she sees only a few special pictures."

According to articles in *Variety*, both Fox and Paramount received complaints from women's organisations and fans after *Baby Take a Bow*, *Now and Forever* and *Little Miss Marker*, about Shirley appearing in movies in which she was "mixed up with crooks." During production of *Bright Eyes*, it was announced that she would appear in no more movies with "gangster backgrounds" (AFI Catalog) Jason Joy was involved in some of these discussions.

An indication of Shirley's commercial value: during the filming of *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm*, the Quaker Oats Company objected when they learned that there was to be song in the movie about "crackly corn flakes," since Shirley was under contract to them to advertise their product, Quaker's Puffed Wheat. Zanuck had the song changed to "Crackly Grain Flakes." The National Confectioners' Association brought a \$500,000 libel suit against Fox claiming that a scene in which Aunt Miranda (Helen Westley) says: "Candy bar! Gwen take the child into the kitchen and give her something decent to eat" did members of the association irreparable harm, since the scene "libels a bar of candy and holds up the candy profession to ridicule and shame." The suit was rapidly dropped. (AFI Catalog)

In *Stowaway*, Temple dances in imitation of Rogers with a life-sized rag doll Astaire. She also imitates Al Jolson and Eddie Cantor.

"Children have set styles before, but they have been royal children or more frequently dream children, evolved, like Little Lord Fauntleroy, from an artist's or an author's imagination. Never before the advent of the movies had any one conceived the scheme of ingratiating into the affections of the public the personality and mannerisms of an everyday child without rank or fortune. And only in the past few years have the film magnates themselves fully realised how profitable such exploitation might be.

"But already certain movie children, all from average homes and backgrounds, are setting the patterns of juvenile dress and conduct around the world. Mothers in Austria and Australia, as in Tampa and Tacoma, are twisting their babies' hair into curls like Shirley's teaching their children Shirley's little songs, dressing them in copies of her frocks. ... on a thousand counters Shirley Temple and Jane Withers dolls are a bulwark of the toy industry. In lofts and factories and shops uncounted adults owe their jobs to the vogue for imitating Shirley's clothes, underwear and furniture, on which, it is said, her own royalties alone amount to \$100,000 a year." (Eunice Fuller Barnard, "Children of Hollywood's Gold Rush," *New York Times*, 4 October 1936)

Shirley was involved in tie-ins from the outset of her career, since the *Baby Burlesks* were part-funded by them. Her picture promoted corn flakes, Baby Ruth candy bars, gum wrappers and cigars. (Black, p. 14)

She signed with Educational in January 1932 after making *The Runt Page* – age 3½. She made *War Babies* at 4.