

Betrayed by Blondness: Jiřina Štěpničková 1930 - 1945

Blondness seems to be always already connected with female stardom mostly in terms of glamour, sexuality and wealth. But not much attention has been paid to stars articulating different set of values attached to fair hair found in artistic, national and religious discourses. In my case study focusing on Czech star Jiřina Štěpničková I aim to take a closer look on her star image in the period through the 1930s up to early-to-mid 1940s. I argue that while blondness heavily contributed to her status of a national icon it also resulted in a complex set of negotiations between her star qualities and the national rural characters she performed. On one hand, Štěpničková was labeled as "Czech Madonna", perceived as perfect candidate for heroines defined by faithfulness, self-sacrifice and chastity. On the other hand she was questioned as being too beautiful and elaborately styled for the parts she was cast in. In analyzing formal elements of the image together with reconstruction of the promotional and critical discourse I hope to enrich our understanding of stardom in relation to blondness. Scholars are therefore invited to look out for other patterns associated with blond hair in different time frames, media landscapes and geographical contexts.