Dragon Lady Encyclopedia Article

Dragon Lady

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Dragon Lady

In movies and comic strips, the Dragon Lady epitomized a mythic female legend; the seductive, "exotic," yet deadly Asian black widow. Although there is no evidence that a real Dragon Lady ever existed, her character was treated as real and was embodied by Anna May Wong in the 1931 Fu Manchu thriller, *Daughter of the Dragon.* The Dragon Lady persona gained additional popularity in Milton Caniff's 1930s comic strip *Terry and the Pirates*. In this comic, the Dragon Lady "captivates men with her beauty then tramples them like insects when they cross her." During World War II, the Dragon Lady persona became associated with an English-speaking radio announcer for Radio Tokyo, whose voice was broadcast to American soldiers. The American media dubbed her Tokyo Rose, and portrayed her as an Asian Mata Hari. Rose turned out to be a naive Japanese American girl named Iva Ikuko Toguri.

Further Reading:

Cao, Lan, and Himilce Novas. *Everything You Need to Know About Asian American History.* New York, Plume, 1996.

Kutler, Stanley I. "Forging a Legend: The Treason of 'Tokyo Rose.'" *Wisconsin Law Review.* 1980, 1341-1382.