Tierney, Gene (1920-1991) Encyclopedia Article

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Debuting as a teenage model and budding stage actress, Gene Tierney soon metamorphosed into one of Hollywood's most recognizable movie stars of the 1940s and 1950s. Her reputation relied on promotion of her distinctive looks and physical elegance. Twentieth Century Fox founder Darryl Zanuck famously proclaimed her, "unquestionably the most beautiful woman in movie history." With high cheekbones and unusually shaped eyes, Tierney, a New Yorker, was considered "exotic." Studios cast her in films that highlighted her mystique like *The Shanghai Gesture* (1941) and *The Egyptian* (1954). In seeming contradiction with her inscrutable features, Tierney's image also reflected her Swiss finishing school poise and sophistication, garnering her the cosmopolitan title role in the film noir classic *Laura* (1944) and that of the love-obsessed femme fatale of *Leave Her to Heaven* (1945). Offscreen, Tierney's life embraced another incongruity. The popular star suffered well publicized misfortunes and subsequent breakdowns, and her aura of graceful beauty came to signify tragedy.

Further Reading:

Ellrod, J.G. *The Stars of Hollywood Remembered: Career Biographies of 82 Actors and Actresses of the Golden Era, 1920s-1950s.* Jefferson, North Carolina, McFarland, 1997.

Lambert, Gavin. "Gene Tierney: Beverly Hills Backdrop for the Enigmatic Star of *Laura." Architectural Digest,* 1992.

Tierney, Gene, with Mickey Herskowitz. *Self Portrait.* New York, Berkley Books, 1980.