



FROM CONVENT TO HOLLYWOOD:

Redefining Female and Gender Roles in the Colonial Philippines

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Philippine history is usually characterized, by both scholars and ordinary Filipinos, as a story of a people who spent 300 years trapped in a convent and then shaped by Hollywood for the next 50 years. Such gendered characterizations often explain the Filipina/o's ambiguous and contrasting identities. Spanish colonization produced devout Filipina/o Catholics steeped in the virtues of charity, obedience and chastity but the glitz of Hollywood made Filipinos adventurous, daring and sexually liberated. Although referring to the Filipino sense of history and identity, such metaphors distinctly refer to women of the Philippines—as they are the ones often portrayed in history books as pious convent-bred girls who were transformed as Americanized, modernized women. This legacy of the double metaphor of the convent and Hollywood continue to misrepresent and marginalize women in Philippine history. This talk will examine and challenge the gendered origins of these metaphors in order to imagine a history of the Philippines outside of the convent and a rejection of Hollywood. It will be a history that will be produced by and for the women in the Philippines.