

The Prevalent Cinematic Adaptation in the Woman's Film of the 1950s¹

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Abstract

The genre called the "woman's film" was transplanted from Hollywood to the Philippines during the Golden Age of Philippine Cinema in the 1950s. It may have drawn influences from Spanish colonial traditional theatre that was heavily predisposed to infusing elements of romance, music and even comedy. Although there were stories or plots that were written directly for the cinema, a number of films in the '50s were adaptations of komiks stories published in the Liwayway magazine. These productions revealed a close resemblance to the woman's film genre. This practice of generic re-articulation raises a number of concerns pertaining to the representation of the Filipino woman in popular culture, namely: (1) the embedding of the female image within the bourgeoisie ethos; (2) the female characters' subtle co-optation in maintaining the status quo; and (3) the deployment of the traditional concept of womanhood via the romantic comedy genre and the sub-genre known as the marriage plot.

This paper then investigates how female roles and female-related plots were engaged, invoked, or even compromised at the height cinematic adaptation during an important era of Filipino cinema.

Keywords: woman's film, komiks-to-film adaptation, prevalent film adaptation, feminism in film, status quo, romantic genre, marriage plot

Introduction

The "woman's film" is a category of film or film genre specifically addressing women's concerns. It may be of two predispositions. One is to address female spectatorship, which refers to the assumption that "certain representations are aimed at a female audience." (Kuhn, 2000, p. 440) Another is the subject of film which obviously is gendered or is about the woman. As Haskell (1973) avers: "In the woman's film, the woman – a woman – is at the center of the universe" (p.155). Therefore, the woman's film represents a genre that borrows from other types as it intersects with melodrama, comedy, fantasy, and the like in terms of subject and spectatorship.

Two films produced in the 1950s may be considered examples of the "woman's film," based on their titles. These are *Aristokrata* (1954) and *Despatsadora* (1955), both based on a komiks series published in

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