

The End of the National Cinema: Filipino Film at the Turn of the Century. Patrick F. Campos, Quezon City: The University of the Philippines Press, 2016, 665 pp. ISBN 978-971-542-882-4.

Reading Patrick F. Campos' book, one encounters several paradoxes. Movie-making includes the unmaking of what is thought to be "the movie" by certain institutions or authoritarian rulers while national cinema is "a condition of not being confined within national space" but contending with forces and causes beyond national borders" (2-3).

When Campos writes 'end of national cinema,' it is not a statement about the nation's cinema end or its eventual demise. Rather he wants us to see beyond what is already known or represented. Campos treats the concepts "beginning" and "end" as rhetorical devices to question the very idea of origin with all the fiction and truth they conceal. As such, the book attentively documents the salient moments of the birth of Philippine cinema while simultaneously outlining its end. Campos provides infinite differentiation of the identity of national cinema to prevent its identity from being fixed. By postponing its identification, he suggests an alternative definition of "national cinema," and thus invites us to install one that is heterogeneous, truly of the nation, and open to radical changes.

In tracing its history, Campos' declaration of cinema's "end" brings to light the inherent, but sometimes suppressed, conflicts in the field over what is thought to be ideal, relevant and original and what would bring pride, connote degradation, and merit insufficiency. The recurring theme throughout the book is that the field of cinema is simultaneously political and artistic, and has consequently generated various contending viewpoints.

Campos' account of cinema's histories is also about an origin that is contested and problematized by those who participated in its making. The structural changes in the institutions of film are also followed by styles of

film production and criticisms that also historicized and interrogated the idea of national cinema. Campos made an eloquent case for these arguments in the first three chapters of the book that talked about the contributions of Ishmael Bernal, Mike de Leon, and Kidlat Tahimik.

One of the arguments that the book foregrounds is that cinema in the Philippines, and also in some countries in Southeast Asia, is bound up with the accelerated globalization which pulls it away from state ideologies in the time of post-independence modernization. However, self-rule had inaugurated an era of comprador despots who opened up their countries to globalizing capital, market, and culture industries. Thus, for Campos, the promise of independence, that also affects culture, stood still or failed to move beyond itself in the hands of the ruling elite.

But cinema, unlike formal political institutions, offers flexible ways of resisting any sort of state paranoia and fixed ideas on what should make up a nation and its culture. Flexibility could mean less rigid politics that advances counter positions against entrenched power, i.e. authoritarianism that was common to many Asian countries in the process of defining their own cinema. Thus cinema is known to have created spaces of freedom during the time when freedom of assembly and of the press were absent along with dissent. Campos argues that the realist cinema of Lino Brocka and Ishmael Bernal provided a counterpoint to the aesthetics of modernization sponsored by then dictator Ferdinand Marcos and his wife, Imelda.

These developments became ambivalent in the post-Marcos years. On the one hand there were freedoms gained in the political sphere, among them the institution of some measures of accountability, including the related growth of an adversarial press. On the other hand, such freedoms have fallen short of what they promised and were easily kept within bounds. Movie-making has become a huge profit-producing machine turning out formulaic and inane offerings.

It is in that light that the book's fourth chapter, devoted to independent filmmaking, has much to contribute to the discussion of national cinema.

The independent films, a melange of forms and subjectivities, were pushed by Cinemalaya. The films enjoyed state and corporate grants but tried to retain their artistic integrity and the fresh insights of filmmakers. The independent films' exhibitions are not only occasions to screen outstanding or potentially marketable works but, as Campos posited, became a venue where the very concept of "independent cinema" is reflexively "defined, delineated, and problematized," (219) or, following Derrida, deconstructed. Given that independent films is generally defined in relation to dominant cinema, perhaps the debate afforded by the annual gathering would keep the independent cinema movement from falling into the very thing that it renounces—"crass commercialism, formal aesthetic sterility, Hollywood domination and state censorship" (216). Another debate rehearsed in the chapter is the role of digital technology on independent film movement. Many of the arguments to its favour is on accessibility, whether technological or economics-wise, and largely defined from the point of view of filmmakers. On that point, Campos left the examination of technology open. However, if digital technology is simultaneously part of the means of production and means of communication, then its contribution should be theorized alongside the process and discourses of independent cinema.

Much of filmmaking takes place out of the public eye, but Campos provides us with the ways to imagine cinema and enter into its heart, its borders, and beyond its limits as it accommodated changes from the last century and the present. Campos's account on national cinema is almost encyclopaedic, so that the uninitiated reader would be overwhelmed by its scholarship and the politics of its representation. In all, "The End of National Cinema" is an engaging, extensively researched book, a vital reference for film and media studies students and scholars alike.

Ma. Diosa LABISTE

College of Mass Communications
University of the Philippines