

DOI: 10.1355/sj37-2h

*Postcolonial Hangups in Southeast Asian Cinema: Poetics of Space, Sound, and Stability.* By Gerald Sim. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020. 254 pp.

Gerald Sim's *Postcolonial Hangups in Southeast Asian Cinema* unravels the complex postcolonial relationships that constitute Southeast Asian cinematic identities. The book argues that the region's entanglement with colonial pasts could be read through different poetic elements enabled by film form. Situated at the intersection of the heterogeneous postcolonial experiences and encounters with globalization, the book investigates how Southeast Asian cinema negotiates colonial histories and how it aesthetically manifests their postcolonial remnants. In Sim's book, Southeast Asian cinema is located in film texts from three different geopolitical spaces: Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia. It is true that the connection between postcoloniality and these nations can seem too obvious given their historical interactions with the European empires. However, the book successfully points us to a totally unfamiliar terrain and modality of thinking or engaging with postcolonial theory in cinema.

When most contemporary conversations have already moved away from postcolonial theory, why is it that this book must propose a return to postcolonial tropes? To Sim, cinematic poetics of space, sound and stability found in the cinema of these three geopolitically specific sites demonstrate not only postcolonial identities but also the place of Southeast Asia in film theory. One is not wrong to understand this project as a poststructuralist reading of the curated film archive. But that understanding tends to overlook unique nuances and configurations of postcoloniality in these places, and is hence dismissive of the possibility that new postcolonial film form could emerge from this hitherto overlooked region in postcolonial studies.

Even though the book is situated within the postcolonial tradition, it resists complying with some theorization of postcolonial subjects that have long assumed an authorial or normative position within postcolonial theory. This book claims that the Singaporean,

Malaysian and Indonesian cinematic identities evince an unfamiliar set of understandings of postcolonial subjects—ones that have been shaped both by different colonial powers and by their own transitions to globalization. Thus, Sim proposes in his four chapters four unique traits of postcolonial subjects: ones that are spatially shaped; contradicted by the impulse to partake in globalization and the longing for a local space that never exists; aurally resonant to ethnic Others; and less resistant to closure and resolution.

The first chapter investigates how Singaporean films map out the colonial past through countless revealing shots of historical, architectural and geographical sites. On the one hand, Sim sees this spatial awareness as a nationally unique relationship to the indelible colonial past. On the other hand, this chapter explores contradictions emerging from shots of aerial views and projections of horizontal landscape. The chapter offers an astoundingly sharp comparison of these two cinematographic styles in the films' narratives, arguing that this spatial awareness instils a new way to understand a postcolonial subject and its attachment to and negotiation with the past.

Chapter 2 expands on the first one, proposing that Singapore's national film historiography should focus more on the national fixation on spatiality. Sim connects the hitherto bifurcated film history of the 1950s and 1960s and the post-1990s' "new wave" with the framework of Deleuzian time-images and "any-space-whatevers" (pp. 121–23). Some might say that the so-called 'high theory' is prevalent in this chapter but it is for a good creative cause. With the readings of films by Tan Pin Pin and Lei Yuan Bin, Sim expands the postcolonial tropes of alienation and foreignness in Deleuzian time-image to capture the impossibility of Singaporean identities to embody neither a sense of alienation nor attachment to Singapore. An avid reading of the contradiction between attachment and alienation underlines how it is an underestimation to claim that Singaporean global connectedness could rule out national identities shaped by colonial pasts.

Shifting towards Malaysian cinematic identities, Chapter 3 is a rich chapter in which commercial romance melodramas of Yasmin Ahmad were read with a focus on soundscape and different dialects,

both of which heavily reflect on the nation's colonial tension over racial differences. References to Jean-Luc Nancy's engagement with listening as well as his concepts of "echo chamber" and "resonant subject" (pp. 149–50) mark a decisive move to not only destabilize the visual-centric field of cinema studies but also to complicate a hegemonic understanding of hybridity in postcolonial subjects.

For the closing case, Sim's interest in postcoloniality is stretched out to cover Indonesia's period of Americanization. Those who are familiar with Joshua Oppenheimer's film *The Act of Killing* (2012) will find Sim's reading of the film for its echo of the Indonesian condition of the post-Suharto era—"the need to work through a fraught but suppressed history of violent trauma" (p. 173)—illuminating. The overarching claim of this last chapter symptomatically connects the post-Suharto traumatic sentiments to *reformasi* cinema and to how genre cinema and generic training by Hollywood recite and resuscitate the psychological attachment to stability and order—legacies of Suharto's Americanist era of Indonesia.

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DOI: 10.1355/sj37-2i

*Thai Cinema Uncensored*. By Matthew Hunt. Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2020, xi+300 pp.

Studies of Southeast Asian cinema have been in flux for two decades, as has cinema studies more generally. Thai cinema is unique in the field of Asian cultural production, and its problematic survival in recent years is marked not so much by competition from a greedy