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Christina Gerhardt and Sara Saljoughi, editors. 1968 and Global Cinema. Wayne State UP, 2018.

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Abstract

Review of Christina Gerhardt and Sara Saljoughi, editors. *1968 and Global Cinema*. Wayne State UP, 2018. 422 pp.

Keywords

Cinema, Global, Imperialism, 1968, International Film Studies, Post Colonialism, Feminism

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There is a wide range of scholarship about the events of May 1968 France, also known as “the long 1968,” and its cultural impact. The term is relatively new, reflecting the efforts of recent scholarship to expand the cultural and historical events associated with the year. Richard Vinen’s recent book *The Long 1968* (2018) and this book are both examples of a wider wave of scholarship that re-contextualizes the year in a broader historical context. The editors’ introduction of *1968 and Global Cinema* briefly surveys the most critical of existing publications, and gives insightful summaries of select critical works on the period. Yet as the editors point out, few studies frame the events of the long 1968 as *longer* (2). The editors argue that in order to expand the critical lens and create a more inclusive and further reaching understanding of the events and the cinema that emerged from this era, a more “processual” periodization that emphasizes a vast set of artistic, political, social, and economic practices should be accounted for and considered. This collection of essays serves as a much-needed intervention and supplement to previous critical studies. The editors begin with the useful question of how to revisit the topic with a new approach: although plenty of scholarship exists on the late 1950s and 1960s and in particular on the French New Wave, few of these put the cinema of 1968 into a dialogue that spans across decades and national boundaries.

At the heart of the book lies a consideration of how relationships formed among social movements globally, and it effectively places emphasis on the global dimension of 1968 by including previously neglected regions in order to expand the reach of current global cinema studies (3). Offering a significant body of work to fill this gap in scholarship, the editors’ selection of 19 essays written by international cinema scholars explores previously undervalued nations, angles, and cultural phenomena that emerged from the dramatic political stage producing what we understand today as a 1968 global cinema. The essays also expand the period and consider film movements from the 1970s to produce a longer history of 1968. Previous studies have focused all too narrowly on the most renowned French new wave *auteurs* like François Truffaut and Jean-Luc Goddard, as well as the Left Bank cinema of Chris Marker. The essays in this collection all point to the ways in which films from multiple nationalities contributed to the politics and aesthetics of the long 1968. The editors are careful to point out however that they do not view the cultural production of the long ‘68 as inherently having a universal aesthetic or political norm—despite overlaps in realism, ideology and modernism in the cinema works at hand; rather, their goal is to expand what is meant by global, girded in an examination of how previously overlooked national cinemas of the time were engaged in radical politics.

While this approach is invaluable and long overdue given our current age of criticism that responsibly sets out to illuminate and redress cultural marginalization, readers would benefit from a deeper clarification on the important core concept of “global” and why it needs renewal as it pertains to their study. Both the editors and many of the contributing authors tend to gloss over much of what is at stake in re-appropriating the term “global”—the editors’ introduction would have been more effective for readers had it thoroughly unpacked how “global” has long been used in reference to western imperialism, and they fail to parse out exactly how their “nuanced” understanding of the term serves as a corrective, or seeks to undermine the unfortunately vast and violent history of western supremacy.

This is not to say that the editors failed in selecting contributions that do indeed help us rethink global cinemas and radical politics associated with the long 1968. They curated a much needed collection of essays that do just that—and the book is a valuable tool for any scholar, student, or instructor who is researching or teaching global cinema studies and/or the events of 1968, but it is particularly useful for those explicitly concerned with the history of colonization, radical politics, and cinema. Each contribution addresses an overlooked aspect of the era and its film production, and as varied as the selections are, they share in common the importance of demonstrating the links between so called Third World Cinemas and so called First World Cinemas. In other words, these essays consider in dialogue how imperialism and colonization influenced the cinemas produced in exploited countries and also impacted films of the so called First World—a link that has not been examined in such depth or with such breadth before this volume.

The book is organized chronologically into two sections, with essays addressing both the cultural production from the longer 1968 and its impact on later political movements and cinema. Robert Stam’s excellent chapter that is part history, part case study, and part overview of radical politics and cinema, “‘The Long 1968’ and Radical Film Aesthetics,” is a fitting opener, and one of the more insightful from the collection. Editor Christina Gerhardt’s contribution considers short student films from the era, and their relationship to and influence on later films as well as second wave feminist movements in West Germany. Sara Saljoughi’s brilliant “Political Cinema, Revolution and Failure: The Iranian New Wave, 1962-79” closes the volume, and certainly is in keeping with the editors’ overall aim to draw attention to film movements from the era that have been routinely left out of critical conversations regarding the long 1968. This collection puts undervalued national cinemas in dialogue with one another, and in effect creates new critical links to renew and expand the interest in this period of cultural production and political action that has suffered from unexamined discourses of failure attached to the radical politics of the movement in our current historical moment of late capitalism. The book certainly provides cinema scholars with

extensive and varied looks at previously neglected cultural and political movements, and it expands the era, helping readers to rethink concepts of the global and national as well as cinema's relationship to radical politics and the legacy of the long '68.

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