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Theory and Practice of Minor Cinema: A Comparative Perspective

The paper proposes to examine the history and theory of “minor cinema”, referring back to the key aspects of “minor” as defined by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, in their text *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (the deterritorialization, the political aspect, and the collective value) and elsewhere. Tom Gunning’s pioneering appropriation of their concept in an essay *Towards a minor cinema* (1990) describes amateur and outsider film practice as the new avant-garde, in contrast to the established and institutionalized art, as a cinema that celebrates its marginal identity, fashioning from it a revolutionary consciousness. Gunning's reading continues to inspire texts on amateur, experimental and adjacent marginal film cultures, from Los Angeles to Switzerland (not the least in countries like Sweden that benefit from exemplary archival film practice). The notion of „minor cinema“ has been disseminated further across film studies, again in film cultures like Nordic that have historically defined themselves in contrast to the Hollywood dominant, notably in Mette Hjort's analyses of contemporary Danish as a “minor cinema”. David N. Rodowick, on the other hand, referred back to Deleuze's claim that "if there were a modern political cinema, it would be on this basis: the people no longer exist, or not yet“, and criticized identity politics and common identification of “minor” with demographic minorities. Such a reading, Rodowick claims, reifies the subaltern subject no less than the cultural hegemony it is trying to combat, whereas minor cinema, just like fiction, should produce “collective utterances (*énoncés collectifs*) whose paradoxical property is to address a people who do not yet exist and, in so doing, urge them toward becoming”.