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From lndependence to Detachment in Recent Japanese Film / ??????? ?? ????

Aaron Gerow

From Independence to Detachment in Recent Japanese Film

by Aaron Gerow

A Japanese film industry association releases data every year on the number of films distributed in Japan. According to the figures for the year 2000, the three major Japanese film studios, Toho, Toei, and Shochiku, distributed a total of 57 movies through their distribution arms. Compared to that, companies listed as "independent" (dokuritsu), distributed 225 works, outnumbering major studio films by a ratio of 4 to 1. The numerical dominance of independent companies in Japan is even more pronounced if one considers the realm of production: for the year between July 2000 and June 2001, the majors (including Daiei) made only 27 films compared to 150 for the independents and 100 for adult film producers.[1] Thus of the pictures distributed by the majors, over half were not in-house productions, but rather co-productions or creations of other corporate entities. In contemporary Japan, the major studios only account for a tiny fraction of the films actually made. That leaves us with a problem: What can the term "independent," which is usually defined through difference (e.g., "independent" vis a vis the major studios), mean in contemporary Japanese cinema if almost all the films produced are independent? Looking at this issue from industrial, stylistic, and political angles, I want to argue that the old definition of independent has largely lost its meaning in contemporary Japanese cinema. Divisions do exist, especially between versions of the classical Hollywood style and other competing styles, but these can no longer be easily overlaid on maps of the industrial and political context. With the changes in the cultural landscape of contemporary Japan, one can argue that in recent film there has been a shift from independence to detachment -- from politics, from meaning, from the other, etc. — but one that has resulted in a complex political and stylistic environment irreducible to such binary divisions as "independent vs. major."

The Loss of "Independence" in Industry

In Japanese film industry history, "independence" has signified first of all a production and/or distribution structure separate from that of major companies that are supported by oligopolistic distribution networks. "Independent" made sense back then precisely because from around 1910 on, vertically integrated studios established nation-wide theater chains, either through contract or direct ownership, founded on block-booking systems that prohibited chain theaters from showing non-studio films. Especially given occasional cooperative agreements between major companies aimed at weeding out the interlopers, those excluded from this oligopoly, especially production companies without a strong theatrical arm, were considered independent.

The notion of independence was augmented by the historical fact that, while small companies existed before 1920, they only started being called "independent" in the mid-1920s when individuals who used to belong to a major studio left to form their own production entities. The sense of going out on one's own was important for attaching connotations of "freedom," "singularity," and "autonomy" to independence. The narrative of going independent implied a need to exit a restrictive Fordian production structure in order to achieve the freedom supposedly lost in the major studios' policy of profit before all. This freedom could range from the artistic, as in the case of Kinugasa Teinosuke and his *Kurutta ichipeiji* (Page of Madness, 1926), the political, as in the left wing independents of the 1950s (centered around such directors as Imai Tadashi, Yamamoto Satsuo, and Shindo Kaneto), and the politically artistic, as in Oshima Nagisa's company Sozosha in the 1960s. The ideal of independence seemed to reach its apex in late 1960s with organizations like the documentary collective Ogawa Productions, which marked a difference between itself and dominant commercial cinema not only in style and mode of production, but even in distribution and exhibition: it showed its films by having its members lug them across the country to show at community halls and universities.

The reality, however, was that in most cases independence was a much more ambiguous phenomenon. Most independent production companies were formed for financial gain. The first "independents" in the 1920s were founded by such popular stars as Bando Tsumasaburo to increase their share of the profits of a business that had become star-centered, a trend that resumed in the 1960s when stars such as Ishihara Yujiro, Mifune Toshiro, and Katsu Shintaro left their studios to start production companies. Even today, many of the films categorized by the industry as independent are in fact soft porn "pink films" (about 90 to 100 a year), which, with a few exceptions, are hard to describe as artistically or politically independent. Whether or not independent companies could succeed depend less on artistic and political viability than on overall industry strength. When the industry was economically the strongest in the 1950s, with the studios both restricting competition between themselves and exerting control over the decisions of theater owners, the number of independent films distributed could hit zero (as in 1959). But when the industry was feeble, as in the 1920s, when the studios were capital weak, or the 1960s, when the studio system itself was in decline, independent production companies could find a niche for themselves. That niche, however, was often in a subsidiary and dependent position vis a vis the majors. In a distribution system that, for much of Japanese motion picture history, required major studios to provide two brand-new films to their theaters every week (or in some cases, every 10 or 14 days), the sheer number of films that had to be produced led the industry, at times when it was not strong enough to produce that number, to accept independent producers as essentially subcontractors filling in the spots on their release schedule.

Much has changed in the Japanese film industry since 1970, but the ambiguity of independents has, if anything, only increased. As the majors have, for all intents and purposes, turned into distribution and exhibition companies, the term "independent" on the level of production has become largely meaningless today. With the studio system a thing of the past, the act of "leaving" and "going out on one's own" bears much less weight.

Moreover, there are few barriers to capital entering the production system, a fact evidenced by the wide range of companies that have invested in films in the last decade or two. The old requirement of apprenticing as an assistant director before becoming a director is also largely defunct as not only actors like Kitano Takeshi, but 8mm "amateurs" like Hashiguchi Ryosuke and Yaguchi Shinobu have secured places in commercial cinema. While the major Japanese companies have not followed Hollywood's example in buying up independent companies, subsuming "independence" to a strategy of product differentiation, they have given major releases to films by such "independent" directors as Kurosawa Kiyoshi, Ishii Sogo, and Sakamoto Junji.[2]

If independence still makes any sense industrially, it is in the realms of distribution and exhibition. The situation is not at all similar to the 1950s, when the majors' tight control over theaters essentially ran independents out of business for a lack of screening venues. The proliferation of art house and mini-theaters has ensured that, at least in Tokyo, small production companies can screen their films — as a prelude to releasing on video — and audiences get a wide variety of films to choose from. The playing field is far from even, however. The majors still control the majority of theaters willing to play Japanese films, which means that, unless a production company can convince a major to distribute its film — difficult task without high-powered corporate backing — each of the 225 "independent" films in 2000 had little chance of playing in more than a handful of theaters across the country. The major video rental chains also rarely stock such limited release films. This not only makes it difficult to generate a profit, it renders it hard for the majority of spectators — especially those outside of Tokyo or Osaka — to see any of these films. Companies such as Kadokawa, a publishing house that was a major film producer in the 1970s and 1980s, and Argos Pictures, active in the 1980s, tried to correct this imbalance by creating their own vertically integrated companies, but both to little success.

This imbalance definitely divides the industry into the haves and the have nots, the majors and the minors, but that does not necessarily make the minors "independent." Given the term's original positive connotations of actively pursuing autonomy in finance, style, or politics, it would be ironic to term the negative conditions of these small companies, most of which do not favor their deprived position, as independence. That does not mean some companies do not choose to keep their distance from the majors. Certainly experimental, documentary, and even some fiction filmmakers like Watanabe Fumiki still prefer alternative exhibition systems for their special works. In addition, it is clear that, especially after a decade like the 1980s, when the majors abused both the advance ticket (*maeuri*) system and cozy relations with corporate partners to "pre-sell" movies regardless of their quality,[3] they have become lethargic and non-innovative despite the crisis of a changing market.[4] There are serious questions about their commitment to producing even good entertainment cinema, or their capability of marketing "small" films. This explains in part why Kitano Takeshi, a powerful player in the entertainment industry, decided to distribute his own movies after experiencing several failures with the major

distributors. Staying away from the majors can thus still indicate a desire to structurally do things one's own way, but in a changing industrial structure, that stance no longer bears the significance "independence" once had.

Detachment in Style and Politics
This does not mean that there are no differences in the contemporary Japanese film world other than those between dominant and small companies. Variations in style, for instance, are articulated as significant, but they can no longer be reduced to the binary "major-dominant style" versus "independent-alternative style." This is first because the majors have largely ceased making films, and thus these differences are largely located in the realm of "independent" films themselves. As we have seen, industrial differences are less significant and cannot automatically be tied to stylistic and political stances. In some sense, we are seeing that the mapping out of cinematic differences is not only much more complex than it used to be, but also that homologies between industry, style, and politics can no longer be taken for granted.

One prominent opposition in style is between a version of the classical Hollywood style and what I call the detached style. The former shares with the classical style the emphasis on obviousness, on subsuming style to narrative so as to doubly ensure spectator comprehension. Stylistic form operates as an explanatory device, analyzing space and character action for the sake of narrative clarity. This style can often be seen in the works distributed by the majors, from the social comedies of Yamada Yoji to the melodramas of Sawai Shin'ichiro, but it is not necessarily the style of the majors because it is also evident in the works of 1950s left-wing independents and their contemporary descendants, such as Kumai Kei and Koyama Seiichiro. Whatever the ideology, the point was to make it understandable to all in the audience, clearly positioning the viewer with regard to the narrative theme. Importantly, this style is evident, almost to excess, in television drama as well, as producers have tried to combat the "distraction" inherent in televisual viewing with a style that over dramatizes action and emphasizes narrative explanation to the point of excess. Given the significant influx of television capital and network staff into the film industry, epitomized by the success of such Fuji TV productions as *Odoru daisosasen* (Bayside Shakedown, 1997) and *Whiteout* (2000), one can consider this less the style of the film majors than a dominant style of visual narrative in Japan.

The detached style is often consciously opposed to this style, though in a more complex relation than that of binary opposition. To put it succinctly, the detached style is defined by a detached stance on the levels of film form and narration. The camera is often placed at a distance from the characters, refraining from approaching their bodies and, especially, their faces, in effect refusing to intrude on whatever inner thoughts and emotions are etched on their physique. Editing generally abstains from breaking up and analyzing space, not only in order to deny viewers proximity to characters and their internal states, but also to resist dramatizing the scene and ascribing meaning to actions. Point-of-view shots are particularly rare, as viewers are thoroughly positioned outside the characters. This is thus

mostly a long shot, long take style, one that keeps a distance from character psychology and emphasizes the ambiguity of what may exist before the camera. Unlike the classical style, nothing is obvious or clear because style refuses to be subservient to narration. Spectators must work to draw any meaning from the mise-en-scene because there is a general lack of explanation, both of narrative action and of internal states. Aspects of this style can be found in the films of such varied directors as Kurosawa Kiyoshi, Aoyama Shinji, Kawase Naomi, Koreeda Hirokazu, Miike Takashi, Kitano Takeshi, Sai Yoichi, Hashiguchi Ryosuke, Ichikawa Jun, Suwa Nobuhiro, Shinozaki Makoto, and a number of lesser-known filmmakers. A prominent example, familiar to many abroad, is Koreeda's *Maborosi no hikari* (Maboroshi, 1995). There the narrative not only cuts out many of the dramatic events (such as the first husband's death), leaving in their place seemingly mundane actions, crucial moments like Yumiko's final expression of distress on the seashore are shot in an extreme long shot, giving spectators little access to character expressions. As evident in Koreeda's own statements, such a strategy is often based on a consciousness of television, on a desire not to dramatize or explain in the way that media does.[5]

Such an opposition between television and the detached style can lead one to generically define the detached style as art cinema, a mode distinguished from the classical styles of popular commercial film and television. Some have even charged that this generally undramatic, "quiet" style is consciously catered to the tastes of international film festivals and foreign art film fans who prefer a distinctly "still" Japanese cinema. These boundaries between art and commercial, however, are not as certain these days. Kurosawa, Aoyama, Miike, and Kitano have all worked in commercial genre cinema, especially the yakuza film, and it seems that, with the success of Iwai Shunji, Sabu, and Japanese horror (especially Nakata Hideo) with foreign crowds, international festivals are no longer just looking for quiet Japanese cinema.

The domestic geography is also complicated by the fact that the detached style is also opposed to a more postmodern fetishism of style and spectacle evident in the work of directors trained in music videos and television commercials. These include Ishii Katsuhiko, Tsutsumi Yukihiko, Nakano Hiroyuki, and Yukisada Isao, but the most prominent example is Iwai Shunji. Whereas the detached style features restraint in both style and narration, this postmodern approach foregrounds an excess of style, not for the sake of narrative clarity (as in the classical style), but for the spectacle of style itself. Narrative is not ignored, but story pleasure is often paralleled or even exceeded by the enjoyment of stylistics. The detached style also operates in distinction to this style, resisting the commodification of the image evident in such works through distance, although some directors, like Miike, can be seen to straddle both styles (Miike's combination of the two providing a uniquely critical stance towards both). What is intriguing, however, is how all three styles participate in a struggle over what I would call the politics of the real. It is significant that many of the directors using the detached style either came out of documentary, as with Koreeda, Kawase, and Suwa, or have exhibited a strong interest in

documentary as a cinematic option, as is evident in the cases of Aoyama, Shinozaki, and Ichikawa. While not necessarily a documentary aesthetic, the detached style, by refraining from ascribing meaning to events before the camera, opposes a naked, bare "real" to both the coded and thoroughly conventional "realism" of the classical style, and the artifice of the sign in the postmodern style. In some ways, one can argue that the detached style is a mode of resistance against both the hegemonic categorization of reality and the postmodern reduction of reality to floating signifiers and virtual experiences. The other styles, however, have their own competing claims to the real. Social problem filmmakers such as Yamada Yoji (the *Gakko* [Class to Remember] series) and Kumai Kei stake a strong claim to the social pertinence of their pedantic narratives, while a recent postmodern work like Iwai Shunji's *Riri Shushu no subete* (All About Lily Chow, 2001) advertises itself as "the real of 14-year olds" precisely because, it seems to argue, the reality of Japanese youth is the loss of reality to the commodified image and virtual experiences.

Such oppositions still seem to pose one-to-one relations between politics and style, but such combinations must be considered amidst a changed political climate in contemporary Japan. Independent film in the 1950s and 1960s was politically supported by such universalizable metanarratives as "humanism," "socialism," "the individual," and "liberation," and thus the politics of independence itself deeply combined industrial and artistic autonomy with the pursuit of such metatruths. The failure of radical politics in the 1960s, epitomized by the internecine bloodbath committed by the Japanese Red Army in 1972, created a strong distrust for political metanarratives that still defines much of Japanese culture today, especially since the economic decline of the 1990s has accelerated disillusionment among the youth in social institutions such as the family, school, government, and political parties. This distrust is evident both in the postmodern style, which celebrates surface spectacle over "meaningful" involvement, and in the detached style, whose refusal to adopt a certain stance of knowledge towards the story world is in many ways based on an emphatic dislike for the political confidence of their elders from the 60s. This environment, perhaps more than anything else, indicates how previous definitions of "independent" are no longer valid in today's Japanese film, and explains why few young filmmakers are in a rush to establish programmatically alternative production or exhibition frameworks. "Independence," it seems, has come to bear meaning more in the line of "indies" (*indizu*), a word prominent in the record industry, which, while promising a proliferations of styles "true to one's self," does so only within a post-Fordist consumer culture in which the choices of commodities becomes the basis for self-expression.

Politics does still matter in contemporary Japanese film, but I would argue it is a politics not of meta- but of micronarratives, focused less on social and industrial independence than on the micro-relations of the individual to the other. This politics, I would contend, creates even more complex divisions within the recent film scene. Consider, for instance, the theoretical writings of Aoyama Shinji.[6] Amidst a history of discourse that tends to label any influx of new directors into a national cinema scene a "nouvelle vague," he

intervenes with a polemically strict definition of a "nouvelle vague" as a mode of thought (*shikō*). To him it is "nothing other than a discourse dueling over the sole point of how to treat the other from a political perspective, with the subject in struggle in the end being the individual." His contentious conceptions of the key terms "political" and "individual," however, prompts him to reject the much-heralded Shochiku Nouvelle Vague of the 60s (Oshima Nagisa, Shinoda Masahiro, Yoshishige Yoshikata, etc.) and declare there has never been a new wave in Japan (except, perhaps, the works of Suzuki Seijun and Yamatoya Atsushi). While the 60s new wave still attempted to make the individual and the other represent political metanarratives, Aoyama defines the individual as that "unitary existence that possesses no meaning and is a representative of nothing" — that which "cannot be generalized or universalized." To him then, cinematic politics — the true *nouvelle vague* — is the "struggle to protect the individual as an individual," the "struggle over the subject that grasps the other."[7]

One can easily relate this to elements of the detached style since cinematic detachment can, especially in Aoyama's films, constitute a refusal to invade the individual's space and inscribe him/her with meaning in a universalizable framework. That stance, far from constituting a solipsistic individualism, makes the relationship with the other central because it is only in the recognition of the individual as not representative of anything, that the individual is recognized as an other, opaque and resistant to appropriation by universalizing ideologies. A number of recent films make respect for the otherness of the other a central theme. This is the case with Suwa Nobuhiro's *M/Other* (1999), in which the glass-walled architecture of the house comes to signify the visibility that oppresses the woman as her life is invaded by demands from her lover. Suwa's film, as with Hashiguchi Ryosuke's *Nagisa no Shindobaddo* (Like Grains of Sand, 1995), problematizes invasions of the private space of the individual, and posits occasional invisibility and detachment as a means of respecting the other. In a crucial sense, these cinematic statements oppose the tendency of more classical styles to create structures of identification that allow easy access to the thoughts and feelings of others. Aoyama, Suwa, Kurosawa and many others use elements of the detached style, especially abstention from point of view shots, to refuse that process, thereby respecting the other in its unknowability.

This can relate to the problems of nationalism and ethnicity when structures of cinematic identification make it easy for the Japanese spectatorial subject to "identify" with ethnic others despite the material chasms between them.[8] The 1990s has seen a spate of Japanese films taking up the issue of minorities in Japan, the Asian and foreign others crisscrossing the national space, but few have really have been self-conscious of, to use Aoyama's words, "the struggle over the subject that grasps the other." It is significant that some of the directors who have dealt with the issue of ethnic minorities in the most politically interesting fashions, such as Sai Yoichi and Yamamoto Masashi, have used aspects of the detached style precisely to resist the nationalist universalization of their subjects and to respect their otherness. At the same time, the issue of the nation and the other also reveals the potential divisions even within the

detached style. The fact that detachment can also constitute aesthetic detachment means that, in some cases, the detached style can transform into a form of aestheticism that, far from recognizing the opacity of the other, reduces it to beautiful landscape. Aoyama and other critics have laid this charge against Koreeda, accusing *Maborosi* (1995) of unproblematically reconstructing a national self,[9] and even today critics associated with Cahiers du Cinema Japon consistently vilify Koreeda's aesthetic tendencies. As different political vectors cross the Japanese film world, we can see that the divisions, overlaps, and alliances between different camps have become more and more minute and complex, resisting any simplified mapping.

The old divisions between major and independent, dominant and alternative, are much harder, if not impossible to make in contemporary Japanese cinema. This is not simply because the industrial and stylistic landscapes have changed, but also because the political environment, along with the narratives and questions which shape and filmmaking style and practice, has fundamentally altered. One just doesn't hear young filmmakers talk of independence as a political goal any longer; one instead sees a certain detachment from the old politics of independence. Perhaps we can see in that detachment its own kind of independence, but that, as I have argued, is a more complex, more tortured notion of independence. I certainly feel that this complexity has made watching contemporary Japanese cinema a rich, varied, and exciting experience. The intricate relations between films make one want to explore some more — even if the map of the scene may not be that easy to follow.

1. These and other statistics are available in the yearly Eiga nenkan published by Jiji Eiga Tsushinsha.

2. Although Shochiku's Cinema Japanesque and Toho's Young Entertainment Square were failed attempts at such differentiation.

3. For an account of this practice, in which corporate relations were used to "force" the sale of tickets before the film even opened, see my "The Industrial Ichikawa" in Kon Ichikawa, ed. James Quandt (Ontario: Cinematheque Ontario, 2001), 385-397.

4. Two industry analysts, Murakami Yoshiaki and Ogawa Norifumi, who pay little attention to the plight of small companies, still strongly criticize the major film companies for their total lack of innovative policies in a globalized information age. See their Nihon eiga sangyo saizensen (Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten, 1999).

5. See the interview Tanaka Junko and I conducted with Koreeda: "Documentarists of Japan #12: Koreeda Hirokazu," Documentary Box 13 (1999): 9. This interview is also accessible on the Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival website: http://www.city.yamagata.yamagata.jp/yidff/docbox/docbox-e.html

6. For a more lengthy analysis of Aoyama's theory and works, see my "Aoyama Shinji" in Fifty Contemporary Filmmakers, ed. Yvonne Tasker (London: Routledge, 2002).

7. Quoted from Aoyama's manifesto-like "Yo wa ika ni shite Gareru shito ni nari shika," Cahiers du Cinema Japon 21 (1997): 166-175.

8. I have already written about how structures of identification and the commodification of the image work in Iwai Shunji's *Swallowtail Butterfly* (Suwaroteiru, 1996) to create a form of consumer nationalism that appropriates the Asian other: "Consuming Asia, Consuming Japan," in Censoring History, eds. Laura Hein and Mark Selden (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 2000).

9. See for example Aoyama Shinji, Yasui Yutaka, and Abe Kazushige, "Kenzaikasuru 'Nihon' to iu jiko," Cahiers du Cinema Japon 19 (1996): 84-100.

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從獨立走向抽離
當代日本電影

Aaron Gerow

根據日本《映畫年鑑》刊登的電影業年度統計，2000年日本國內獨立單位發行電影共二百二十五部，但由日本三大電影公司 ── 東寶、東映與松竹發行的電影卻只有五十七部，僅及獨立發行的三分之一。製片的數量更見懸殊，由2000年7月至2001年6月期間，獨立單位的製片量達一百五十部，成人電影製片商亦有一百部，而包括大映在內的大型電影公司卻只有二十七部[1]。由於大型電影公司發行的電影中，有超過一半是自外購入或與其他單位合作，因此日本每年出產的電影，只有極少是真正來自幾家大型電影公司。

在差不多所有電影皆屬獨立製作的情況下，「獨立」一詞已經失去了過去它在行業結構、作品風格、政治形態等方面與「主流」的相對意義。雖然內容上傳統荷里活風格與其他表現手法的分野依舊存在，不過日本電影的政治形態與製作、發行模式已不能再以同樣方式輕易劃分。文化環境的轉變，已逐漸令日本電影從「獨立」走向意識形態與意涵等的抽離，這種趨勢造就的複雜電影業生態，令「主流 ── 獨立」的簡單二分法失去了意義。

不再「獨立」

一直以來，日本電影中所謂「獨立」指的是在大型電影公司及其發行網絡以外的製作、發行系統。透過垂直整合以壟斷市場的大型電影公司，自1910年開始以收購或合約形式建立全國性的連鎖影院網，並藉其對檔期的控制阻礙影院放映其他電影。大型電影公司之間更不時互定合作協議，扼殺其他製作單位進入市場的機會。那些被排斥在寡頭系統以外，尤其是缺乏影院網絡支援的小型製作公司，就被視為「獨立」。

小型製作公司其實早在1920年以前已經存在，不過要到1920年代中期，一部份電影工作者開始離開大型電影公司自組製作單位，小型製作公司才開始被定性為「獨立」。這些電影人的出走，為「獨立」帶來了自由、自立、自主等特別意涵。一個加入獨立行列的電影人，就是一個認為有需要掙脫流水作業系統與成本效益考量的枷鎖、追求創作自由的電影人。其後的獨立作品，無論是藝術電影（如衣笠貞之助的《瘋狂的一頁》(1926)）、政治電影（如今井正、山本薩夫、新藤兼人等導演的左派獨立作品），或是政治藝術電影（如1960年代大島渚「創造社」的作品），皆反映出獨立電影人對自由的渴求。隨着1960年代末期，小川製作等新晉獨立單位的出現，這種理想主義可說達致頂峰。小川製作不單製作模式和表現手法均與主流電影截然不同，就連發行也是靠成員自己帶着影片到全國各地的社區會堂和大學放映。

事實上，日本電影業中的獨立從來不是單純的現象，大部份獨立製作公司其實也是為牟利而成立。1920年代出現的第一批獨立單位，由坂東妻三郎等名演員成立，目的不過是要在影星地位越來越重要的電影圈裏增加自己的直接收入。其後1960年代的影星石原裕次郎、三船敏郎、勝新太郎等離開所屬電影公司自組獨立單位，目的亦是一樣。

近年被歸類為「獨立」的電影，大部份是軟性色情的「粉紅電影」，根本談不上藝術或政治獨立。小型製作公司的成功，一直取決於電影業景氣多於政治內容或藝術活力。在1950年代日本電影業最為蓬勃時，在大型電影公司協議避免相互競爭，並透過對影院網的控制保障利益的情況下，獨立影片的發行量可以如1959年般低至零；但在電影業普遍疲乏的狀況下，如1920年代電影公司缺乏資金、1960年代大型電影公司制度開始崩潰時，獨立製作公司往往可以找到較大的生存空間。

不過無論成功與否，日本的獨立製作一直是以附庸的形態依賴大型電影公司藉以生存。日本的電影發行網絡長期需要電影公司每星期（有時是十或十四天）提供兩部新電影以供放映。發行網絡的龐大壓力，令電影公司在力有不逮時，不得不採用其他製作公司的作品填補檔期。

由1970年至今日本電影業的變化，令「獨立」的意義變得更為模糊。當大型電影公司都差不多完全蛻變為發行與放映商時，「獨立製作」已失去它相對於大型電影公司製作的實際意義。隨着電影公司壟斷狀況的消失，今日「出走」或「自力更生」的電影人也不如從前般任重道遠。而在近十、二十年間，來自不同商業團體的大量投資亦大大降低了開拍電影的資金門檻。從前要成為導演必需要先以副導演身份學師，今天卻不單演員如北野武可以執導，就連橋口亮輔、矢口史靖這些拍8米厘影片出身的「行外人」也能在商業電影中佔一席位。雖然日本的大型電影公司並未有跟從荷里活的做法收購獨立製作公司，但在「多元化」的旗號下，電影公司早已將黑沢清、石井聰互、阪本順治等人的獨立製作納入本身的系統裏，予以商業發行[2]。

時至今日，「獨立」在日本電影業結構中的實質意義，極其量只在於發行和放映。相對於1950年代大型電影公司對市場的強勢壟斷，今日小規模製作無疑可以在發行錄像前，於東京與大阪越趨盛行的藝術影院及迷你影院放映，而觀眾亦享有較多的選擇。不過日本國內大部份願意放映本土製作的影院，仍然為大型電影公司所緊密控制，除非其他製作公司有能力取得足夠的財力與人脈支持，說服大型電影公司為其放映影片，否則影片獲得全國性放映的機會可說是微乎其微。加上較具規模的家庭電影連鎖店對租貸或售賣這些只作小量發行影片的興趣不大，不單令小規模製作變得幾近無利可圖，而且大部份觀眾（尤其是東京與大阪以外的觀眾）根本無緣看到這些影片。1970、1980年代，角川書店與Argos Pictures等相繼建立各自的「一條龍」製作－發行－放映系統，企圖打破大型電影公司的壟斷，不過最終皆無功而退。

1980年代市場環境大變，大型電影公司卻繼續透過與商業夥伴間的融洽關係以及「預售」等制度，傾銷質素參差的影片[3]，經營日趨因循苟且[4]，就連製作最起碼的娛樂片、發行小型製作公司產品的能力也開始成疑。北野武成立公司發行自己的電影，原因之一就是屢遭大型發行商的失誤連累。而部份拍攝實驗電影、紀錄片、甚至故事片的電影人，如Watanabe Fumiki等，依然堅持選擇影展或其他特別渠道發表他們重視的作品。雖然「獨立」仍然意味着某

種對體制上自主的訴求，今日大部份大型電影公司體制外的電影工作者，往往對身陷的困境感到迫不得已，與過去「獨立人」追求創作與經濟自由的理想主義大相逕庭。

自既有政治形態抽離

這並非表示，今日日本電影只能以製作或發行單位的大小來分類。雖然不同的作品，在題材、表現手法方面依然有着明顯的分別，「主流－獨立」的簡單二分法已不適用。原因之一，是大型電影公司早已停止製作電影，在全部電影皆為「獨立」製作的情況下，製作單位作業模式與作品風格、政治取向的關係已不如過去般明顯。由此可見，日本電影不單比過去更難分類，就連既有的分類標準亦須重新釐定。

就作品風格而言，日本電影中，有所謂典型荷里活風格與「抽離」風格兩大類別。典型荷里活風格採取直截了當的表達形式，藝術元素主要為敘事服務，令觀眾完全了解片內容是創作的最大目的；藝術元素的角色是解析空間關係與角色行為，加強敘事的清晰與連貫性。這種風格不單常見於大型電影公司發行的作品，如山田洋次的喜劇與澤井信一郎的通俗劇，就連 1950 年代的左派導演及其繼承者，如熊井啟與神山征二郎等的作品亦常予糅用。不論導演的政治，文化立場為何，採用這種風格就是為了要將觀眾置放於預設的位置，清晰接收敘事主題。典型荷里活風格尤其常見於電視劇，製作人為克服電視劇觀眾易於分心的傾向，每每使用極其誇張的動作與過多的解釋去說明節目主題。近年電視台工作人員大量湧入電影業，造就了如富士電視台製作《跳躍大搜查線》(1997) 與《雪茫危機》(2000) 等電影的成功，因此要將典型荷里活風格於大型電影公司製作劃上等號，倒不如說它就是日本視象媒介常用的風格更為恰當。

「抽離」風格可說是典型荷里活風格的反動，不過即使同是「抽離」電影，表現形式亦各有差異，不可輕易歸類為「二元化的對立」。顧名思義，「抽離」風格的特色就是採取「不介入」的表現形式和敘事手法，攝影機往往是置放於離角色較遠的位置上，盡量避免接近角色的身體（尤其是面部），製造一種阻礙窺探角色思想及情緒的距離；剪接亦盡可能避免割裂及分析空間，不讓觀眾接近角色及其內心世界，減低製造過份戲劇性場面及為角色行為賦予多餘意義的可能性；長鏡頭的大量使用製造了與角色心理狀態的距離，擴闊影像所給予的想像空間；藝術形式並非敘事的工具，因此典型荷里活風格重視的明顯和清晰並不重要。由於缺乏對角色行為與內心世界的直接交待，觀眾必須於僅有的場景調度中自行發掘意義。

「抽離」風格以不同形見於黑沢清、青山真治、河瀨直美、是枝裕和、三池崇史、北野武、崔洋一、橋口亮輔、市川準、陶訪敦彥、篠崎誠等導演的作品中，其中以是枝裕和的《幻之光》(1995) 尤為明顯，影片不但省略了大量戲劇性的情節（如第一任丈夫之死），並代之以看似無意義動作的冗長場面，更將如女主角最後無奈佇立海邊的重要幕次以超長鏡頭描寫，令觀眾完全無從得知她的實際表情。根據是枝裕和的解釋，這種處理手法源於他對媒介的感覺，目的是避免如電視製作般將情節過份戲劇化或提供過多的解釋[5]。

「抽離」風格對傳統表現手法的相對意義，容易令人將具「抽離」風格的作品與藝術電影劃上等號。甚至有論者認為，這種所謂「抽離」的「沉靜」與非戲劇性風格是為國際電影節與外國藝術電影迷度身定做，完全為迎合外國人對日本電影中獨特的「凝重風格」的偏好。不過，要將日本電影分類為商業電影與藝術電影同樣不容易。黑沢清、青山真治、三池崇史與北野武皆有製作商業電影（尤其是黑幫電影）的經驗，而且由於中田秀夫的驚慄電影與岩井俊二、Sabu 等導演在國外的成功，國際電影節對日本電影的興趣亦早已不再局限於「沉靜」一面。

「抽離」風格亦與那種沉溺於後現代的風格對立，代表人物有石井克人、堤幸彥、中野裕之、行定勳與岩井俊二。這些導演多自拍攝電視廣告或流行音樂短片出身，偏好複雜的藝術形式與華麗的場面。「抽離」風格於敘事手法及藝術形式上多所克制，後現代表現手法卻大量使用花巧的場面調度，目的並非為了敘事的清晰，而是純粹為了視覺上的華麗。雖然敘事並非完全被忽略，但電影藝術形式對電影（及觀眾）的意義，往往等同或大於敘事的主題。這種對影像的潤飾、商品化，與「抽離」着重距離的風格迥異，但亦有導演（如三池崇史）嘗試同時運用這兩種風格。三池崇史的作品對了解這兩種風格有獨特的參考意義。

上述三種風格的出現，無疑意味着一場耐人尋味的「真實」政治。值得注意的是，採用「抽離」風格的導演不是製作紀錄片出身（如是枝裕和、河瀨直美與陶訪敦彥），就是對紀錄片作為一種表現媒介極感興趣（如青山真治、篠崎誠與石川）。雖然「抽離」風格不一定等同於紀錄片美學，但抽離風格堅持表現赤裸裸的「真」－既反對典型荷里活風格為影像賦予意義的傳統「寫實主義」，亦反對後現代表現手法對符號的擺弄。相對於將真實作極權式重構的典型風格，以及將真實簡化為虛幻符號與經驗的後現代進路，「抽離」風格可被視為一種反抗。對此，山田洋次（《學校》系列）與熊井啟等以社會問題為題材的導演，堅持他們的傳統敘事是對社會真實的中肯描寫；而岩井俊二的新作《青春電幻物語》(2001) 則被標榜為「14歲少女的真實」，似是要指出日本青年的真實，其實就是被虛擬經驗與商品世界佔據的不真實。

要明白政治取向與風格之間複雜的關係，必先了解當代日本政治氣候的變化。1950、1960 年代的日本獨立製作，除追求運作與創作的獨立外，政治上更受「人道主義」、「社會主義」、「個人」、「解放」等宏觀的大敘述 (meta-narratives) 支持。1960 年代日本極端政治主張的失敗，以至 1972 年日本赤軍的血腥內訌，令日本人對陳義過高的政治口號理想徹底破滅。這種不信任一直延續至今日，間接導致年青人對包括家庭、學校、政府、政黨在內的建制失去信心，亦反映於「抽離」與後現代風格的電影作品中。後現代作品不談意義或參與而標榜形式上的華麗；「抽離」作品拒絕對題材採取既有觀點，似乎源於對 1960 年代滿懷政治理想的上一輩的徹底反感。普遍的政治冷感，正是過往「獨立」的定義不再適用於今日日本電影的原因，亦說明了為什麼年青電影人並不熱衷於在現有的電影體制外建立較開放的製作/發行系統。在一個商品選擇決定權與自由的消費文化中，「獨立」對日本年青人的意義，其實更近於流行音樂中所謂的INDIZU（即 "Indies"），雖然十分重視「忠於自己」的風格，但其表達方式卻是「後福特式」的消費主義文化，以商品的選擇作為個人自主的表達。

雖然政治對當代日本電影依然重要，不過政治的含義，卻已從過去以脫離工業體制、追求解放為目標的大敘述意義，轉變為今日以個人與他人的關係為基本關懷的「微敘述意義」。政治意義的改變，令今日日本電影的分類更為複雜。例如，日本過去一直將電影圈的新晉標籤為新浪潮（Nouvelle Vague），青山真治的理論文章卻為新浪潮另立新義[6]，指出「新浪潮作為一種思想模式」純粹是「由某種政治角度出發，關於如何對待他人的論述，而論述中掙扎的主體是個人」。青山真治對「政治」與「個人」等重要觀念的狹窄定義，令其不得不否定 1960 年代以大島渚、篠田正浩、吉田喜重等人為首的「松竹新浪潮」，並聲稱（或許除鈴木清順與大和屋竺的作品以外）日本從來未出現過真正的新浪潮。當 1960 年代的新浪潮仍在嘗試以個人與他人代表不同的政治大敘述時，青山真治卻將「個人」定義為「無意義、不代表任何事物的個體存在」⋯⋯「既不可被歸納，亦不可用以推論」。因此，對他而言，電影政治才是真正的新浪潮，而電影政治就是「保護個人為其個人的掙扎」⋯⋯「為他者（the other）關注的問題而掙扎」[7]。

這種論調與「抽離」風格的共通之處顯而易見。「抽離」（尤其是在青山真治的電影中）就是拒絕入侵任何個人的私人空間，或為個人賦予任何可供推諸他人的集體意義。這種理論非但不是唯我的極端個人主義，而且更將個人與他人的關係置放於中心位置。正因個人並不代表任何事物，個人因而亦被其他個人視為他人 —— 一個模糊的、不受大敘述或意識形態歸納的他者。

近期多部作品皆以對尊重他者的「為他者性（otherness）」為主題。陶訪敦彥的《家庭和小說》（又名《媽／他》，1999）中女主角居住的玻璃屋，就是象徵她在愛人步步進迫的要求下，完全的透明度對她個人空間的侵害。與橋口亮輔的《流沙幻愛》（1995）一樣，陶訪敦彥的作品企圖突顯個人空間被侵害的狀況，並將偶爾從他人眼中消失與抽離描述為尊重「他者」的重要方式之一。這些作品的母題，實際上就是反對典型荷里活風格令人感覺能輕易明白他人感覺與思想的敘事結構。青山真治、陶訪敦彥、黑沢清與其他「抽離」風格的導演，就是透過如避免使用主觀鏡頭的電影語言，摒棄令人過份容易了解他人的敘事模式，貫徹尊重「他者」之不可的主張。

日本人雖然與國內弱勢移民族群之間有着極大的物質生活差距，但典型風格敘事結構令觀眾在觀看有關弱勢移民族群的電影後，可以抱着「感同身受」的感覺離場[8]。1990 年代出現大量以亞洲及其他族裔的/小數族群為題的電影，但套用青山真治的說法，真正具有「為他人關注的問題而掙扎」的自覺性的可說少之又少。其中部份如崔洋一與山本政志的作品，卻能採用「抽離」的元素尊重「他者」之為「他者」，巧妙避過將角色簡單化的民族主義陷阱。

民族題材的不同處理手法，突顯了「抽離」陣營之內出現不同電影政治取向的可能性。當「抽離」被異化為一種「抽離的美學」時，非但有悖於尊重他人之為「他者」，「他者」甚至會被簡化成毫無意義的美觀景物。青山真治與另外數位評論家曾以此指控是枝裕和，稱其《幻之光》（1995）輕描淡寫地重構了一個日本的集體自我[9]，時至今日仍有部份《日本電影筆記》的評論家對是枝裕和的美學取向時加非議。

由此可見，不同的電影政治取向不斷影響着日本電影，陣營之間的分界、重疊與整合日益變得細微而複雜，過去「主流－獨立」的簡單分類已幾近不可能。無論是工業結構、表現手法、政治取向、或是影響製片方式與作品風格的設問與論述，皆已出現根本的改變。沒有幾個年青電影人會再將「獨立」視為政治目標；相反，電影人抽離過去「獨立」政治意義的趨向日益明顯。雖然這種抽離亦可被視為某種意義上的「獨立」，但如上所述，這並非亦不再是過去簡單的「獨立」。這種複雜的狀況，令日本電影內容更豐富多變、令人興奮；不同作品間千絲萬縷的關係，總叫人有尋根究底的衝動 —— 雖然複雜得地圖也不一定幫得上忙。

1　統計數字詳見於由 Jiji 映畫通訊社出版的《映畫年鑑》。

2　雖然亦有部份大型電影公司的「多元化」計劃以失敗告終，如松竹的「Cinema Japanesque」與東寶的「青年娛樂坊」（Young Entertainment Square）。

3　「預售」即大型電影公司在影片仍未上映前，已預先利用商業關係「強行」傾銷戲票。這種制度的詳細描述見筆者著「工業的市川崑」（The Industrial Ichikawa）一文（刊於 James Quandt 編著《市川崑》，頁385-397；安大略：安大略電影中心，2001）。

4　電影工業分析家 Murakami Yoshiaki 與 Ogawa Norifumi 雖然並不以小型電影公司的困境為其關注重點，但亦曾在二人合著的《日本映畫工業最前線》（東京：角川書店，1999）中，批評大型電影公司面對全球一體化與資訊革命依然墨守成規，完全缺乏具創意的應變措施。

5　見筆者與田中純子1999年與是枝裕和的對談：「日本紀錄片製作人＃12是枝裕和」（刊於《Documentary Box13（1999）》。對談紀錄亦刊載於山形國際紀錄片電影節網頁 http://www.city.yamgata.yamagata.jp/yidff/docbox/docbox-e.html

6　有關青山真治電影理論與作品的詳細分析，見筆者著「青山真治」一文（刊於 Yvonne Tasker 編著《當代電影五十人》（Fifty Contemporary Filmmakers）；倫敦 Routledge，2002）。

7　節錄自青山真治著，性質與宣言無異的評論文章「Yo wo ika ni shite Gareru Shito ni nari shika」（刊於《日本電影筆記21》（1997），頁（66—175）

8　有關影像商品化與各種身份辨別模式，如何在岩井俊二的《燕尾蝶》中被轉化為一種定位其他亞裔「他者」的消費者民族主義，可參考筆者著「Consuming Asia. Consuming Japan」一文。（刊於 Laura Hein 與 Mark Selden 編著《審查歷史》（Censoring History）；Armonk：M.E. Sharpe，2000）。

9　如青山真治、Yasui Yutaka 與 Abe Kazushige 合著「Kenzaikasuru Nihon to iu jiko」一文所述（見於《日本電影筆記19》（1996），頁84—100）。

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