

Lines upon Lines: Cinema and Borders

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Some lines are markers used to distinguish the Other, whereas other lines are traces of contact with the Other. If the former is a means to actively create otherness, then the latter could be said to be a sign that otherness has passively manifested itself in an established relationship. In either case, lines are often not something that belong to a place or its people, but are rather violently created or arbitrarily discovered by outsiders. A wall is created, closely linked with those things we call “laws,” “rules,” and “customs,” casting long shadows on the people who live in these places.

In confronting such lines, cinema inevitably involves a situation in which the filmmaker becomes a subject who creates and discovers even more lines. The act of directing a camera toward a people and their circumstances becomes nothing other than an exercise of power to create and discover lines in the otherness of the world, whether this exercise is conscious or not. Every shot (or montage) is itself a line, a manifestation of love and hate, friendship and hostility. It is the work of skilled filmmakers to shake-off the restraints of the firmly established lines of the world, and to draw new ones in their place.

Nontawat Numbenchapol's *Boundary* records the internal conflicts of the director's native Thailand, and is set primarily in Sisaket Province, where border disputes with Cambodia frequently occur. The line drawn by his camera unearths the countless lines that lie buried in everyday life, and the hidden relationships that the local people and these lines share. The film's gaze is not an impersonal and harmless attempt to record reality, but rather the camera becomes a subject that influences various phenomena. In one memorable sequence, the camera is violently bombarded with water, marking a reversal of this power relationship as the object revolts against the subject. In this sense, the film is made with a slight touch of masochism. Nevertheless, the gaze of the people

who appear in this sequence and the gaze of the film are definitely not unrelated.

In *Once I Entered a Garden*, Israel-born director Avi Mograbi and his Palestinian teacher Ali share a close friendship. In contrast, a young girl born of parents of different races tells of her struggles as she feels her heart and body torn apart from one another. Together, they journey in search of a once joyous community, yet their travels cruelly reveal how the girl is forced to confirm that the lines she experiences are solid. Nevertheless, during that trip, in a scene in which the girl shares naïve conversation with the film's French cinematographer, a complete outsider, we see that the friendship between Avi and Ari offers another kind of intimacy. As the girl tries to perform herself before the camera, she together with these two men who are searching for a lost past, revealing that the various quests taking place in this land are not solitary endeavors.

On the border between India and Bangladesh, The Great River Ganges changes its flow every year due to seasonal winds. *Char... The No-man's Island* records the people who live on the sandbanks there. Rather than attempting to control this river, which never behaves as one would expect, the temporary harmony of this land is preserved by rigidly controlling and obstructing people through laws, customs and family. The uncontrollable Ganges is the reason for the harsh lifestyles of this region. Director Sourav Sarangi chooses as his main character a young boy who is bound by various circumstances, directing a camera toward him as he floats on the Ganges's muddy waters in the middle of a storm, without fear. It's as if the dynamic changes between river and lines, and the political movements to overlay new lines, offer a means to break down this region's obstruction.

(Translated by Kyle Hecht)

■ Screenings

Boundary [IC] 10/11 12:45- [A6] | 10/13 10:00- [CL]

Once I Entered a Garden [IC] 10/12 13:45- [A6] | 10/13 15:30- [CL]

Char... The No-man's Island [IC] 10/11 15:00- [CL] | 10/13 19:00- [A6]