

Living My Life: Two Films Portraying Sexual Minorities

Ebata Koki (Filmmaker)

Two films nominated for New Asian Currents, *In-Between Days* and *Summer Days in Bloom*, portray sexual minorities. The first features male-to-female transgender people, the second HIV/AIDS positive gay men. Starting in France in April 2013, when gay marriage was recognized, a wave of legal developments spread around the world. On the other hand, in Russia in June an anti-homosexual law was passed and in New York in August Islan Nettles, a transgender woman, was murdered in a hate crime. Problems of transphobia, homophobia, misogyny (and no doubt misandry and other forms of prejudice) continue as ever. So how is it in India and in Korea? My impression from these two films, from these stories of people resisting the male-female gender binary, is of individuals suffering alone, now as it was in the past.

There's a scene in *In-Between Days* where Bubai, one of the transgender protagonists, goes to take her school exit examinations. Bubai's classmates jeer at her. "Shoot his breasts first." "What's the name of this film?" "It's called 'Who Fucks Bubai?'" What is it about Bubai's behavior that her classmates criticize so much? It's that compared to her classmates at the same high school Bubai deviates from the model of appropriate masculinity. She keeps her face clean-shaven, lets her hair grow long, and makes herself look pretty. Perhaps because the director and the camera is with her, Bubai puts on a good front. But her downcast face shows how the insulting words really make her feel. How on earth is Bubai to come to terms with her life and find a way to go on? Will she be able to share those problems with other transgendered individuals in the same situation? Or will their joint unhappiness just collide and hurt each other? There's no end to these speculations but when I hear Bubai confidently say "I will become famous after

this film" then I breathe a sigh of relief.

In *Summer Days in Bloom* Han Ki starts to live together with Du Yul. While Han Ki searches for his HIV/AIDS medication in that one-room apartment Du Yul mutters, "Homosexual, Bisexual, whatever the fuck. I don't give a shit about any of that crap. I just like Yoon Han Ki." Du Yul was infected with HIV/AIDS while working as a prostitute at the age of 21. He had had previous heterosexual relationships but he tells Han Ki that because of his disease he has become unable to love another. But Han Ki replies "Why should I be discriminated [against] just because I'm infected? ... This whole mindset is just wrong." Han Ki and Du Yul take part in a gay rights solidarity group, but somehow their views on HIV/AIDS are different. When Han Ki came out to his friends they hugged him and supported him, but Du Yul's friends rejected him for his dirty and disgusting disease. The distance gradually begins to grow between these two people that resemble each other in some ways and not in others. Simply, to want to love another, and to not even be able to do that. That dilemma troubles my heart.

Both Bubai and Du Yul seek happiness while fighting against discrimination and prejudice. But what makes that so difficult? To what extent can we truly understand words such as transgender and HIV/AIDS? I don't want to say that ignorance is sin, but I want us to think about what we would do when we come face to face with people in such situations. Even as individuals we can want happiness for many others. I, too, like both these directors, want to go on making films with that desire.

(Translated by Michael Raine)

■ Screenings

In-Between Days 【NAC】 10/11 16:40- [F3] | 10/13 20:00- [F5]

Summer Days in Bloom 【NAC】 10/11 18:40- [F3] | 10/13 17:00- [F5]