



HELMRICH TRILOGY /  
EYE OF THE DAY  
SHAPE OF THE MOON  
POSITION AMONG THE STARS

THE DRUNKARD

JOURNALS OF MUSAN

PAUL GOODMAN CHANGED MY LIFE



FILM

for **THOUGHT**

HAWAII COUNCIL FOR THE HUMANITIES & HAWAII INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL



# FILM for THOUGHT

THE SIX FILMS IN THIS SECTION FOCUS ON HUMAN ISSUES, AND WE'RE BRINGING YOU LOCAL SCHOLARS TO DISCUSS THEM AFTER THE FILMS CONCLUDE, ALONG WITH SELECTED FILMMAKERS.

THESE DISCUSSIONS WILL FOLLOW THE FIRST SCREENING OF EACH FILM.

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REGAL DOLE CANNERY STADIUM 18 THEATERS

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**02 EYE OF THE DAY** ..... **10.16 (11:45 AM)**  
Helmrich Trilogy

**03 SHAPE OF THE MOON** ..... **10.16 (2:15 PM)**  
Helmrich Trilogy

**04 POSITION AMONG THE STARS** ..... **10.18 (6:00 PM) / 10.21 (3:45 PM)**  
Helmrich Trilogy

**08-11 THE DRUNKARD** ..... **10.16 (6:15 PM) / 10.20 (3:00 PM)**

**12-15 JOURNALS OF MUSAN** ..... **10.15 (5:30 PM)**

**16-19 PAUL GOODMAN CHANGED MY LIFE** ..... **10.14 (6:30 PM) / 10.17 (4:00 PM)**

# Film as Food for Thought

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**Bob Buss**

*Executive Director*

Hawai'i Council for the Humanities

The guiding inspiration for "Film For Thought" is a simple one: Select some interesting contemporary films from around the world that present their ideas, observations, and messages in ways that we would like to examine closer for their meaning. Films for which it would be helpful to know more about their contexts – cultural, historical, biographical, or authorial – and for which we would like to explore why and how we find them interesting.

Peter Brook, talking about "deadly theatre," by which he means bad theatre, could also have been talking about "deadly films," when he notes that few plays reach the highest levels of their craft and can actually be considered alive – with a good plot, a story worth telling, good twists, and what is described as "understanding human nature." \* We all know blockbusters, sequels and prequels, 3-D wannabes, and studio system churned-out grade B flicks, whether from Hollywood or Bollywood. And we all know about the classics to be and wonders among them. The ones that not merely entertain but make us want to think about them.

There is much about our modern information age that makes such thinking increasingly rare. The Internet, social media, Facebook and Twitter, bombard viewers and readers around the world with the latest image or word about the trivial and sensational, shrinking the unknown ever further into the background. It drives us to make instant judgment, before the next image or tweet shoots across the screen of our consciousness, almost before we know it.

But not here! Here we take time to enjoy the art, to learn more about how and why a film was made, and to discuss it carefully and thoughtfully. Here there be (the leisure of) dragons, ready for the innovative, the mysterious, the thoughtful and the profound. Ready to become

ourselves "a guide at night who does not know the territory, and yet he has no choice – he must guide, learning the route as he goes." \*

Sometimes it's not quite enough to let the story speak for itself – or at least to assume that it does so easily. Conjuring is a mighty act, most especially when it seems most simple. Because it's stories "all the way down," as William James once said, or heard said to him. And the humanities, when all is said and done, is mostly about the effort it takes to connect with good stories, finding the keys to their art and maps to their understanding, in this case shared with an audience and in after-film discussions, when the lights come up. •

(\* Peter Brook, *"The Empty Space: A Book About the Theatre: Deadly, Holy, Rough, Immediate,"* 1968, Touchstone Books)

## The Visualization of Thought

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**Philp Bossert** PhD.

*Film for Thought Project Coordinator*

The most basic form of communication used by humans is oral, the spoken word. Somewhere between *Homo erectus* two million years ago and *Homo sapiens* one hundred thousand years ago, humans developed a complex oral signaling system to express their thoughts. This tool is called language. Then, about 3,000 BC, a new language technology began to emerge that today we call "writing". Writing first appeared as cuneiform and hieroglyphics; but these were eventually replaced by a technology called the alphabet that many of us still use today.

By using sounds and symbols, humans were able to communicate what they were thinking (ideas & concepts) and feeling (sensations and emotions), and over the past 5,000 years humans have produced a rich body of scientific and creative literature using the oral and written technologies of language.

But not every thought or experience is best expressed through spoken

or written words. As a result, we find evidence of cave drawings and paintings dating back to 35,000 BC also being used to express human thought and experience. The use of pictures allows humans to communicate an entirely different type or range of thought and experience. And, just as the invention of writing expanded the power and options of language to express human thought, so to did the invention of still photography and moving picture technologies in the 1800s provide new options for capturing human experience and expressing human thought.

Some ideas come to us in the form of sounds – words or music – while others come to us as images – pictured or danced. Concepts become articulate when defined or captured in language and art. And, as Marshal McLuhan pointed out, the medium is as much a part of the message as the thought it conveys.

The films included in the Film for Thought section of the Festival have been selected by HIFF's Anderson Le in the hope that they will cause us to reflect upon both the ideas expressed in the film and the means employed to express them. The brief essays provided on the following pages by four knowledgeable scholars in the humanities are offered as guides to help you explore both the thoughts of the filmmaker and your own experience of these films.●



# HELMRICH TRILOGY

## EYE OF THE DAY

/ NETHERLANDS 2001

## SHAPE OF THE MOON

/ NETHERLANDS 2004

## POSITION AMONG THE STARS

/ NETHERLANDS 2011



director

LEONARD RETEL HELMRICH

screenwriter

LEONARD RETEL HELMRICH  
HETTY NAAKENS-RETEL HELMRICH

producers

HETTY NAAKENS-RETEL HELMRICH

cinematographer

LEONARD RETEL HELMRICH



# EYE OF THE DAY

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10.16 (11:45 AM)

**NETHERLANDS 2001**

INDONESIAN W/ ENGLISH SUBTITLES 94M

Indonesia, 1998. A deep political and economic crisis forces President Suharto to resign after thirty-two years in power. Thus begins the tumultuous era known as the REFORMASI. Since then, Indonesians have seen ongoing political change, protests, and poverty.

*Eye of the Day* tells of a handful of them, including the sixty-year-old woman Rumijah, her sons Bakti and Dwi, and her friend Ibu Sum. The film depicts their world, from harvests in the countryside to mass protests in the cities, from the mysterious natural forces of the volcanoes and mountains to religious seances and pilgrimages.

*Eye of the Day* is a rich and powerful film about a crucial, transformative era in one of the world's most populous countries.

director

LEONARD RETEL HELMRICH

screenwriter

LEONARD RETEL HELMRICH  
HETTY NAAKENS-RETEL HELMRICH

producers

HETTY NAAKENS-RETEL HELMRICH

cinematographer

ISMAIL FAHMI LUBISH  
LEONARD RETEL HELMRICH

cast

BACHTRAR BECKER  
RUMIDJA SJAMSUDDIN  
THERESIA UTARI



# SHAPE OF THE MOON

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10.16 (2:15 PM)

**NETHERLANDS 2004**

BAHASA, INDONESIAN, JAVANESE W/ ENGLISH SUBTITLES 92M

In this vivid follow up to *Eye of the Day (2001)*, director Leonard Retel Helmrich again visits Indonesia through three generations of the Sjamsuddin family. Rumidjah, a 62-year-old Catholic widow, lives in a working-class district of Jakarta, with her son Bakti, a new Muslim convert, and her granddaughter Tari.

Since the fall of Suharto, she has witnessed the country pass through a period of socio-political chaos. Islam, Indonesia's largest religion, is trying to maintain order and discipline, while becoming increasingly fundamentalist in its tone. These changes and conflicts with her son make Rumidjah long for life in the simple country village of her birth.

Mother and son's good-natured quarrels take place against the background of anti-US demonstrations and an Islamic neighborhood watch. In this way the film continually connects small issues with large ones. *Shape of the Moon* offers the kind of cinema verite where the camera moves intuitively along with the action.

director  
LEONARD RETEL HELMRICH

producers  
HETTY NAAKENS-RETEL HELMRICH

cinematographer  
LEONARD RETEL HELMRICH  
ISMAIL FAHMI LUBISH



## POSITION AMONG THE STARS

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10.18 (6:00 PM)

10.21 (3:45 PM)

### NETHERLANDS 2011

INDONESIAN W/ ENGLISH SUBTITLES 111M

Dutch director Leonard Retel Helmrich returns with the latest chapter in his artful and intimate portrait of the Shamsudin family of Jakarta. After a pulse-quickening recap of choice moments from the first two films, grandmother Rumidjah is summoned to the big city from the countryside by her son Bakti to counsel and motivate her teenage granddaughter Tari—the family’s great hope for attaining middle-class stability.

Tari is smart but devious, and more interested in boys, music and colored contact lenses than studying. And presuming she does get into a university, where will the money for tuition come from? The domestic drama of intersecting lives unfolds against a neon backdrop of rapidly increasing materialism in Indonesia and the fascinating underlying tension between secular modernism and Islam’s central place in Indonesian life.

Helmrich’s eye remains fixed on his subjects. Tari may represent the future of the family and Indonesia, but Rumidjah is the rock, the moral center, the connection to the land and, yes, the stars.

*-Micheal Fox*

# THOUGHTS

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**Tamara Albertini PhD.**

*Associate Professor of Philosophy*

**University of Hawai'i at Mānoa**

Dutch film director Leonard Retel Helmrich made three documentary movies following three generations in one and the same family in Indonesia. The period covered by the trilogy goes from the days before the fall of Suharto in May 1998 and ends some time in 2009. No narrator guides the audience through the three documentaries. No third person speaks authoritatively about the family members shown in the movies or about the political, social, and religious developments engulfing them. The camera neither comments nor judges when either Muslims or Christians make odd gestures or statements. It acts as a window into the lives of Rumijah, the family's Christian matriarch, her two Muslim sons Dwi and Bakti, and granddaughter Tari (Theresia). Helmrich has no need of 3-D technology to open a passage to their world and make the audience think they are nearly touching the images projected on screen. His use of the camera is such that physical closeness is evoked most spontaneously. In the beginning of *Eye of the Day* (Stand van de zon, 2001) the skin of a farmer's upper body is scrutinized with great intensity – exposing every pore, every wrinkle, every scar. The camera appears to sculpt the surface of the farmer's chest as it slowly moves from his belly button to his face. This scene sets the tone for the entire trilogy. The audience will follow people and events featured in the trilogy - up close.

Three documentaries, three generations, and yet everything else in Helmrich's movies seems to come in twos. The trilogy's first sound is the muezzin's call for prayer in the early hours; it is followed by the rooster's call. The sun is shown rising - above an electric post. A farmer chases birds from his field; Bakti lets his pigeons out on the roof of his Jakarta home. Hands of adults raised up in the air struggling to receive rations of rice in Jakarta's slums; children's hands on

the ground collecting fallen rice grains. Two injured cats are rubbing their heads against each other most affectionately. They are sifting through the garbage; the people a few feet away from them do the same. Children sing the national anthem in school; protesters chant out in the squares. Small groups of women are shown in the privacy of the home; large numbers of men are out in the streets. Dwi, the older son, is respectful and hard working; his younger brother, Bakti, is rebellious and a gambler. Nevertheless, no opposition, certainly no dualism, is implied. Both sons are dedicated to their mother, each one in his own way and in his own time.

The message is simple: there are two sides to everything, including religion. Islam and Christianity may be opposed to each other in the world at large. However, in Rumijah's family religion has two faces, one Muslim, the other Christian. The first part of the trilogy ends with images of two grasshoppers mating and two butterflies chasing each other. It takes two to create a union or, as the motto of the Indonesian emblem reads "Unity in Diversity."

The first scene of *Shape of the Moon* (Stand van de maan, 2004) shows the slow approach of light at the end of a long tunnel. A recurring image is a bridge perched high above a fertile valley on the way to Rumijah's native village in Java. On several occasions a man is seen making a crossing over that bridge at a dizzying height. Life is a journey with no safety nets. The heart of the trilogy is dominated by images and sounds of Islam. Tari, Rumijah's Christian granddaughter, reads to younger children about the torments of hell from a Muslim pamphlet. Rumijah is shown making a donation to a mosque representative. Muslim guardians are shown patrolling the streets. A voice from the



**EYE OF THE DAY** / Netherlands 2001

**SHAPE OF THE MOON** / Netherlands 2004

**POSITION AMONG THE STARS** / Netherlands 2011

loudspeaker admonishes the neighborhood to cook for the victims of a fire. The camera keeps zooming in on the name of Allah inscribed within a circle in the Arabic script. Islam is omnipresent. This is the time when Bakti decides to marry a Muslim girl. When he asks a Muslim cleric "Can two religions be within one marriage?" the answer is "That is not recognized." Bakti gives in and converts to Islam. After the wedding Bakti finally kneels before his mother and asks for her forgiveness, the way his older brother Dwi had done it in the first documentary. His recent conversion brings out a deep expression of filial piety. When his mother stops him from removing the cross on the wall of her living room, he obeys grudgingly but he obeys.

Rumijah feels the time has come for her to return to her native village. The headline in *Jihad*, the Muslim newspaper she and Bakti read on the train, says "Christianization as an ethnic conflict." When Rumijah prays before her grandmother's tomb upon arriving in her village, her words are a blend of Christianity and Islam: She addresses Jesus and calls God Allah. There is no conflict in Rumijah's mind. When her family needs to head back to Jakarta, she stands between the tracks to stop the train. She may look frail but she is a pillar of conviction. Toward the end of the movie the camera waits patiently for the rising moon to fill the circle circumscribing the name of Allah.

*Position among the Stars* (Stand van de sterren, 2010) shows Rumijah and her family several years later. Bakti has become neighborhood manager. His wife has opened a food stand, and Tari has graduated from high school. Rumijah is ready for a visit to Jakarta. When she arrives in her city home, the wall crucifix is still hanging in the living room. Rumijah's daughter-in-law has brought blessed water from the mosque and

offers some to Tari asking her to pray over it - according to her (Christian) religion. Christianity and Islam continue to live side by side in Rumijah's family. But when Rumijah attempts to teach Dwi's son the Lord's prayer, Dwi is in a rush to have his son circumcised. There is no way back.

The family's greatest concern is Tari's college education. In a moment of disappointment Bakti says to her "You are the star." The family is prepared to continue making great sacrifices, so that she may have a better future. But Tari prefers a life of fun in the company of wealthier friends to studying and working. Nevertheless, Rumijah mortgages her humble Jakarta home to pay for Tari's college tuitions. She has nothing left to give. As her old childhood friend from Java states "Possessions take possession of you." The trilogy ends with a night scene. Rumijah's lantern throws light on her grandmother's tomb stone. She sits down in the grass with her friend. Together they look up: the stars form a crown over a gigantic electric post.

When Leonard Retel Helmrich unfolds the lives of Rumijah and her family before our eyes, we do not simply watch them - we experience them. We feel their struggle, fight, hope, disappointment, and silliness. We end up knowing everything about them: how they sleep, eat, and laugh. We know the shape of their teeth and toes, the sound of their voices. We almost touch their skin. What Helmrich cannot tell us, is how the story will end. For that we would have to be Rumijah, Bakti, or Tari. ●

**Tamara Albertini** PhD.

Associate Professor of Philosophy

director  
FREDDIE WONG

screenwriter  
FREDDIE WONG

producers  
FREDDIE WONG  
EDMOND CHAU  
SAMUEL LAI  
KAWAH WONG

cinematographer  
HENRY CHUNG

cast  
JOHN CHANG / IRENE WAN  
JOMAN CHIANG / KATIE KWOK  
WEI WEI / AMY CHUM

# THE DRUNKARD



# FILM

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10.16 (6:15PM)

10.20 (3:00PM)

## CHINA, HONG KONG 2010

CATONESE W/ ENGLISH SUBTITLES 106M

Mr. Lau comes to Hong Kong to try to make a living as a respected writer, but soon finds it difficult to survive as one. Forced to write cheap martial art screenplays, he loses himself in drink and women. As his prospects as a serious writer begins to fade, so do his relationships with the women around him which causes him to drown further into his addiction for alcohol. Moving from apartment to apartment, Mr. Lau finally settles into one inhabited by an old woman who mistakens him as her long lost son from the war. Haunted by his own childhood memories of the war, alongside his dwindling career, Lau slowly drinks his life away.

Can this old lady be the one to save him? Or will she simply become another victim of his troubles. Based on the acclaimed novel by Liu Yichang and set in the 1960s, *The Drunkard* is a spellbinding journey into a man's addiction. -*Jason Pila*

# THOUGHTS

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Ruth Y. Hsu PhD.

Associate Professor of English

University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

This film is Freddie Wong Kwok-Siu's directorial debut and an adaptation of respected, Hong Kong author Liu Yichang's novel of the same title. Wong – a well-known film critic – also wrote the screenplay. *The Drunkard* has traveled well, so far among ten film festivals, and garnered mostly favorable reviews as well as the award for Best New Director at the 30th Hong Kong Film Festival.

*The Drunkard* is a much grittier portrayal of 1960s British Crown Colony of Hong Kong than Wong Kar-Wai's *2046* and *In the Mood For Love*, both based on Liu's stories. John Chang, a well-regarded Taiwanese actor, plays Lau, who is an aging, destitute author, a refugee from Commu-

nist China, and a drunk. He desires recognition as a great literary talent but runs up against a society that values only the amassing of wealth and crass entertainment, which are both different kinds of narcotic that blunt the constant fear of failure driving everyone in the colony to run faster in place. Lau supports himself by writing wushu (kung fu) and X-rated screenplays and fiction. He avoids confronting his circumstances by getting drunk and consorting with a string of 'loose' women. Nonetheless, he is haunted by terrible memories of Japanese atrocities in Shanghai during World War II and by his feeling of guilt at selling out his talent. In a sense, he keeps company with prostitutes and hustlers because he equates his social worth





## THE DRUNKARD / China, Hong Kong 2010

with theirs; he believes he is one of them. The director uses intertitles of poetry written in accomplished calligraphy in order to contrast Lau's banal and harsh existence with what he wishes to be: romantic, heroic, and a bohemian auteur. In one scene, Lau opens the door of his dingy room to find a much older him, dressed in the traditional garb of the good wushu warrior; the smiling warrior asks him to hand over the potboiler manuscript that Lau had promised the editor of a popular magazine.

Freddie Wong flirts with objectifying Lau's 'girlfriends'. However, one comes away from watching the film with a clear understanding of the distinctive qualities of each female character and with sympathy for their situations, which would be less likely to occur if they were merely cardboard figures. They do what is necessary in order to survive in cutthroat Hong Kong: Lulu (Joman Chiang as Lulu and Mak), Lily (Elena Kong), Mrs. Wong (Irene Wan), Mary (Katie Kwok), the sexually precocious 17-year-old, and, the most vulnerable among them, the old Mrs. Lei (Wei Wei), who believes that Lau is the son she lost during World War II. Is old Mrs. Lei simply senile or has she resurrected her dead son in the form of Lau as a way to carry on living? Lulu becomes a dance-hall hostess in order to support her siblings. Yet, she spends time with Lau not simply because he is a paying customer; she appears to feel genuine affection for him. The hint of innocence in Joman Chiang's performance prevents the role from falling into the stereotype of the hard-as-nails whore with a hidden heart of gold.

Like Lau, the female characters have been set adrift with few options; like Lau, they are deeply lonely and alone, in spite of the presence of

family, drinking partners, and lovers. They are aspects of Lau, reflectors of his struggles, but without the romanticized idealism that infuses this role with pathos rather than tragedy.

Wong's *The Drunkard* is provocative because the film is less about a bohemian alcoholic (minus the sexiness of Tony Leung as the male lead in *2046*) and more about the decision that persons often make to try to behave in an ethical and moral way despite terrible obstacles and despite repeated failures in that regard. Are not the 'loose' women and the 'dissolute' Lau more deserving of our sympathy than our disapproval? In the end, most characters pay up, in one way or another and in ways that may not appear obvious at first – therein lies the complexity of this film. *The Drunkard* is also a stark reprise of Hong Kong's past, during a time when the colony was teeming with the latest wave of refugees from a repressive regime, failed Five-Year Plans and mass starvation. What is the nature of our integrity when Failure or Ignominy sits across the table, pushing towards us drink after drink? That perhaps is Freddie Wong's question to contemporary Hong Kong in this 2010 filmic adaptation of an early 1960s novel. ●

**Ruth Y. Hsu PhD.**  
Associate Professor of English

director  
JUNGBUM PARK

screenwriter  
JUNGBUM PARK

producers  
JINUK LEE

cinematographer  
JONGSUN KIM

cast  
YONGUK JIN  
EUNJIN KANG  
JUNGBUM PARK



# JOURNALS OF MUSAN



# FILM

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10.15 (5:30PM)

## SOUTH KOREA 2010

KOREAN W/ ENGLISH SUBTITLES 127M

North Korean 'defectors' who survived their flight to South Korea and are seeking a place in society remain recognisable for employers and authorities because their registration number starts with 125. As a result, it is difficult for them to get a good job.

The introvert Jeon Seung-Chul, played by the director Park Jung-Bum himself, also ends up stuck in the middle. He tries to earn his living as honestly as possible on the fringes of the capitalist society and on the outskirts of the mega city Seoul - first sticking up posters, a job in which competition and territorial claims are murderous. His only comfort is a beautiful white stray dog he cares for. When he also starts working at night in a karaoke bar, he seems to be acquiring more perspectives, both economically and romantically. But he remains an outsider. His attempts to improve his position in some way are not without their down side. Director Jungbum Park has made a deeply moving and profound film about the position of the unwanted guest. *-Intl. Film Festival Rotterdam*

# THOUGHTS

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Gary Pak PhD.

*Professor of English & Member of the Center for Korean Studies  
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa*

South Korean rookie film director Park Jung-bum credits master director Lee Chang-dong for his making of *The Journals of Musan*, which won the Tiger Award at the 40th Rotterdam International Film Festival, the Firpresci Award by the International Federation of Film Critics, and the New Currents Award at the 2010 Pusan International Film Festival. As the assistant director on Lee's critically acclaimed movie, *Shi/Poetry*, Park stated what he learned from his mentor was not how to make movies but "why we make movies, how we should look at the world and how we should live.... [Lee Chang-dong] teaches you how to ask questions...questions of yourself. He teaches you the way to ask questions." In *Journals of Musan*, Park tells us

a story of a recent North Korean defector and how he must face the difficult and questionable life he now encounters in South Korea. But perhaps Park is rather asking us questions about our complicity in stories like the one he is telling.

There have always been North Korean defectors to the South, called *buk-han-i-tal-ju-min* ("people who have fled from North Korea"), or simply *tal-buk-ja*, since the Korean peninsula was divided, but the numbers have increased dramatically since the early 1990s when North Korea suffered a series of famines due to harsh weather conditions that destroyed a significant amount of the North's agricultural base. During



## JOURNALS OF MUSAN / South Korea 2010

the early years, defectors were rewarded handsomely by the South Korean government, though this aid recently has been cut back significantly. Still, North Koreans have been defecting in record numbers, seeking not only food but also a life that they hope will be happier and that has more opportunities. The reality of it, however, is that many defectors enter a South Korea that has a rigid double-standard against them. Yes, they have a common ancestry and history with the South Koreans—perhaps all Koreans, whether North or South, have a strong jeong, or a deep bond, between each other—but in reality to be a North Korean refugee in the South means being discriminated against harshly when trying to find a good job, or a safe and clean place to live, or an education that can open a door of opportunity.

Based on the life of a close friend whom the future director met in 2002 and who died a few years later of cancer, Seung-chul, the main character in *Journals of Musan*, is perhaps an archetypal anti-hero: quiet, flawed, abused by even his closest friend, naïve, honest and unsuccessful in his simple quest for happiness. Set in the hustle and bustle of contemporary Seoul with all of the glamour and impersonal relationships that a major metropolis offers, Seung-chul has few friends and must scratch out a living barely enough to feed himself, not having the means even to clothe against a bitter Manchurian winter (his ostensibly best friend has to buy him a down coat so he doesn't freeze to death). About the only rewards of life that are given to him are a free meal after a Sunday church service and a puppy upon which he showers his undivided affection. In his almost nonstop struggle to avoid a complete misery that perhaps shadows the fates of all North Korean

refugees, he must negotiate what very little he has with the inflated and required demands of a society and people that don't care if he lives to see another day.

Given the New Directors Award at the 2011 San Francisco International Film Festival, director Park Jung-bum, who also wrote the screenplay and acted in the role of the main character, has given us a work of art that is beyond a simple, slice-of-life realism. The use of the hand-held camera throughout the film may give the suggestion of a disjointed intimacy between the characters and audience, one that teases to pull the viewer into the action and at the same time shuns any direct involvement with the drama of the film. Ultimately, it instead begs the audience to look at Seung-chul—and ourselves—with judgment. The effect is perhaps Brechtian. By the end, the film seems to be asking us this question, to paraphrase what Park said in an interview given after the film's release: Can we choose to ignore the Seung-chuls that exist alongside of us "in the same society, same era, same space...that capitalism breeds"? ●

**Gary Pak PhD.**  
 Professor of English &  
 Member of the Center for Korean Studies

A black and white photograph of Paul Goodman, an older man with glasses, laughing heartily. He is wearing a dark zip-up jacket. The background is slightly out of focus, showing what appears to be an indoor setting with some architectural elements.

director  
JONATHAN LEE

producers  
JONATHAN LEE  
KIMBERLY REED

cinematographer  
BENJAMIN SHAPIRO

cast  
GEOFFREY GARDNER  
SUSAN GOODMAN  
SALLY GOODMAN  
JUDITH MALINA  
TAYLOR STOEHR

# PAUL GOODMAN CHANGED MY LIFE

# FILM

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10.14 (6:30PM)

10.17 (4:00PM)

## UNITED STATES 2011

ENGLISH 89M

Poet. Public Intellectual. Pacifist Anarchist. Queer Advocate. Social Activist. Paul Goodman could never be defined as one single thing. Perhaps best known as the author of *Growing Up Absurd*, Goodman's work during the 50's & 60's influenced a generation raging against a stagnant culture of moral arrogance. And yet the man seen in the spotlight at any given time is merely a sliver of the man as a whole.

*Paul Goodman Changed my Life* reflects not only on the public persona, but on how the man touched others, both personally and with his work. Through interviews with colleagues, family members and activists, as well as an abundance of photographs from his private life, Director Jonathan Lee gets beyond the intellectual celebrity and delves into the humanity of a complex individual. In turn, that human connection makes the impact of his achievements all the more compelling. **-Chris Claxton**

# THOUGHTS

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## Thomas Jackson PhD.

Director, P4C Hawai'i

[www.p4chawaii.org](http://www.p4chawaii.org)

In mentioning to people that I was reviewing a film on Paul Goodman, the most frequent question was: "Who is Paul Goodman?"

Here is what some of those who appear in the film say about him:

**Gordon Wheeler:** "He was a political radical, a Jew, gay or bisexual and very openly so in 1947! His insistence on action, being who he was, was inconvenient in every company...he really suggested another way of being."

**Taylor Stoehr:** "The public role he would ultimately take was not as an artist, but rather as a public intellectual and the philosopher of the

*New Left, the man who set the agenda, who had the ideas, who taught the attitude that really taught everyone in the 60's."*

**Susan Sontag:** "I think he's the sort of figure that's hard to classify...People didn't know what to do with him. He was a gadfly...a moralist...he made people uncomfortable."

**Michael Walzer:** "This activity of complaining gets semi-specialized. It falls out in certain people. Certain people take it on as an enterprise, as an activity: sometimes a distinct group of people like the prophets of Ancient Israel, sometimes free lance individuals like Socrates and the satirists of Ancient Rome who are





*critical of the hierarchical arrangements, the institutional rigidities, the hypocrisies of their time and whose complaints echo the complaints of ordinary people."*

The comparison with Socrates and the ancient prophets is well taken. Like Socrates, Goodman embodied in his life and work the profound commitment to living "the examined life". He was an activist engaged in "the market place."

Like the prophets, he spoke the truth as he saw it, not for personal gain, but from a deep sense of moral outrage at what he saw in the events around him: war, imminent threat of nuclear holocaust, hypocrisy, misuse of power, compulsory mis-education.

**Geoffrey Gardner:** "Paul was really the first person I knew who really stood for me as an

*example of moral courage and it was so absolutely almost effortless on his part that for a long time I didn't even realize that that was what he was about."*

In one of the film's many powerful uses of photographs and news footage from the time, you will see Goodman speaking in Washington, D.C. in 1967 to an audience of major leaders of the Military Industrial Complex. As he is speaking, one of the largest demonstrations against the Vietnam War is in full progress outside. The candor and directness with which he spoke seems incredible given the debased, vacuous level of most political discourse today.

**Frieda Gardner:** "Another thing that's wonderful about the work he did...was to advance the

## PAUL GOODMAN CHANGED MY LIFE / United States 2011

*notion of the boundary as something that is flexible, that dissolves, that comes back into place. He was there for me and I think for members of my generation to violate boundaries."*

Goodman's book *Growing Up Absurd* figures prominently in the film. Gordon Wheeler tells us this book: "*[W]as a bible of my generation, of college students in the 60's. We felt so spoken to. We felt here's somebody who 'get's it', that gets us."*

Goodman wrote, "*In this book I shall ask, is the harmonious organization to which the young are inadequately socialized perhaps against human nature or not worthy of human nature and therefore there is difficulty in growing up? If this is so, the disaffection of the youth is profound and will not be finally remedied by better techniques of socializing..."*

As one of those "disaffected youths" whose coming of age was the 60's, this film stirred deep memories and renewed reflection on those times and the present.

In the beginning of that decade, when as yet there was no idea of what was to come, there was an exuberant "audacity" of hope.

Let the word go forth...that the torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans - born in this century...my fellow Americans: ask not what your country can do for you - ask what you can do for your country.

The generation of the 60's would immediately recognize these words of John F. Kennedy. Change was in the air. As Bob Dylan put it, "the old order is rapidly changing." It was the dawning of an "Age of Aquarius".

But as the 60's unfolded in increasingly nightmarish fashion, *Growing Up Absurd* continued

to resonate. The unraveling began with the assassination of John F. Kennedy in 1963 and accelerated under Lyndon B. Johnson.

Goodman at a press conference said of Johnson: "*I don't know whether he was lying or whether he's simply captive, but in any case the President received a 20 million vote mandate precisely not to go to Vietnam or to escalate that war in Vietnam."*

The craziness seemed to know no end: assassinations: the killing of college students, the invasion of Cambodia, the MyLai Massacre...

**Taylor Stoehr:** "*Ultimately, Goodman ended up feeling that the youth movement had taken all the wrong turns."*

Toward the end of his life Goodman wrote this poem:

*Sometimes I said I was Marooned  
sometimes that I was imprisoned  
or was in exile from my land.  
Or I was born on the wrong planet.  
But my daily fact, Lord,  
is that awake I am a coward  
and in my dreams that say the cause  
I have lost the address. I'm confused.*

He died, having suffered a grievous loss, broken, at the age of 60.

I think you will find this film will touch your life as his life touched so many others. Find a good friend or set of friends to view this film together and a congenial place for coffee and thoughtful conversation afterwards. ●

**Thomas Jackson PhD.**  
Director, P4C Hawai'i



**special thanks**

**BOB BUSS & HAWAII COUNCIL FOR THE HUMANITIES**

