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# IREZUMI

Also known as *The Spider Tattoo*

刺青

Original Release Date: 15 January 1966

## Cast

**Ayako Wakao** Otsuya / Somekichi

**Akio Hasegawa** Shinsuke

**Gaku Yamamoto** Seikichi, the tattoo master

**Kei Satō** Serizawa

**Fujio Suga** Gonji

**Reiko Fujiwara** Otaki

**Asao Uchida** Tokubei

## Crew

Directed by **Yasuzō Masumura**

Screenplay by **Kaneto Shindō**

From the original story by **Junichirō Tanizaki**

Produced by **Hiroaki Fujii** and **Shirō Kaga**

Edited by **Kanji Sukanuma**

Director of Photography **Kazuo Miyagawa**

Music by **Hajime Kaburagi**

Art Direction by **Yoshinobu Nishioka**



## *In Praise of Uncanny Attunement: Masumura and Tanizaki (2021)*

by Thomas Lamarre

Like other filmmakers of his generation, Yasuzō Masumura gained stature through his cinematic adaptations of celebrated works of Japanese literature. Among them, works by one of Japan's most popular and acclaimed writers, Junichirō Tanizaki, loom large. Masumura would produce three films based on Tanizaki's fiction. The first, *Manji*, appeared in 1964, a rendition of the novel of the same title published in serialization between 1928 and 1930 (translated in English as *Quicksand*). Masumura then brought Tanizaki's 1910 short story *Shisei* or "The Tattooer" to the big screen in 1966 under the title *Irezumi*. Finally, 1967 saw the release of a third Masumura adaptation of Tanizaki, the 1924 novel *Chijin no ai*. The English translation of this novel bears the title *Naomi*, while the film version has been more literally translated as *A Fool's Love*. In sum, circumstances conspired to bring Masumura and Tanizaki together. What is interesting about the encounter is Masumura's focus on a particular slice of Tanizaki's oeuvre: fiction written between 1910 and 1930.

From the publication of "The Tattooer" in 1910 until his death in 1965, Tanizaki wrote short stories, plays, essays, novellas, and novels, many of which remain to this day among the most celebrated works of Japanese literature. "The Tattooer" established the tone for his fiction published throughout the 1910s and into the 1920s, sometimes associated with a literary movement dubbed diabolism. Many of his short stories featured sexual obsession and perversion, exploring relationships between what at the time were called the "new woman" (bold, self-aware, enlightened) and the "new man." The new man, more interested in cultural and aesthetic pursuits than in respectable careers with utilitarian ends, presented a sharp contrast with the self-made man touted during the Meiji period (1868-1912).<sup>1</sup> In the wake of *A Fool's Love* (1924) and *Manji* (1928-30), however, the tone of Tanizaki's writing in the 1930s gradually became more sober and less diabolical, more nuanced

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<sup>1</sup> Roden, Donald. "Taishō Culture and Gender Ambivalence." In *Culture and Identity: Japanese Intellectuals in the Interwar Years*. Ed. J. Thomas Rimer, pp 36-55. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990.



and less sensational, as he experimented with narrative form and embraced the more traditional arts and culture associated with the Kansai region, especially the Kyoto-Osaka area. Acclaimed novels and novellas from this period include *Some Prefer Nettles* (*Tade kuu mushi*, 1928-29), *Arrowroot* (*Yoshinokuzu*, 1931), *The Reed Cutter* (*Ashikari*, 1932), and *A Portrait of Shunkin* (*Shunkinshō*, 1933). Tanizaki devoted the 1940s to translations of the 11th century literary classic *The Tale of Genji* (*Genji monogatari*) and the serialization of a major novel, *Sasameyuki* (translated as *The Makioka Sisters*, 1943-1948).

Tanizaki remained an active and important writer in the postwar period. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, he enjoyed something of a renaissance with the publication of two critically acclaimed and widely read novels, *The Key* (*Kagi*, 1956) and *Diary of a Mad Old Man* (*Fūten rōjin nikki*, 1961). Both novels were quickly translated into English: *The Key* appeared in 1960 and *Diary of a Mad Old Man* in 1965. Both also soon received film adaptations. An adaptation of *The Key*, known as *Odd Obsession* in English, was released in 1959, directed by Kon Ichikawa whose popularity enhanced buzz for the film. Keigo Kimura, who had already helmed two versions of *A Fool's Love* (1949; 1960), had his rendition of *Diary of a Mad Old Man* in theatres by 1962, within a year after the novel's publication. In addition, in 1961 renowned director Teinosuke Kinugasa directed a version of *A Portrait of Shunkin* under the title *Okoto to Sasuke*.

Masamura's adaptations built upon this Tanizaki boom. Circumstances permitted him a significant shift in emphasis. Instead of focusing on Tanizaki's later, reputedly mature works, Masamura's films draw on the early works from the two decades between 1910 and 1930, which flank the Taishō period (1912-1926). These decades are commonly characterized in terms of "Taishō democracy" to indicate a radically enlarged sense of democracy that includes anarchist, socialist, and feminist movements as well as an emerging cultural politics that explored alternative lifestyles and sexual dispositions embracing androgyny, sado-masochism, and diverse forms of same-sex eroticism. These dispositions are sometimes characterized as "erotic grotesque nonsense" (*ero guro nansu*), which emerged in the early 1930s, by which time Tanizaki's



interests had already shifted away from the popular urban culture of Tokyo toward traditional aesthetics. It is significant, then, that Masumura's films gravitate toward Tanizaki's earlier works, toward the sexual upheavals and inversions that were paired with radical democracy in the Taishō era.

The novel *Manji*, for instance, the basis for Masumura's first Tanizaki film, tells a scandalous tale of sexual obsession and betrayal featuring lesbianism and a *ménage à trois*. Sonoko, a young married woman attending art school, is drawn into a temptuous affair with a young female student, Mitsuko. As Sonoko begins to suspect that Mitsuko is a temptress using her to torment her feckless fiancé Eijirō, Sonoko's husband Kotarō is also drawn into their affair, and a three-way tryst ensues. Knowing that such a relationship is doomed, the three form a suicide pact. Only Mitsuko and Kotarō die, however, secretly withholding the poison from Sonoko.

While *Manji* may be read as a harbinger of *ero guro nansu*, it clearly builds on Tanizaki's longstanding fascination with what he and others called the new "self-aware woman" (*jikaku no onna*) and the new man; that is, the men who idealize and willingly submit to the new woman, body and soul, thus transforming themselves into new men. Tanizaki's previous novel, *A Fool's Love*, hinges on a similar conceit: the fool in question is a young man, Jōji, who strives to transform a young woman, Naomi, into his ideal of the modern girl (or *moga*) featured in movies. Jōji chooses Naomi due to her Eurasian features and lack of sexual and social inhibition. Naomi not only meets but surpasses expectations, turning the tables on the master and eventually dominating him entirely.

The figure of the new woman had emerged years earlier, first through the mediation of women's social movements that stressed the "the universalization of modern human values such as 'equality,' 'human rights,' and the 'individual.'"<sup>2</sup> Subsequently, particularly around the Bluestocking Society that began publishing the journal *Seitō* ("Bluestocking") in 1911, there emerged a new stance that might be thought of as cultural politics, with an emphasis on creative freedom and unfettered activity for women, which coalesced around



the New Woman as a “self-aware woman.”<sup>3</sup> By the 1920s, with the debates surrounding the emergence of yet another variation on the New Woman, the *moga*, it was clear that a new middle-class women’s culture had emerged, in the form of a mass consumer culture offering a dramatic redefinition of women, with a range of new identities presented in widely-circulated women’s journals.<sup>4</sup>

For Tanizaki, the figures of the new woman and the modern girl meshed with his interest in overturning received sexual hierarchies, that is, inverting the dominance of men over women. This interest, even obsession, is boldly announced at the outset of his career, in the 1910 story “The Tattooer,” the basis for Masumura’s *Irezumi*. The story centers on a tattooer who secretly takes sadistic delight in inflicting pain upon the men he inks, until he encounters a beautiful young woman, about fifteen or sixteen. Beneath her timid and yielding manner, he detects the potential for her to become a woman powerful enough to dominate and crush any man. He is transformed: his secret desire is now to be dominated by her. On her back, he tattoos a masterpiece, an exquisite spider that releases her power, and the brief story ends as the transformed woman turns to him and says, “You are my first victim.”

Not surprisingly, “The Tattooer” stirred up a scandal during its publication. Initially set in contemporary Japan, when censors objected that it was “injurious to public morals,” Tanizaki’s solution was to change the time period to the Edo era, claiming that the story provided a moral perspective on the unenlightened and licentious practices of the townspeople of Edo. Nonetheless, the story clearly evokes the new self-aware woman of the Taishō era. The story is not without its critics, for Tanizaki’s way of imagining the liberation of the woman feels all too ambivalent about women’s agency. To what extent does her agency belong to her? Does she need an artist to awaken her latent agency? Is his agency simply transferred to her? Or, is it art itself that empowers her?

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2 Sato, Barbara. *The New Japanese Woman: Modernity, Media, and Women in Interwar Japan*. Durham: Duke University, 2003.

3 Sievers, Sharon. *Flowers in Salt: The Beginnings of Feminist Consciousness in Modern Japan*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1983.

4 Sato, *ibid*.

Masumura's film expands significantly on Tanizaki's short story, introducing a backstory in which the young woman, Otsuya, is separated from her lover Shinsuke, sold into prostitution, and tattooed with a giant spider across her back. Despite these significant enlargements on and departures from Tanizaki's story, Masumura's film is true to Tanizaki's vision in the cinematic turbulence of fascination surrounding the empowerment of the woman. As Otsuya grows powerful and wealthy and exacts her revenge on men, the spider becomes animated, writhing across her body, taking on a life of its own, as if the tattoo itself were the source of her power or entwined with it. Masumura thus calls attention to the fantastical, magical agency of cinema over and above that of characters. In this respect, Masumura's film feels strangely attuned to an aspect of Tanizaki's fictions that has long been downplayed or ignored — their cinematic quality, which came from a deep engagement with the world of moving pictures, especially in the late 1910s and early 1920s.

In the wake of "The Tattooer," Tanizaki's stories increasingly revolved around cinema and cinematic experience, either making moving pictures central to the story, or commenting on the effects of film, or experimenting with cinematic style. Prominent examples are "The German Spy" (*Dōkutan*, 1915), "The Magician" (*Majutsushi*, 1917), "The Siren's Lament" (*Ningyō no nageki*, 1917), and "The Tumor with a Human Face" (*Jimensō*, 1918). At the same time, as film journals started to make their appearance in Japan, Tanizaki read them avidly, eventually contributing to their debates.<sup>5</sup>

Tanizaki's interest in moving pictures thus coincided with the emergence of cinema itself. In the mid-1910s, when Tanizaki began to pen film-inspired stories and essays on *katsudō shashin* or "moving pictures"; the term *eiga* or "cinema" had yet to become prevalent.<sup>6</sup> It was around the mid-to-late 1910s, in Japan much as in Europe and America, that there emerged a new awareness of moving pictures as a form of entertainment distinct from other kinds of spectacle such as peep shows, magic acts, theatre, and so forth. Histories of Japanese cinema allude to this transformation by noting a general shift in terminology from "moving pictures" to "cinema." Of particular interest is Tanizaki's essay "The Present and Future of Moving Pictures" (*Katsudō*

*shashin no genzai to shōrai*, 1917), in which he criticizes the current state of the film industry in Japan and makes proposals for its future, presenting and reformulating many of the reforms proposed by Pure Film advocates.<sup>7</sup>

His passion for moving pictures led him to join the film industry. In 1920, he suspended work on his first serial novel, “Siren” (*Kōjin*) and announced that he would henceforth devote his energies to film production with the newly formed Taikatsu Studios, where he had been hired as a literary consultant, largely to lend artistic prestige to their productions. Tanizaki, however, threw himself into film production with an energy that far exceeded expectations, working closely with director Thomas Kurihara (Kisaburō Kurihara), who had recently returned to Japan after a stint in Hollywood working on Thomas H. Ince’s productions.<sup>8</sup>

Kurihara and Tanizaki collaborated on four films in less than two years: *Amateur Club* (*Amachua Kurabu*, 1920), *The Sands of Katsushika* (*Katsushika sunago*, 1920), *The Night of the Doll Festival* (*Hinamatsuri no yoru*, 1921), and *The Lust of the White Serpent* (*Jasei no in*, 1921), none of which survive today. Three screenplays survive, however, as well as a “film play” entitled *Tsuki no sasayaki* (*Murmur of the Moon*, 1920) because they were published in film journals. Although Tanizaki was primarily credited as a screenwriter, contemporary accounts indicate that he became involved in direction as well. The third film, *The Night of the Doll Festival*, was largely directed by Tanizaki at his home in Yokohama. A number of developments conspired to put an end to Tanizaki’s film career after these two years: the financial failure of Taikatsu Studios, the poor health of Thomas Kurihara, and probably Tanizaki’s ambitions.

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5 Lamarre, Thomas. *Shadows on the Screen: Tanizaki Jun'ichirō on Cinema and "Oriental" Aesthetics*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Center for Japanese Studies, 2005.

6 Gerow, Aaron. *Visions of Japanese Modernity: Articulations of Cinema, Nation and Spectatorship 1895-1925*. Berkeley: The University of California Press, 2010.

7 Lamarre, *ibid.*

8 Bernardi, Joanne. *Writing in Light: The Silent Scenario and the Japanese Pure Film Movement*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2001.





After he left Taikatsu Studios, cinematic experience remained central to Tanizaki's fiction. The novel *A Lump of Flesh* (*Nikukai*, 1923) built on Tanizaki's experiences in film production with Kurihara. The story centers on two friends who embark on a career in filmmaking, one of them, the director and cinematographer, recently returned from America. The screenwriter, however, unwilling and maybe unable to draw a line between film and everyday reality, loses all his money, destroys his marriage, and vanishes. Similarly, *A Fool's Love* centers on cinematic experience with constant references to Naomi's resemblance to Mary Pickford. Interestingly enough, however, until the publication of film historian Nobuo Chiba's book-length study of Tanizaki's contributions to cinema in 1989, Tanizaki's career in moving pictures remained largely ignored.<sup>9</sup>

Tanizaki himself is partly to blame. In the 1950s, he began to revisit and reconsider his past and his past work. This is particularly evident from *Childhood Years: A Memoir* (*Yosho jidai*), an extended memoir in the form of reflections on his years just before adolescence (1889-1901) serialized in *Bungei shūnjū* ("Annals of Literary Arts", 1955-56). Equally important was his involvement in an edition of his collected works. The publication of the thirty volumes began in 1957 and reached completion in the summer of 1959, and for its preparation, Tanizaki shifted through his earlier works, made selections, and wrote appreciations. At this time Tanizaki eliminated many of his short stories from the Taishō period that might be characterized as "diabolic," which furthered the already pronounced tendency toward a negative evaluation of his earlier fiction as stylistically, thematically, and conceptually immature. Needless to say, his film work too was largely passed over.

At the same time, the process of reviewing his earlier work seemed to rekindle something of those earlier works. One of the many surprises in *A Record of Cruelty* (*Zangyakki*, 1958), an unfinished and largely ignored novel, often remarked only for being the last written in Tanizaki's hand, is how precisely its first section echoes the stylistic and thematic concerns of his fiction from the

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<sup>9</sup> Chiba Nobuo. *Eiga to Tanizaki*. Tokyo: Seiabō, 1989.

Taisho period. It is as if Tanizaki wished to reprise his earlier work, to begin it anew. Indeed, *Diary of a Mad Old Man* feels entirely in consonance with his earliest stories. In other words, even as his cinematic past was buried once again, something of it remained somehow irrepressible, integral to Tanizaki's literary vision.

It is interesting to speculate, then, about the Tanizaki boom of the 1960s, which spawned so many film adaptations of his works. Although Tanizaki openly expressed his dislike of all of them, is it not possible to detect in them a resurgence of the magic of cinematic experience that captured so much of his creative energy in the Taishō period and apparently haunted him still? Amid the wave of cinematic adaptations of Tanizaki, Masumura's might be said to cut the closest to the bone in this respect. For, as *Irezumi* attests with its diabolically animated spider, Masumura's concentration on Tanizaki's earlier works allowed him to channel something of the author's reverence for and deference to the unsettling agency of moving images, and to translate that more-than-human force into the cinematic idiom of the 1960s.

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## *Red, White, and Black: Kazuo Miyagawa's Cinematography in Irezumi (2021)*

*by Daisuke Miyao*

In 1953, the Ministry of Education of Japan awarded Kazuo Miyagawa, the celebrated cinematographer of Akira Kurosawa's *Rashomon* (1950), Kenji Mizoguchi's *Ugetsu* (*Ugetsu monogatari*, 1953), and Mizoguchi's *Sansho the Bailiff* (*Sanshō dayū*, 1954), among others, a national prize for his "introduction and promotion of Japanese beauty in cinema."<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the golden age of Japanese cinema in the post-World War II period opened with the accumulation of prizes for the above-mentioned films at international film festivals.

Miyagawa's postwar work was strongly associated with traditional Japanese aesthetics. In 1960, on his award-winning films, Miyagawa himself declared, "These pictures came close to giving a true impression of the real Japan."<sup>2</sup> In most cases, the traditional Japanese aesthetics that Miyagawa's work displayed was connected to a certain image of Kyoto, the capital of Japan between 794 and 1603. Miyagawa confirmed such a view. In 1985, he wrote, "I was born and raised in Kyoto. As you know, the objects and the landscapes of Kyoto are filled with quiet and dark colors. My eyes naturally remember them and have formed my sense of colors."<sup>3</sup> In 1999, Miyagawa said in an interview, "[In my house in Kyoto] there was a backyard right behind a completely dark kitchen. The sunlight came through a window on the ceiling, which made only the well bucket in the backyard shine. Such a view that I saw when I was a child left an unexpectedly strong impression on my mind . . . even though I was one of those children who were so shy that they would not go outside but stayed in a dark corner of the house."<sup>4</sup>

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1 Yutaka Watanabe, *Eizō o horu: Kaitei-ban Satsuei kantoku Miyagawa Kazuo no sekai* [Curving visual images: The world of cinematographer Miyagawa Kazuo, revised edition] (Tokyo: Pandora, 1997), 58.

2 Clifford V. Harrington, "The Techniques of Kazuo Miyagawa: Observations of Japan's Eminent Cinematographer at Work," *American Cinematographer* 41.1 (January 1960), 41.

3 Kazuo Miyagawa, *Watashi no eiga jinsei 60nen: Kyameraman ichidai* [My sixty-year life with cinema: A life of a cameraman]. Tokyo: PHP kenkyūjo, 1985), 195.

4 Yoneo Ōta, "Monokurōmu no jidai" [The period of monochrome], in *Hikari to kage no eiga shi: Satsuei kantoku Miyagawa Kazuo no sekai* [Film history of light and shadow: The world of cinematographer Miyagawa Kazuo], ed. Uekusa Nobukazu (Tokyo: Kinema Junpō sha, 2000), 18.





The incessant confirmation of Miyagawa's career as the explorer of Japanese beauty was striking because, whether the lighting of Kyoto architecture was authentic or not, Miyagawa was not aiming to capture it and to call it Japanese beauty when he worked at Nikkatsu's Kyoto studios in the prewar period. Miyagawa admitted that at the base of his style of lighting was a strong influence of both Hollywood and German cinemas. Miyagawa once said that he mainly learned how to place and move cameras from Hollywood films, especially from the Hollywood musicals that he watched in 1939-40.<sup>5</sup>

When Miyagawa talked about the dark tones that he preferred, it was not the lighting of Kyoto but that used by such German filmmakers as F. W. Murnau.<sup>6</sup> Miyagawa said in an interview, "In short, French film was the soft-focus, American film was high key and bright, and German film was good in the contrast between black and white. I prefer the lighting in German film."<sup>7</sup> More specifically, he stated, "[German films] fully utilized contrasts between black and white. Relatively, they looked dark in tones, but with solid images, didn't they?"<sup>8</sup>

If that was the case, the connection between Miyagawa, the traditional culture of Kyoto, and Japanese beauty seemed nothing but an invention of tradition following the postwar policy of Japanese cinema. After the success of Kurosawa's *Rashomon* at the Venice International Film Festival, international distribution of films became a prevalent aspiration for the Japanese film industry. A major strategy taken by Japanese film companies to appeal to international audiences was to emphasize such cultural motifs as Noh and Kabuki drama, Zen Buddhism, samurai, and geisha that were self-consciously marked as traditionally Japanese. Exotic Japaneseness was sold as a commodity to foreign audiences. Daiei studios, where Miyagawa worked, initiated such exoticization of Japanese cinema under Masaiichi Nagata, the president.

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5 Miyagawa, *Watashi no eiga jinsei* 60nen, 38-39.

6 Watanabe, *Eizō o horu*, 201.

7 Miyagawa, "Watashi no cameraman jinsei: Kinō, kyō, asu" [My life as a cameraman: Yesterday, today, and tomorrow], FCXX (Tokyo: Tokyo kokuritsu kindai bujutsukan, 1984), 3.

8 Shigeki Oguri, "Renzu no mushi" [Bug of a lens]. In *Hikari to kage no eiga shi*, 67.

Under such conditions, Miyagawa's work became an important site in which traditional Japanese aesthetics were used to suit the new cultural and financial ends of post-World War II Japan. While playing an official role with the publicizing of Japanese beauty, however, Miyagawa was not simply subscribing to such an industrial policy. Even when Daiei's strategy of self-exoticization was one of the central forces of Japanese filmmaking, his detailed lighting scheme that was inscribed on many pages of the scripts of his post-World War II films indicates that he was more concerned about the potentiality of cinematography than the exoticization policy. He was fully aware of Daiei's policy. That was why he publicized that his work had a strong connection with the culture of Kyoto. But in practice, Miyagawa was exploring the potentiality of cinematography to achieve cinematic realism, in particular.



The Japanese New Wave filmmaker Masahiro Shinoda, who worked with Miyagawa on several films, once distinguished Miyagawa's cinematography from the "so-called postwar realism."<sup>9</sup> Shinoda did not clarify what he exactly means by "postwar realism," but he juxtaposes Miyagawa's work with Gregg Toland's and calls these cinematographers "photogenists," who prioritize acquiring cinematic images with "clear lines" and "contrasts" between lights and shadows.<sup>10</sup>

Indeed, what characterized Miyagawa's postwar cinematography was conspicuous clarity of images and the prominent distinction between light and shadow, both of which had nothing to do with the Japanese traditional aesthetics in nature. In Miyagawa's work, the illusion of presence on screen and the existence of darkness were enhanced by the constant use of deep focus and high contrast lighting. With such a conspicuous, or even obsessive, emphasis on clarity and contrast by way of lighting, Miyagawa was exploring reality effects in cinema. For example, when Daiei studio executives begged Miyagawa to open the aperture of his camera more widely to economize the electricity used for lighting, Miyagawa rejected that idea so as not to lose the sharpness of the images that he would capture.<sup>11</sup>

Perhaps, what Shinoda had in mind was Italian neo-realism. Such Italian neorealist films as *Paisan* by Roberto Rossellini (1946), which was released in Japan in 1949 and was selected as the best film of the year by *Kinema Junpō* magazine, and *Bicycle Thieves* by Vittorio de Sica (1948), which was released in Japan in 1950 and was also selected as the best film of the year by *Kinema Junpō*, influenced the formation of postwar realism. These films arose from the devastation of postwar Europe. Rejection of the "manipulation of raw materials" and photographing only with available light, no matter how dark it would look, turned into a justification of neorealist filmmaking that resorted to the notion of mechanical reproduction as the nature of cinema under the extremely limited material conditions.<sup>12</sup> In contrast, the extremely sensitive and rather hyperbolic emphasis on clarity of images and contrast between light and shadow in Miyagawa's work brought the question of cinematic realism to the surface.



Kurosawa's *Rashomon*, which established Miyagawa's international fame for the first time, was a good example of Miyagawa's pursuit of cinematic realism with clarity and contrast. When Miyagawa was working on *Rashomon*, he did not say anything about Japanese beauty or traditional aesthetics. Instead, he was emphasizing that the film was nothing but contrast and clarity to capture the "seriousness" of the story that "would express the true nature of human beings."<sup>13</sup> Miyagawa said of *Rashomon*: "Absolutely with black and white. No gray. I want to shoot pictures with strong contrasts."<sup>14</sup> Miyagawa pursued such contrast and clarity by intentionally limiting the materials that he would use as if he had been revisiting the wartime conditions of filmmaking and reexamining the ultimate potentiality of those limited materials. First, Miyagawa selected "hard" Fuji film.<sup>15</sup> In the script of *Rashomon*, we can find Miyagawa's handwritten notes on f-stops and emulsion for the scenes of the open courtyard. Kneeling on the shining white sands, suspects and witnesses make their testimonies to the invisible judge. The notes read "400, 150, 250, f13" at the top of the page for the scene in which a woodcutter talks to the judge and "200, 300, f14" for the one in which a Buddhist monk does the same.<sup>16</sup> Such faster f-stops as 13 and 14 usually indicate less depth of field. Miyagawa said about the scene, "I attempted deep focus with lots of light with f16 or so. I am very sorry for the actors [who hurt their eyes because of the too-bright light]."<sup>17</sup> Therefore, Miyagawa had to have used extremely bright lighting for the scene. The numbers 400, 150, 250, 200, and 300 indicate that Miyagawa was experimenting with how his composition of depth would look with different types of Fuji film stocks. As a result of his experiment with film stocks and lighting, the sharpness of the image from front to back in the courtyard is striking. With such a depth of field, the illusion of presence on the screen was achieved, as in the works of Gregg Toland in *Citizen Kane*, among others.

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9 Watanabe, *Eizō o horu*, 335–37.

10 Ibid.

11 Watanabe, *Eizō o horu*, 38.

12 Ibid.

13 Watanabe, *Eizō o horu*, 91; Ōta, "Monokurōmu no jidai," 21.

14 Miyagawa, *Watashi no eiga jinsei 60nen*, 60; Oguri, "Renzu no mushi," 72.

15 Watanabe, *Eizō o horu*, 43.

16 *Rashomon* screenplay, n.p.

17 Miyagawa, "Watashi no cameraman jinsei," 8.



Second, when he photographed scenes in the woods, Miyagawa used mirrors to directly reflect the sunlight. It was impossible to use electric lights deep in the woods—the location created a limited material condition. Miyagawa even painted trees, grasses, and leaves black to emphasize the contrast between black and white.<sup>18</sup> Miyagawa said, “Shadows are not only created by lamps and lights. Water on the streets can create a dark spot that may look like shadows.”<sup>19</sup> Miyagawa adopted “manipulation of raw materials” to obtain the sharp details of the images and simultaneously the strong contrasts between light and shadow.

The arrival of color film was “the most shocking” change in filmmaking in Miyagawa’s entire career.<sup>20</sup> The expressivity of lighting is less in color films. In color films, cinematographers tend to light the entire set to maximize the effects of its various colors, rather than painting black and white with lights. Miyagawa admitted, “Colors of objects are considered to be so important that all parts of the set tend to be lit rather evenly. More lights mean more shadows. Therefore, in color films, it is important to think of lighting that does not create shadows.”<sup>21</sup>

Nevertheless, in *Irezumi* (1966) directed by Yasuzō Masumura, Miyagawa used colors based on the lighting scheme of black-and-white films. He did that in a hyperbolic manner so that his main theme, clarity and contrast, would be maintained, or even enhanced in color films. The colors white and red play significant roles in that regard.

Throughout the film, the skin of the heroine, Otsuya (played by Ayako Wakao), is astonishingly white. When I interviewed Wakao in January 2010, I pointed out this issue. I added that in Miyagawa’s other works with Wakao, including *The Love of a Princess* (*Suzakumon*, Kazuo Mori, 1957), she looked so white

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18 Watanabe, *Eizō o horu*, 92.

19 Ōta, “Monokurōmu no jidai,” 21.

20 Tōru Ōtake et al., eds. *Eizō kenkyū bessatsu: Kojin betsu ryōkibetsu danwa shūroku ni yoriu eigashi taikēi* [Appendix to visual studies: Film history via interviews on individuals and genres] (Tokyo: Nihon daigaku geijutsu gakubu eiga gakka, 1979), 17.

21 Ōta, “Monokurōmu no jidai,” 21.



that Miyagawa must have been somewhat obsessed with connecting her to the image of whiteness. Wakao chuckled, courteously denied my opinion, and said to me, "That is your obsession, isn't it?"

Maybe, or maybe not. Miyagawa had often been expressing female sensuality, which is subjectively perceived by male characters, in extreme whiteness, beginning with Kyō's character of the samurai's wife in *Rashomon*. The bandit Tajōmaru (Toshirō Mifune) loses his mind when he happens to glance at the white countenance of the samurai's wife under the veil because of a sudden breeze. As mentioned above, Miyagawa enhanced the whiteness of her face by fully utilizing the Fuji film stock and the mirrors. Another example is *Odd Obsession* (*Kagi*, Ichikawa Kon, 1959), which is based on a novel of 1956 by Junichirō Tanizaki. In this early experiment with colors by Miyagawa, the same actress Machiko Kyō, who plays Ikuko, a young wife of an elderly art dealer, displays her extreme sensuality, which is hyperbolically expressed in white. Ikuko, who feels sick after having a few glasses of wine, faints in a brightly lit bathroom, naked. Right after a shot of a dark corridor of a traditional-style Japanese house, in which lights from the *shōji* screens on one side create high contrast, a bust shot of Ikuko, in a faint in a bathtub, follows. The skin of her naked shoulders is extremely white in the brightly lit bathroom. It is the elderly art dealer's perverse plot to stimulate his sexual desire by forcing the young physician, who finds her in the bathtub, to fall for his young and beautiful wife.

In *Irezumi*, which is also based on Tanizaki's works—his debut short story "The Tattooer" (*Shisei*, 1910) and his later work *Murdering Otsuya* (*Otsuya goroshi*, 1915), the whiteness of Otsuya's skin is strongly contrasted with the vivid red colors of the kimonos, the red ink for tattoos, and blood. The contrasts are not between black and white but between red and white. Even when the andon lamp, the single source of light in a room in most cases, represents realistic use of light, the heroine's naked skin looks as if it were glowing with an inner light often by reflecting the unrealistically strong light emitted from the andon lamp and in contrast to the vivid red kimono. The spider tattoo in red ink forcefully inscribed on the heroine's back moves as if it were alive on the white skin that seems to radiate light.

Miyagawa's choice of Eastman negative for this film indicated his obsession with contrasts and clarity. At that time, Eastman negative was not considered to be suitable for contrasty cinematography but more appropriate for the brightness of images. But Miyagawa approached it differently. Miyagawa treated the brightness of images to enhance the contrast between white and red: Otsuya's skin versus the spider tattoo, which is painted on it, and the red blood.

The final sequence of the film, which is set in Otsuya's room in the evening, is a distinctive example. Thunder is roaring outside. White lightning shines on Shinsuke's sword with which Otsuya stabs him. Otsuya takes off her kimono and shows the spider tattoo on her back to Seikichi, who has sneaked into the room. Another flash of white lightning shines on the spider painted in red, as Seikichi says, "The spider is as lively as ever. How many men will she eat to kill? Every time she does so, I feel like I am the one who murders them." Otsuya turns pale. She looks whiter than ever. At the moment when Otsuya tries to put her clothes back on, Seikichi stabs her in the back with Shinsuke's sword. Under the white lightning, Otsuya falls. In a close-up, it looks as if the spider tattoo were spilling blood onto the white skin of her back.

Thus, Miyagawa's emphasis was on clarity and contrast even in his color films. In *Irezumi*, the distinction was not between black and white, but between red and white.

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# Yasuzō Masumura Filmography

## 増村保造

25 August 1924 – 25 November 1986

### *As Assistant Director* *(selected works)*

*Princess Yang Kwei Fei*  
(dir. Kenji Mizoguchi)  
母情  
Yōkihi  
Daiei / Shaw Brothers, 3 May  
1955

*Street of Shame*  
(dir. Kenji Mizoguchi)  
赤線地帯  
*Akasen chitai*  
Daiei, 18 March 1956

*Punishment Room*  
(dir. Kon Ichikawa)  
処刑の部屋  
*Shokei no heya*  
Daiei, 28 June 1956

*Nihonbashi* (dir. Kon Ichikawa)  
日本橋  
Daiei, 1 October 1956

*The Crowded Streetcar*  
(dir. Kon Ichikawa)  
a.k.a. A Full-Up Train  
満員電車  
*Manin densha*  
Daiei, 27 March 1957

### *As Director*

#### 1957

*Kisses*  
くちづけ  
*Kuchizuke*  
Daiei, 23 July 1957

*The Blue Sky Maiden*  
青空娘  
*Aozora musume*  
Daiei, 8 October 1957

*Warm Current*  
暖流  
*Danryū*  
Daiei, 1 December 1957

#### 1958

*The Precipice*  
氷壁  
*Hyōheki*  
Daiei, 18 March 1958

*Giants and Toys*  
a.k.a. *The Build-Up*  
巨人と玩具  
*Kyojin to gangu*  
Daiei, 22 June 1958

*The Lowest Man*  
a.k.a. *Fearless Man, A Daring Man*  
不敵な男  
*Futeki na otoko*  
Daiei, 7 September 1958

*Undutiful Street*  
a.k.a. *Disobedience*  
親不孝通り  
*Oyafukō dōri*  
Daiei, 14 December 1958

#### 1959

*The Most Valuable Madam*  
a.k.a. *The Most Distinguished Wife*  
最高殊勲夫人  
*Saikō shukun fujin*  
Daiei, 10 February 1959

*The Cast-Off*  
a.k.a. *Overflow, Inundation, Flood*  
氾濫  
*Hanran*  
Daiei, 13 May 1959

*Beauty the Enemy*  
a.k.a. *Beauty Is Guilty, So Beautiful It's a Sin*  
美貌に罪あり  
*Bibō ni tsumi ari*  
Daiei, 12 August 1959

*Across Darkness*  
闇を横切れ  
*Yami o yokogire*  
Daiei, 1 December 1959

#### 1960

*A Woman's Testament*  
女経  
*Jokyō*  
Daiei, 14 January 1960  
Note: Three-part omnibus film,  
with Masumura directing the  
first instalment *The Woman  
who Wants to Bite Ears (Mimi  
o kamitagaru onna)* and  
Kon Ichikawa and Kōzaburō  
Yoshimura directing the second  
and third.

*Afraid to Die*  
a.k.a. *A Man Blown by the Wind*  
からっ風野郎  
*Karakkaze yarō*  
Daiei, 23 March 1960



*The Woman Who Touched  
the Legs*

足にさわった女  
*Ashi ni sawatta onna*  
Daiei, 24 August 1960

*A False Student*  
偽大学生

*Nise daigakusei*  
Daiei, 8 October 1960

**1961**

*Desperate to Love*  
a.k.a. *Love and Life*

恋にいのちを  
*Koi ni inochi o*  
Daiei, 27 January 1961

*A Lustful Man*

a.k.a. *The Life of an Amorous  
Man, All for Love, The Man  
Who Loved Love*

好色一代男  
*Kōshoku ichidai otoko*  
Daiei, 21 March 1961

*A Wife Confesses*

妻は告白する  
*Tsuma wa kokuhaku suru*  
Daiei, 29 October 1961

*The Burdened Sisters*

a.k.a. *Just for Kicks*  
うるさい妹たち  
*Urusai imōtotachi*  
Daiei, 17 December 1961

**1962**

*Stolen Pleasure*

a.k.a. *Indulgence*  
爛  
*Tādare*  
Daiei, 14 December 1962

*Black Test Car*

黒の試走車  
*Kuro no tesuto kā*  
Daiei, 1 July 1962

*Life of a Woman*

女の一生  
*Onna no issho*  
Daiei, 18 November 1962

**1963**

*The Black Report*

a.k.a. *Black Statement Book*  
黒の報告書  
*Kuro no hōkokusho*  
Daiei, 13 January 1963

*When Women Lie*

a.k.a. *Lies*  
嘘  
*Uso*  
Daiei, 31 March 1963  
*Note: Three-part omnibus film,  
with Masumura directing the first  
instalment Playgirl (Purēgāru)  
and Kōzaburō Yoshimura and  
Teinosuke Kinugasa directing the  
second and third.*

*Band of Pure-Hearted  
Hoodlums*

a.k.a. *Hooligans, Pure  
Thoughts*  
ぐれん隊純情派  
*Gurentai junjyōha*  
Daiei, 27 July 1963

**1964**

*Modern Fraud Story: Cheat*

現代インチキ物語 騙し屋  
*Gendai inchiki monogatari:*  
*Damashiya*  
Daiei, 19 January 1964

*With My Husband's Consent*

a.k.a. *The Husband  
Witnessed, Love and Greed*  
「女の小箱」より 夫が見た  
*'Onna no kobako' yori: Otto  
ga mita*  
Daiei, 15 February 1964

*Manji*

a.k.a. *All Mixed Up, Swastika*  
卍  
Daiei, 25 July 1964

*Super-Express*

a.k.a. *Black Express*  
黒の超特急  
*Kuro no chōtokkyū*  
Daiei, 31 October 1964

**1965**

*Hoodlum Soldier*

兵隊やくざ  
*Heitai yakūza*  
Daiei, 13 March 1965

*Seisaku's Wife*

清作の妻  
*Seisaku no tsuma*  
Daiei, 25 June 1965

**1966**

*Irezumi*

a.k.a.  
刺青  
Daiei, 15 January 1966

*Nakano Spy School*

a.k.a. *The School of Spies*  
陸軍中野学校  
*Rikugun Nakano gakkō*  
Daiei, 4 June 1966

*Red Angel*

赤い天使  
*Akai tenshi*  
Daiei, 1 October 1966

**1967**

*Two Wives*

妻二人  
*Tsuma futari*  
Daiei, 15 April 1967

*A Fool's Love*  
a.k.a. *Naomi, Love for an Idiot*  
痴人の愛  
*Chijin no ai*  
Daiei, 29 July 1967

*The Wife of Seishu Hanaoka*  
華岡青洲の妻  
*Hanaoka Seishū no tsuma*  
Daiei, 20 October 1967

## 1968

*Evil Trio*  
a.k.a. *The Great Villains, The Most Corrupted, The Big Bastard*  
大悪党  
*Dai akutō*  
Daiei, 24 February 1968

*The Sex Check*  
a.k.a. *Sex Check: The Second Sex*  
セックス・チェック 第二の性  
*Sekkusu chekku: Daini no sei*  
Daiei, 1 June 1968

*The House of Wooden Blocks*  
a.k.a. *A Building Blocks Box*  
積木の箱  
*Tsumiki no hako*  
Daiei, 30 October 1968

*One Day at Summer's End*  
a.k.a. *They Made Love*  
濡れた二人  
*Nureta futari*  
Daiei, 30 November 1968

## 1969

*Blind Beast*  
a.k.a. *The Warehouse*  
盲獣  
*Mōjū*  
Daiei, 25 January 1969

*A Thousand Cranes*  
千羽鶴  
*Senbazuru*  
Daiei, 19 April 1969

*Vixen*  
女体  
*Jotai*  
Daiei, 18 October 1969

## 1970

*Electric Jellyfish*  
a.k.a. *Electric Medusa, Play It Cool*  
でんきくらげ  
*Denki kurage*  
Daiei, 1 May 1970

*Ode to the Yakuza*  
a.k.a. *Yakuza Masterpiece, Song of the Yakuza*  
やくざ絶唱  
*Yakuza zesshō*  
Daiei, 11 July 1970

*The Hot Little Girl*  
a.k.a. *Poisonous Jellyfish, The Skin Game*  
しびれくらげ  
*Shibire kurage*  
Daiei, 3 October 1970

## 1971

*Games*  
a.k.a. *Play*  
遊び  
*Asobi*  
Daiei, 4 September 1971

## 1972

*New Hoodlum Soldier Story: Firing Line*  
新兵隊やくざ 火線  
*Shin heitai yakuza: Kasen*  
Katsu Pro (distr. Toho), 22 April 1972

*Music*  
音楽  
*Ongaku*  
Kōdō-sha/ATG, 11 November 1972

## 1973

*Hanzo the Razor: The Snare*  
a.k.a. *Razor 2: The Snare*  
御用牙 かみそり半蔵地獄責め,  
*Goyōkiba: Kamisori Hanzō jigoku zeme*  
Katsu Pro (distr. Toho), 11 August 1973

## 1974

*Akūmyō: Notorious Dragon*  
a.k.a. *Bad Reputation: Turf Wars*  
悪名 縄張荒らし  
*Akumyō: Shima arashi*  
Katsu Pro (distr. Toho), 24 April 1974

## 1975

*Mainline to Terror*  
a.k.a. *Hardened Arteries, Artery Island, Pulsating Island*  
動脈列島  
*Dōmyaku rettō*  
Tokyo Eiga (distr. Toho), 6 September 1975

## 1976

*Lullaby of the Earth*  
大地の子守唄  
*Daichi no komoriuta*  
Kōdō-sha/Kimura Pro (distr. Shochiku), 12 June 1976

## 1978

*Double Suicide of Sonezaki*  
a.k.a. *The Love Suicides at Sonezaki*  
曾根崎心中  
*Sonezaki shinjū*  
Kōdō-sha/Kimura Pro (distr. Toho), 29 April 1978

## 1980

*The Garden of Eden*  
a.k.a. *Giardino dell' Eden*  
エデンの園  
Nisshin shōji / Orso Oriental  
Corporation (distr. Herald  
Films), 13 December 1980

## 1982

*For My Daughter's 7<sup>th</sup> Birthday*  
この子の七つのお祝に  
*Kono ko no nanatsu no*  
*oiwai ni*  
Shochiku / Kadokawa Haruki  
Corporation, 9 October 1982

## Television (Selected works)

*Detective at Dawn*  
夜明けの刑事  
*Yoake no keiji*  
TBS, 2 Oct 1974-23 Mar 1977  
Masumura, directed episodes 1 &  
43 (first broadcast 8 Oct 1975)

*Red Shock*  
赤い衝撃  
*Akai shōgeki*  
TBS, 5 Nov 1976-27 May 1977,  
29 episodes  
Eps. 1 & 10

*Red Rapids*  
赤い激流  
*Akai gekiryū*  
TBS / Daiei TV, 3 June-26  
Nov 1977, 26 eps [season 1]  
and 23 June-15 Dec 1978, 26  
episodes [season 2]  
Eps. 1, 2, 12 & 20 [season 1] &  
eps. 1, 2 and 26 [season 2]

*I Was Watching a Butterfly*  
*of Primary Colors: The Smell*  
*of Death*  
原色の蝶は見ていた・死の匂い  
Genshoku no chō wa mite ita:  
Shi no nioi  
Asahi TV, 19 Aug 1978  
*Standalone drama for Saturday*  
*Night at the Theater (Doyō waidō*  
*gekijō)*

*Red Storm*  
赤い嵐  
*Akai arashi*  
TBS / Daiei TV, 30 Nov 1979-  
28 Mar 1980, 18 episodes  
Eps. 1 & 2

*Red Death Line*  
赤い死線  
*Akai shisen*  
TBS / Daiei TV, 7 and 14 Nov  
1980, 2 episodes  
*Credited as director alongside*  
*Toshiaki Kunihara and Isamu*  
*Aitsuki*

*Pure Song*  
青い絶唱  
*Aoi zesshō*  
TBS / Daiei TV, 21 Nov 1980-  
27 Mar 1981, 18 episodes  
Eps. 1, 9 & 18

*Sunflower Song*  
ひまわりの歌  
*Himawari no uta*  
TBS / Daiei TV, 13 Nov 1981-  
28 May 1982, 27 episodes  
Eps. 1, 2, 8 & 27

*The Casebook of Detective*  
*Mother Complex*  
マザコン刑事の事件簿(1983年、  
フジテレビ・木曜ファミリーワイド)  
*Mazacon keiji no jikenbo*  
Fuji  
*Standalone drama for Thursday*  
*Family Wide (Mokuyō famiri*  
*waidō)*

*Seicho Matsumoto Special:*  
*Black Gospel*  
松本清張スペシャル・黒い福音  
*Matsumoto Seichō supesharu:*  
*Kuroi fukuin*  
TBS, 26 Nov 1984  
*Standalone drama adapted*  
*from a novel by the crime writer*  
*Seichō Matsumoto, with a*  
*screenplay by Kaneto Shindō*

## Screenplays for other directors (select)

*Seventeen-year-old Wolf*  
(dir. Yoshio Inoue)  
十七才の狼  
*Jūnana-sai no ōkami*  
Daiei, 5 June 1964  
(co-written with Seiji  
Hoshikawa)

*A Certain Killer* (dir. Issei Mori)  
ある殺し屋  
*Aru koroshiya*  
Daiei, 29 April 1967  
(co-written with Yoshihiro  
Ishimatsu)

*Just for You* (dir. Yoshio Inoue)  
a.k.a. *Cute Devil: Just for You*  
可愛い悪魔 いいものあげる  
*Kawai akuma: limono ageru*  
Daiei, 29 April 1967,  
(co-written with Kenji  
Yasumoto)

*Hanzo the Razor: Who's Got*  
*the Gold?* (dir. Yoshio Inoue)  
御用牙 鬼の半蔵やお肌小判  
*Goyōkiba: Oni no Hanzō*  
*yawahada koban*  
Daiei, 9 February 1974







### *About the Transfer*

*Irezumi* is presented in its original aspect ratio of 2.35:1 with mono sound. The film was restored in 4K from the original 35mm negative by KadoKawa, with additional work by Arrow Films at R3Store Studios, London.



## *Production Credits*

Disc and Booklet Produced by **Jasper Sharp**

Executive Producers **Kevin Lambert, Francesco Simeoni**

Technical Producer **James White**

Disc Production Manager **Nora Mehenni**

QC **Alan Simmons**

Production Assistant **Samuel Thiery**

Blu-ray Mastering and Subtitling **The Engine House Media Services**

Artist **Tony Stella**

Design **Oink Creative**

Images courtesy of Kadokawa Corporation  
and Kawakita Memorial Film Institute

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