IMAMURA, Shohei (September 15, 1926 – May 30, 2006)

Imamura Shohei was one of the pillars of postwar Japanese cinema as a key player in the Japanese New Wave. His filmmaking career started at the Shochiku studio in 1951 as an assistant director for Ozu Yasujiro, whose style of directing Imamura found too rigid. He left Shochiku to join Nikkatsu in 1954, where he worked under Kawashima Yuzo, co-authoring the script of *Bakumatsu taiyoden* (*Sun in the Last Days of the Shogunate,* 1957). From his directorial debut with *Nusumareta yokujo* (*Stolen Desire,* 1958), Imamura's films explored such issues as fundamental human desire and sexual perversity in *Hateshinaki yokubo* (*Endless Desire*, 1958), complex anti-American sentiment in *Buta to gunkan* (*Pigs and Battleships*, 1961), female characters at the lower level of the social hierarchy in *Nippon konchuki* (*Insect Woman,* 1963) and *Akai satsui* (*Intentions of Murder,* 1964), and Japanese folklore and myths in *Kamigami no fukaki yokubo* (*Profound Desire of the Gods*, 1968). Imamura’s distinctive methodology was often described as being naturalist, deriving from an ethnographic viewpoint through which cinematic imagination was rendered. He pursued his unique filmmaking style further across the boundaries of generic convention and medium when he embarked on several ambitious documentary projects with *Ningen johatsu* (*A Man Vanishes,* 1967 in collaboration with the Art Theatre Guild) and a series of TV documentaries he undertook from the 1970s. In his later career, Imamura became one of a few internationally celebrated auteurs to win the Palme d'Or at Cannes twice with *Narayama bushiko* (*The Ballard of Narayama,* 1983) and *Unagi* (*The Eel,* 1991).

Reference and further reading

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- Philips, A. and Stringer, J. (ed.) (2007) *Japanese Cinema: Texts and Contexts*, London: Routledge.

- Standish, I. (2011) *Politics, Porn and Protest: Japanese Avant-Garde Cinema in the 1960s and 1970s,* New York: Continuum.

List of works:

*Nusumareta yokujo* (*Stolen Desire,* 1958)

*Hateshinaki yokubo* (*Endless Desire*, 1958)

*Buta to gunkan* (*Pigs and Battleships*,1961)

*Nippon konchuki* (*Insect Woman,* 1963)

*Akai satsui* (*Intentions of Murder,* 1964)

*Ningen johatsu* (*A Man Vanishes,* 1967)

*Kamigami no fukaki yokubo* (*Profound Desire of the Gods*, 1968)

*Narayama bushiko* (*The Ballard of Narayama,* 1983)

*Unagi* (*The Eel,* 1991)

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*Nishi Ginza eki-mae* (*Nishi GinzaStation,* 1958)

*Nianchan* (*My Second Brother*, 1959)

*Jinruigaku nyumon* (*The Pornographers*, 1966)

*Nippon sengo shi: madamu onboro no seikatsu* (*History of Postwar Japan as Told by a Bar Hostess,* 1970)

*Fukushu suru wa ware ni ari* (*Vengeance Is Mine,* 1979)

*Eijanaika* (1981)

*Zegen* (1987)

*Kuroi Ame* (*Black Rain,* 1989)

*Kanzo sensei* (*Dr Akagi*, 1998)

*Akai hashi no shita no nurui mizu* (*Warm Water Under a Red Bridge*, 2001)

*11’09’01* (2002, segment only)

Paratextual Material

<http://www.criterion.com/current/posts/1158-getting-to-the-bottom-of-imamura>

(Interview with Tony Rayns on Imamura)

<http://www.criterion.com/films/822-vengeance-is-mine>

(Trailer: Imamura’s *Vengeance Is Mine*)

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