

## Document Citation

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## Critic's Choice

One of the best Kenji Mizoguchi films showing for the first time locally in the current UCLA series in Melnitz Hall, **Portrait of Madame Yuki** develops Mizoguchi's distinctively bleak view of sexual-power politics more fully than any other of his films. Yuki (Michiyo Kogure) is an aristocratic woman fallen on hard times, married to a cruel, philandering husband whom she cannot leave because she is sexually dependent on his brutish lovemaking. She loves a weak man (Ken Uehara) who is emotionally supportive but too ineffectual to save her. When she becomes pregnant, her husband wrongfully suspects that the child is her lover's. The narrative is elliptical in an almost Jamesian mode, with the point of view shifting between Yuki and her naive maid (Yuriko Hamada). This is the first film in which Mizoguchi has undeniably achieved full command of what would become his late-period visual style, and although the film only reaches for a transcendental effect in its brilliant and sublime final shot, every shot in it achieves a complex effect. This 1950 film, the first of a trilogy on aristocratic women, plays Saturday at a 5 p.m. show after *Poppy*, and on Sunday after the 8 p.m. showing of *The Lady of Musashino*. The latter double-bill is particularly recommended. —**Myron Meisel**