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Implicating Buddhism in Madame Butterfly's Tragedy: Japonisme and Japan-Bashing in Fritz Lang's *Harakiri* (1919)

Qinna Shen (Bryn Mawr College)

Abstract:

This chapter constitutes an extensive and in-depth examination of Fritz Lang's *Harakiri* (1919), an adaptation of the Madame Butterfly story made in Lang's debut year as director. It studies the production and reception histories of the film, which was believed to be lost until a print was discovered in the Netherlands. In comparing the restored version of *Harakiri* with earlier versions of the story, the chapter observes that Lang's film distinguishes itself by dramatizing the double hara-kiri of O-Take-San and her father and by transforming the Buddhist bonze (monk) who makes a brief appearance in Puccini's opera into Butterfly's principal antagonist. By portraying the bonze as evil, the film shifts the responsibility for Butterfly's tragedy to Buddhism and by extension to Japanese culture itself. The chapter considers both historical and contemporary reasons for the harsh portrayal of Buddhism in the film, while recognizing that the negative projection of Japan stands in tension with the film's own Japonisme, a product of Lang's own passion for East Asian art. In the conclusion, a spectacular scene described in a contemporary review but missing from the restored version of the film alludes to the fact that *Harakiri* did not provide a vehicle for Lang's preferred visual style.

Fritz Lang plunged into his career as a director, making four silent films for Decla in 1919: *Halbblut* (Halfbreed), *Die Spinnen: Teil 1—Der goldene See* (The Spiders: Part 1—The

Golden Lake), *Der Herr der Liebe* (The Master of Love) and *Harakiri*. Of the four films, only two are extant: *The Golden Lake* and *Harakiri*. In *Harakiri*, an adaptation of the popular Madame Butterfly story, Lang dramatizes an exotic form of death associated with Japan, namely, suicide by self-disembowelment, and explores Orientalist tropes that were in vogue in the early Weimar years.¹ For many years, *Harakiri* was thought to be lost, but a version with Dutch intertitles was discovered in the mid-1980s in the Netherlands Film Museum in Amsterdam. The fragile copy was sent to Bologna for restoration and the public was finally able to see it in May 1987, 68 years after it premiered in December 1919.² Film historical scholarship on *Harakiri* is meager, perhaps because it is uncharacteristic of Lang's later directorial work, lacking the "modernist grandeur" that was soon to become his signature cinematic style.³ In "The Hand of Buddha: Madame Butterfly and the Yellow Peril in Fritz Lang's *Harakiri* (1919)," Daisuke Miyao compares *Harakiri* with other Butterfly stories and discusses the threatening image of Buddhism and the Yellow Peril in *Harakiri*, but he focuses on visual readings of hands and explains them as originating from the fear of "reverse colonization" and of fragmented bodies associated with traumatic memories of WWI.

This chapter focuses on *Harakiri*'s combination of Orientalist-tinged adoration for and imperialist-impacted abhorrence toward Japan, a result of Japonisme in the art-historical and cultural sphere and Japan-bashing in the sociopolitical arena at the turn of the century. After summarizing the production history of *Harakiri*, it reviews the film's tendentious presentation of Buddhism, which is a striking departure from the earlier tradition of Madame Butterfly narratives. The following section weighs historical and contemporary motives for the film's vilification of Buddhism. Drawing on contemporary notices and reviews in the trade press, the chapter discusses the reception of the film in Germany. It revisits the tension between Japonisme

and Japan-bashing in *Harakiri* and reflects on the gap between the film as Lang conceived it and the film as it is known today by considering a contemporary account of a lost scene. It argues that the negative perception of Buddhism, and by extension of Japan, stands in tension with the film's Japonisme as well as Lang's own passion for East Asian art. The Orientalist and imperialist ideology that permeates *Harakiri* cannot be attributed to Lang alone, however, because he did not write the script. The reactionary ideology, a flaw of the film, is counterbalanced to some extent by its exquisite set designs and costumes. On the other hand, the Madame Butterfly story, even with the addition of the malevolent bonze, did not provide a vehicle for Lang's preferred visual style.

The Genesis of *Harakiri*

Versions of the Madame Butterfly story, in print or on the stage, were in vogue at the turn of the century. At a moment when German filmmakers were seeking exotic subjects for feature films, a romantic tragedy set in Japan was a natural choice. But *Harakiri* is not a film that Lang himself decided to make. Already in May 1918, Decla had announced its plan to shoot a film titled "Madame Butterfly," based on Puccini's opera. Preparations were finished in August and shooting was scheduled to start in September 1918 under the direction of Otto Rippert.⁴ The production poster depicts the eponymous heroine's last act in front of a Japanese shoji as her bi-racial child, dressed in Japanese costume, waves a European flag in the background (Fig. 1.1).



Fig. 1.1. Production Announcement of “Madame Butterfly” (*Lichtbild-Bühne*, June 22, 1918).⁵

The flag is a prop that comes straight out of Puccini’s opera. During the climactic scene, a stage direction indicates, “Butterfly takes the child, seats him on a stool with his face turned to the left, gives him the American flag and a doll and urges him to play with them, while she gently bandages his eyes. Then she seizes the dagger, and with her eyes still fixed on the child, goes behind the screen.”⁶ The Decla poster contains a clue to the original conception of the film. The child’s flag is not an American flag, as it is in *Madame Butterfly*, or a Scandinavian flag, as one would expect in *Harakiri*, given the nationality of the naval officer in the film (in the restored

version, however, the child is never seen waving a flag). The flag on the poster is the old German flag used in the days of the North German Confederation and the German Empire (1867–1918) and at the beginning of the Weimar Republic (1918–1919).⁷ Hence, Rippert had planned to portray the naval officer as a German.

On July 10, 1918, an advertisement on the cover of the trade journal *Der Kinematograph* announced the production of *Madame Butterfly* as a “notable event” (ein Ereignis), still under the direction of the seasoned Rippert (Fig. 1.2). Puzzlingly, the advertisement features two Japanese in front of a shoji with Japonisme drawings and makes no reference to the Western dimension of the Butterfly story. If the drawing is intended to illustrate a moment in the plot, it is depicting a scene in which the rich Japanese suitor, Yamadori, pleads with Butterfly to marry him, as in Puccini’s opera. His outstretched hands suggest his courtship. Butterfly is shown covering her face with her sleeve and acting coyly. The artist, Viktor Arnaud, has left his signature on the shoji. This was not Arnaud’s sole excursion into Japonisme in a cinematic context. He also drew an illustration for a poster promoting the Danish Butterfly film *Troen, der Frelser* (*Die Laternen des Schicksals, The Lanterns of Fate*, Nordische Film-Co, 1917), which was shown in Germany in 1917.⁸

<Insert Fig. 1.2.>

Fig. 1.2. “Madame Butterfly,” *Der Kinematograph* (Düsseldorf), no. 601, July 10, 1918.⁹

In the late 1910s, film companies seemed to be racing to make Japonisme films, with evocative titles such as *Mimosa san* (dir. Curt A. Stark, Messter Projektion, Deutschland, 1912), *Harakiri* (dir. Harry Piel, Eiko Film GmbH, 1913),¹⁰ *Die Augen von Jade* (*The Eyes of Jade*, dir.

Iwa Raffay, Hella Moja-Film, 1918), *Das Teehaus zu den zehn Lotosblumen* (The Teahouse of the Ten Lotus Flowers, dir. Georg Jacobi, Projektions-AG Union, 1919), *Das Mädel aus Japan* (The Girl from Japan, dir. Toni Attenberger, Bayerische Filmindustrie and Wiener Kunstfilm, 1919), *Der Mikado* (The Mikado, dir. Paul Leni, 1920), and *Die weiße Geisha* (The White Geisha, dir. Heinz Carl Heiland and Valdemar Andersen, 1924–1926).¹¹ Some foreign Japan-themed films were screened in Germany as well, including the Danish film *The Lanterns of Fate* (1917) and the Hollywood film *The Toll of the Sea* (1922). The latter picture, which was shown in Germany around 1925 under the title *Lotusblume – Die Geschichte einer Madame Butterfly*, marked the debut of seventeen-year-old Anna May Wong.¹² As Karl Sierek has noted, Japonisme and Chinoiserie were popular in Weimar cinema: “The celluloid screens were full of trivialized images of China and Japan tailored to European taste.”¹³

However, work on Decla’s “Madame Butterfly” was interrupted when Rippert was hired to shoot *Die Pest in Florenz* (The Plague in Florence, script by Fritz Lang, 1919) for the World Class Series of pictures and got behind schedule. A year later, at the end of May 1919, the head of Decla, Erich Pommer, acquired a script of “Madame Butterfly” from Max Jungk, a dramaturg at the German theater on Königgrätzer Straße. Jungk adapted his script from the American story “Madame Butterfly” (1898) by writer John Luther Long.¹⁴ Josef Coenen, who was in charge of Decla’s Women’s Class Series, was slated to direct the film, which was scheduled to start shooting in July 1919.¹⁵ When work on the picture finally began in mid-September, however, Coenen had been replaced by Lang, and the title had been changed to *Harakiri*.¹⁶ Coenen had experienced difficulties in making another women’s film (he would leave Decla in February 1920 after an “amicable cancellation of his contract”¹⁷), and Rippert was still busy with *The Plague in Florence*.

When Lang, responsible for Decla's Adventure Series, was summoned to take over, he was rushing to complete another film, the first part of a projected four-installment serial titled *The Spiders* (only the first two parts were completed).¹⁸ The first installment, *The Golden Lake*, had been announced in January 1919.¹⁹ Its interior shots were filmed at the studios in Berlin Weißensee and were probably finished by the end of June. In preparation for shooting the remaining scenes, Decla had rented an area in the zoo in Hamburg-Stellingen from the animal trader Carl Hagenbeck. In addition, the studio had signed an exclusive contract with Hagenbeck's nephew, Heinrich Umlauff, the director of the J. F. G. Umlauff Ethnological Museum, who made its exotic collections available to Decla. As an expert in the field of ethnology, Umlauff himself advised on the sets and costume designs for *The Golden Lake*.²⁰ In early July, Lang's film team arrived in Hamburg-Stellingen to complete shooting for the film. Lang had to race to finish *The Golden Lake* for its premiere on October 3 in Berlin.²¹ As it turned out, while making *Harakiri* Lang was able to capitalize on some arrangements that had been made during the production of *The Golden Lake*. Lang also reused some of the cast and crew of *The Spiders*: Lil Dagover, Paul Biensfeldt, Georg John, Rudolf Lettinger, and Harry Frank.²² On September 3, *Film Kurier* reported that preparations had begun for *Harakiri*, the second film in the World Class Series, and shooting started on September 14.²³ A Japanese city had been built in Hagenbeck's zoo and Umlauff again served as ethnographical advisor, supplying Lang with authentic Japanese costumes and decorations.²⁴ Writing for *Film-Kurier*, Margot Meyer described how visitors to the zoo were amazed by the "film city" erected by Lang's crew.²⁵

Harakiri provided a showcase for Umlauff's museum, witnessing the infatuation with Oriental objects captured in an "aesthetic of opulence" associated with early Weimar cinema.²⁶ Viewers of the film could relish authentic Japanese or Chinese architecture, clothing, musical

instruments, dolls, objects of art, and, of course, swords. This fascination with all things Oriental is integrated into the storyline of *Harakiri* itself. When Olaf, the Western naval officer who marries O-Take-San, the film's version of Madame Butterfly, first appears, he is seen purchasing a Japanese smoking pipe at a merchant's stall. In his European home, Japanese souvenirs are displayed on a round table (Fig. 1.3).



Fig. 1.3. Screenshot. A table of Oriental objects in Olaf and Eva's European home (54:57).

The film's penchant for Oriental objects mirrors Lang's own affection for East Asian art. The apartment he shared with Thea von Harbou at Hohenzollerndamm 52 in Berlin-Wilmersdorf housed an impressive collection of Chinese and Japanese artifacts, photographed by Waldemar Tizenthaler in 1923/24 for the magazine *Die Dame*.²⁷ Later in life, Lang claimed that the exotic subjects in his early films, including *Harakiri*, reminded him of his travels as a young man, when he "wandered haphazardly through Asia Minor, the South Seas, Indonesia, North Africa, China, Japan, and Russia."²⁸ Lang's references to his youthful globetrotting have become a standard

trope in accounts of the director's life, but there is little evidence to back them up.²⁹ His trips to the Far East in the early 1910s appear to belong to the corpus of "legends he invented about himself."³⁰ It is more likely that his interests in East Asian art should be traced back to his visits at the end of July 1914 to the Guimet Museum in Paris, where, as Patrick McGilligan notes, "he nurtured his appreciation for Oriental, especially Japanese, art."³¹

The verisimilitude of *Harakiri* astounded viewers and reviewers and attests to the popularity of Japonisme in early twentieth-century Europe. Even in the reconstructed version of the film, *Harakiri* gives ample evidence of Lang's determination to evoke Japanese culture through meticulously arranged visuals. The film's aesthetizing portrait of Japanese culture reaches a peak in the scenes set during the "Festival of Falling Leaves," which are crowded with flowers and boats festooned with lanterns and provide the context for the first encounter between Olaf and O-Take-San. But embedded within the same sequence is the first act of ritual suicide that gives the film its name. *Harakiri* is one of the earliest of Lang's works that illustrate his enduring narrative interest in death and women, along with *Hilde Warren und der Tod* (Hilde Warren and the Death, dir. Joe May, script by Fritz Lang, 1917), *Die Pest in Florenz* (1919), *Totentanz* (Dance of Death, dir. Otto Rippert, script by Fritz Lang, 1919), and *Der müde Tod* (Destiny, dir. Fritz Lang, 1921).³² In *Harakiri*, the dramatic focus on death and femininity becomes the vehicle for a harsh critique of Japanese Buddhist culture.

Buddhism as the Culprit

Hara-kiri, literally "belly-cutting," is a form of ritual suicide by disembowelment, commonly known as *seppuku*, and reflects the Japanese belief that the abdomen is the place where the soul or spirit of a person resides. It was performed by samurai as a means of atonement or as a loyal

act of *junshi* (following one's lord into death). Women of the samurai class also committed a form of ritual suicide called *jigai*; instead of slicing the abdomen, they slashed their throat with a short sword or dagger. Practiced since ancient times as an act of self-sacrifice, *hara-kiri* developed into an obligatory ritual in samurai society in the Tokugawa period. Samurai culture was preoccupied with the notions of honor and shame, and *hara-kiri* was viewed as an honorable punishment both by society and by the people who committed it.³³

The suicide ritual of *hara-kiri* intrigued and perplexed Westerners ever since Jesuit priests witnessed it in the late sixteenth century.³⁴ Isolated accounts by Europeans of *hara-kiri* reached the West, for example, in Arnoldus Montanus's *Gedenkwaardige Gesantschappen der Oost-Indische Maatschappy in 't Vereenigde Nederland, aan de Kaisaren van Japan* (Memorable Embassies of the East India Company of the United Netherlands to the Emperors of Japan, 1669), and in *Tales of Old Japan* (1871) by the British ambassador to Japan, Algernon Freeman-Mitford.³⁵ When Emperor Meiji died in 1912, a few years before the film was made, one of Japan's most famous and revered generals, Nogi Maresuke (1849–1912), committed the traditional act of *junshi* by performing *seppuku*, taking his wife with him.³⁶ This horrific act shocked the world and revived attention to this form of ritual suicide.

Lang's *Harakiri* depicts the tragic fate of O-Take-San, the Butterfly figure, who is victimized by an evil Buddhist bonze and by her unfaithful European husband, a naval officer named Olaf. Before Max Jungk reworked Long's American tale, it had already been adapted by David Belasco into a one-act play, *Madame Butterfly*, which was first performed in 1900 in New York.³⁷ Giacomo Puccini saw Belasco's play in London and transformed it into the world-famous opera *Madama Butterfly*, which premiered in 1904 in Milan. Long's American tale in turn derived from Pierre Loti's enormously popular novel *Madame Chrysanthème* (1887), which

describes a naval officer's flighty marriage to a teenage geisha, the model for the eponymous heroine.³⁸ A significant feature in the successive iterations of *Madame Chrysanthème* is the increasing emphasis on the Japanese heroine's suicide, which is not a feature of Loti's novel—*Chrysanthème* is ditched by her European husband but does not kill herself. In Long's story, *Butterfly* only attempts suicide. Belasco's play, however, ends with her hara-kiri, as does Puccini's opera. Lang and Jungk's version takes a step further by dramatizing the double hara-kiri of O-Take-San's father and her own; in earlier versions, the father's suicide is only mentioned in passing.

In addition to spotlighting a characteristically Japanese manner of committing suicide, what distinguishes Lang's version from most previous *Butterfly* stories is its emphasis on Buddhism, especially by casting a Buddhist monk as the main villain. Buddhism is described only peripherally in *Madame Chrysanthème*. As Christian Reed points out, "Loti's condescending descriptions of monks and temples and the ignorant indifference to Japanese religion [is] exemplified by his dismissive allusions to *Chrysanthème*'s 'gilded idol . . . unknown and incomprehensible'."³⁹ Long's and Belasco's versions do not mention Buddhism explicitly. In both the short story and the play, greedy relatives insist on Cio-Cio-San's marriage to a foreign white man, hoping for financial gain. When their ploy fails, they renounce the teenage *Butterfly*, who becomes an outcast and loses the "filial affection" of her ancestors.⁴⁰ Cio-Cio-San, however, secretly seeks out the church of a missionary, which hints at a potential conflict between Buddhism and Christianity. In *Harakiri*, Buddhist statues and objects are key props and cultural signifiers that help to construct Japanese identity. Before the daimyo and O-Take-San commit hara-kiri, they both are seen bowing or kneeling before Buddhist altars in the house (see Fig. 1.4 and 1.5).



Fig. 1.4. Screenshot. The daimyo bows before a Buddhist altar before committing *seppuku* as the scene fades out with a typical iris shot (19:37).



Fig. 1.5. Screenshot. O-Take-San kneels before a Buddhist altar before killing herself (1:25:15).

Jungk and Lang did not invent this tableau of the heroine kneeling before a Buddhist shrine before taking her life. Both Belasco's drama and Puccini's libretto mention the shrine in

the stage directions. The scene description in Belasco's "Madame Butterfly" calls for "A sword rack, a shrine on which lie a sword and a pair of men's slippers." The stage instructions for her hara-kiri act read: "Madame Butterfly bolts the shoji and the door, lights fresh incense before the shrine, takes down her father's sword and reads the inscription: 'To die with honor ... when one can no longer live with honor.' ... She draws her finger across the blade, to test the sharpness of the sword, then picks up the hand glass, puts on more rouge, rearranges the poppies in her hair, bows to the shrine."⁴¹ Likewise, in Puccini's libretto, the stage directions refer to a Buddhist altar on the set, and the blade that Butterfly uses is stored near the altar. Shortly before she dies, "Butterfly goes toward the shrine and lifts the white veil from it; throws this across the screen; then takes the dagger, which, enclosed in a waxen case, is leaning against the wall near the image of Buddha."⁴² It is clear that *Harakiri* is inheriting, not inventing, this visual association of hara-kiri and Buddhism.

Yet, in a critical departure from Puccini's narrative, the film centralizes the bonze, a marginal figure in the opera. In the libretto, the bonze is identified as Cio-Cio-San's uncle, and he crashes her wedding and publicly denounces her for her conversion to Christianity. *Madama Butterfly* thereby uses the figure of the bonze to introduce an explicit religious conflict between Buddhism and Christianity, and having served this function the uncle does not appear again. In *Harakiri*, however, scenarist Jungk turned him into the primary villain, thus implicating Buddhism as the culprit behind such barbaric rituals as hara-kiri. According to a contemporary reviewer, the tale of "Madame Butterfly" itself was a four-act story, and the scriptwriter expanded it to six acts by "forcing a bonze story" onto the original.⁴³ The reviewer appears displeased with this addition, which compromised the dramatic integrity of the original story.

The film highlights the evil nature of the bonze: He is by turns cunning, sadistic, cruel, aggressive, menacing, and violent. The bonze, played by Georg John, is introduced at the center of a symmetric composition whose axis is a staircase leading up to a Buddhist temple. Buddhist iconography is visible behind the bonze, and statues of Buddha flank the entrance to the temple. As the bonze walks slowly down the stairs, his authoritative demeanor commands utter obedience, which is reflected in the kneeling bow of the temple servant, who reports that he is making sure that “no foreign feet enter the shrine” (Fig. 1.6).



Fig. 1.6. Screenshot. First appearance of the bonze (4:17).

Unlike Butterfly’s uncle in Puccini’s opera, the bonze in Lang’s film is not related to O-Take-San. The major conflict in *Harakiri* arises when O-Take-San, with her father’s support, refuses to become a high priestess in his temple. In earlier versions of *Madame Butterfly*, Butterfly’s father is an imperial officer who commits *seppuku* after defeat in battle. In Lang’s film, the father is not an officer but a daimyo (he is identified in the credits as Daimyo

Tokoyawa, played by Paul Biensfeldt), a vassal of the shogun during the rule of the Tokugawa (or Edo) shogunate (1603–1867), and he is forced to kill himself through the intrigue of the evil bonze.⁴⁴ As *Harakiri* opens, the daimyo has just returned from abroad with gifts for his daughter, including a teddy bear that evokes American imperialism because of its association with “Teddy” Roosevelt.⁴⁵ When the bonze visits the home, he criticizes the daimyo for bringing many foreign things to Nippon. When the daimyo indicates that he will allow his daughter to decide whether to join the temple, the bonze accuses him of abandoning Buddhism: “While abroad, you lost your belief in Buddha. — Beware his fury!” But this is clearly a false accusation, as the daimyo has just joined his daughter in bowing before the Buddhist altar in their residence. O-Take-San recognizes the priest’s motive for forcing her to serve in the temple: “This awful priest persecutes me because I have seen through his impure intentions.” The “impure intentions” could allude to the bonze’s suppressed sexual desire for the young woman, which is not developed in the reconstructed version. Whether scenes dramatizing a sexual plot appeared in the original film is unknown; contemporary reviewers did not mention such a plot. The fragmentary state of the available film leaves the motive of the Buddhist monk unclear.

The way the bonze is depicted inevitably taints the image of Buddhism. When O-Take-San goes to seek the wisdom of Buddha, the bonze raises his hand, extends his fingers like claws, and threatens: “Buddha will certainly punish you,” evoking Buddha as the ultimate source of power and punishment—a role that is reminiscent of Judeo-Christian monotheism. The words attributed to the bonze betray a complete misunderstanding of how Buddhism works (Fig. 1.7).



Fig. 1.7. Screenshot. The bonze threatens O-Take-San: “Buddha will certainly punish you” (11:05).

The scheming bonze writes to the emperor that the daimyo, “through foreign teachings, seeks to incite animosity against the holy person of the emperor” (12:34). Trusting the bonze, the Mikado sends a dirk to the daimyo, insinuating the regal order of hara-kiri. The bonze then uses the daimyo’s suicide to intimidate O-Take-San: “Your father was punished for his sins by Buddha. Buddha is stern, and that is why you should serve him as a priestess.” In the film, hara-kiri is not only a penalty that the country’s rulers imposed, but is also sanctioned or even facilitated by religious authority.

The conflict between Buddhism and Christianity intimated in earlier versions of the Butterfly story is curiously absent from the film. Instead, the bonze personifies nationalist and anti-foreign forces in Japan. The Buddhist temple prohibits foreigners from entering, a policy corresponding to the rejection of Western influence during the reign of the shoguns. But Olaf disregards the sacred rules and enters the “holy forest,” where he finds the captive O-Take-San.

After the bonze discovers her rendezvous with a European naval officer, he imprisons her in a cavern—a common locus in Lang’s films.⁴⁶ The temple servant “frees” her from the cavern and sells her as a geisha to a tea house in Yoshiwara. Olaf chances upon O-Take-San and chivalrously rescues her by marrying her. Whereas the naval officer in earlier versions of *Madame Butterfly*—an American named Pinkerton—treats this relationship frivolously from the start, Olaf’s initial devotion to O-Take-San seems sincere.

According to the laws of Yoshiwara, Olaf has to remain married to the geisha for 999 days to release her from bondage to the brothel. The misogynist customs in Japan that allow a husband to abandon his wife at any time play to the advantage of the white man, which makes his behavior at most immoral, but not illegal. The film also subscribes to the gendered Orientalist discourse that associates the male with a superior, virile West and the woman with a subordinate feminized East. Olaf presents himself as the savior of the Asian damsel-in-distress. He violates local custom with impunity by trespassing in the garden of the Buddhist temple and seducing her. Apparently emboldened by the privileges of extraterritoriality, Olaf, a mere naval officer, overpowers the bonze, who otherwise seems to reign supreme. In a scene of direct confrontation, Olaf shows the bonze the door. Rather than condemning Olaf for his behavior, however, viewers feel a sense of relief and gratification because the conflict between Olaf and the bonze is depicted as a confrontation between good and evil.

In Long’s tale the naïve and love-struck Butterfly presents herself as perky, hot-blooded, wild, vibrant, and humorous, but O-Take-San is fragile, submissive, self-effacing, and sacrificial. When she is showing Olaf her inheritance, she holds up a wooden carving and dolls, and tells her European husband that there are three virtues all Japanese girls have: “They must hear nothing, say nothing and see nothing.” This is a familiar trope in the Japonisme repertoire, often

represented by three monkeys covering their ears, mouths, and eyes, respectively.⁴⁷ Lil Dagover mimics Japanese mannerisms: She minces her steps, constantly bowing or kneeling to show obedience. Not long after the marriage, Olaf leaves his pregnant wife behind and returns to Europe. She self-delusively believes that he will return and rejects repeated marriage proposals from the noble Prince Matahari—a positive character, unlike the caricaturistic Yamadori who courts Butterfly in earlier versions of the story and has been corrupted by his western enculturation. O-Take-San often takes her son to the ocean to wait for Olaf’s ship, but when he finally returns he has brought his European wife Eva with him. The bonze comes to take the son into state custody. The maid runs to the embassy to plead with Olaf to save his son. Olaf wavers, but Eva offers to raise her husband’s child. O-Take-San insists that Olaf come to take the boy, but before he reluctantly arrives, O-Take-San commits hara-kiri: “It’s better to die honorably than to live in shame.”

Lang and Jungk’s adaptation embodies a colonial and imperialist attitude toward the East: It alleviates Olaf’s irresponsibility by introducing him as a hero who rescues the damsel in distress and by casting the bonze as the unambiguous villain. O-Take-San’s unwavering love for Olaf could be traced to her gratitude to her savior. Lang’s version thus shifts the blame for O-Take-San’s plight from the behavior of a licentious European sailor to Japan itself and its societal and cultural degradation of women, which ostensibly originates from Buddhism. The film explains Butterfly’s tragic fate as caught between Japan’s Buddhist-inflected nationalism and its gradual tendency to westernize, mirrored through Butterfly’s infatuation with the West. Buddhism is blamed for hara-kiri and for subjugating women. However, according to Mark Blum, male seppuku did not have a specifically religious context.⁴⁸ Buddhism in reality does not abet cruel self-violence such as hara-kiri. Nor is Buddhism more misogynist than other religions.

In fact, Buddhism was well received by a few German philosophers, especially Schopenhauer, and Buddhist circles and societies were formed in Germany.⁴⁹ In a single intertitle in the reconstructed version of *Harakiri*, the film disassociates the monk's behavior from Buddhism when Prince Matahari rebukes him: "Get out of here! It was never about Buddha's holy service for you. You only wanted to satisfy your revenge!" Such a separation between the villain and Buddhism mounts a clear defense of Buddhism. Yet, the film leaves no doubt that the Japanese monk is a greater evil than the white officer, resulting in a de facto indictment of Buddhism. What is the genealogy of the Orientalist image of Buddhism as a malignant force? What could be the historical and contemporary reasons for associating Buddhism with violence and depravity?

Historical and Contemporary Reasons for *Harakiri*'s Negative Portrayal of Buddhism and Japan

Within thirty years after the Portuguese Catholic missionary Francis Xavier brought Christianity to Japan in 1549, missionaries had been outlawed, a situation that could have been perceived by Europeans as a conflict between Christianity and Buddhism. In 1587, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, the Sengoku-period daimyo who unified Japan, issued the "Missionary Expulsion Order." In the late sixteenth century and much of the seventeenth century European Christians, including Franciscan missionaries and Jesuit officials, were persecuted by the Tokugawa shoguns. They were banished, arrested, mutilated, decapitated, or burned to death. In 1637–38, a popular Christian uprising, the so-called Shimabara Rebellion, was brutally suppressed and led to the final expulsion of the Portuguese from Japan in 1639. And in 1640, when a Portuguese deputation returned from Macau to Japan to petition the authorities to reopen trade, sixty-one Portuguese Christians were beheaded by the Japanese government, which invoked a law banning

all foreigners from traveling to Japan. The Dutch, however, actively sought to take the place of the Portuguese. Although the Tokugawa shogunate prohibited trade with the West, a small Dutch outpost was permitted to remain in Nagasaki. Not until 1879 was the ban against Christianity rescinded.⁵⁰ Jesuit missionaries in Japan viewed Buddhism as a form of idolatry. Martin Scorsese's film *Silence* (2016), about apostate priests in seventeenth-century Japan, visualizes the history of Japan's persecution of Christians and its insistence on Buddhism as its national religion. The persecution of Christians in Buddhist Japan and the barbaric rituals of hara-kiri could have contributed to the negative perception of Buddhism/Japan in the West.

A more proximate source for the negative portrayal of Buddhism/Japan in *Harakiri* is the hostile relationship between imperial Germany and Japan at the turn of the twentieth century. Although Meiji Japan modeled itself on Germany and acquired many institutional forms and much technical know-how from the nation, the relationship deteriorated after the Sino-Japanese War (1894–95). According to the terms of the Treaty of Shimonoseki, China was forced to surrender the Liaodong Peninsula and the island of Formosa (modern Taiwan) to the victorious Japanese. Less than a week after the treaty was signed, however, Russia, Germany, and France conducted the Triple Intervention to force Japan to surrender the Liaodong Peninsula, including Port Arthur in the district of Dalian. In 1898, Germany extracted the so-called Kiautschou Bay concession from China and claimed territorial rights over the Liaodong Peninsula, a region Japan still coveted and considered a legitimate part of its war bounty. The intervention humiliated Japan, fanning the flames of nationalism and winning popular support for jingoistic foreign policies.⁵¹

In Europe, meanwhile, Germany's kaiser propagated dread of the "Yellow Peril" to justify the Triple Intervention.⁵² In 1895, Hermann Knackfuss, working from a sketch that

Wilhelm II provided, completed an infamous lithograph that shows the archangel Michael, patron saint of Germans, pointing out a seated Buddha in the “Far East” to a group of Valkyrie-like lady warriors (Fig. 1.8). The Buddha is shrouded in dark clouds that threaten to move west, where the sky is brightened by a radiant cross. For the kaiser, the ladies represented different Christian European nations, including Russia. They stand on a rock overlooking a European city containing a castle and church steeples, but beyond, where the Buddha looms, another city is in flames. The fire seems to spew from the mouth of a dragon on which the Buddha is sitting, instead of his usual lotus flower. This allegorical lithograph thus warns Christian nations of the looming threat from heathen countries in East Asia, in particular Japan.



Fig. 1.8. Kaiser Wilhelm and Hermann Knackfuss, “The Yellow Peril” (lithograph, 1895).

Made in 1895, the second year of the Sino-Japanese War (1894–95), “The Yellow Peril” reflected fears that Japan could form a Pan-Asiatic block to oppose the West. The lithograph is accompanied by a stern admonition: “Völker Europas, wahrt eure heiligsten Güter” (Peoples of

Europe, guard your most sacred possessions). The kaiser ordered copies of the lithograph to be made for other monarchs and statesmen, while giving Knackfuss's original drawing to Tsar Nicholas II in an insincere appeal for unity against the Far East. In fact, Germany's real strategy was to keep Russia engaged in East Asia so as to weaken the nation's threat to Germany's Eastern front. The German diplomat Max von Brandt was in all likelihood the ideological father of this strategy and the inspiration for this drawing.⁵³ Whatever the geopolitical maneuvers behind the image, it is a seminal example of the appropriation of Buddhism as a stand-in for the "Yellow Peril."

The next European slighting of Japan occurred after the Boxer Rebellion in China was suppressed in 1900 by multinational forces that included troops from Japan, Russia, Great Britain, Germany, and four other nations. Russia occupied Manchuria in Northeast China and turned down Japan's proposal to acknowledge mutual spheres of interest in the Far East. Japan attacked the Russian naval base at Port Arthur on February 9, 1904, thus starting the Russo-Japanese War (1904–05). In August 1904, Kaiser Wilhelm reiterated the message of the Knackfuss lithograph, proclaiming that the war would turn into "a final conflagration between the two great religions, Christianity and Buddhism, and would produce a decisive clash between the Western and the Eastern civilizations."⁵⁴ In the lithograph, Russia was allegorized as one of the martial women defending Christian Europe against the imagined "Yellow Peril." When Japan unexpectedly won the war against Russia, however, the kaiser's phantom turned into a threatening reality.

In 1902 Japan aligned itself with Great Britain, and when Britain declared war on Germany in August 1914 Japan followed suit, taking advantage of the opportunity to attack the Kiautschou Bay and to seize German colonies in China and in the Pacific.⁵⁵ After Germany lost

the war, Qingdao, together with the Kiautschou Peninsula, was transferred to Japan according to the terms of the Versailles Treaty. Thus in 1919, when Fritz Lang made *Harakiri*, the relationship between Germany and Japan was adversarial. The political and historical background partly explains the negative and antipathetic portrayal of Buddhism as personified in the bonze. Lang and Jungk were apparently following Puccini's steps in putting blame on Japan. Domingos de Mascarenhas has shown in his article on Puccini's revisions of *Madama Butterfly* that Puccini gradually built a more forceful image of Japan due to the change in European perception of Japan and he shifted "the responsibility for the tragedy from the imperialist Pinkerton to Butterfly and the new Japan."⁵⁶ Hence, the Western perception of Japan at the turn of the century was a mixture of Japonisme and Japan-bashing.

The Reception of *Harakiri*

In mid-October 1919, several trade journals reported that the shooting of *Harakiri* was finished.⁵⁷ *Harakiri* premiered on December 18 at the Berlin Marmorhaus and then screened in the Admiralspalast. The film was censored and no children or youth were permitted to watch it.⁵⁸ A distribution poster for *Harakiri* depicts a torn paper lantern with fake *kanji* (Chinese characters used in Japanese) on it, and the shape of the lantern overlaps with that of a ghost mask with its mouth wide open (Fig. 1.9).



Fig. 1.9. *Harakiri* poster (Source: Rolf Aurich, *Fritz Lang: His Life and Work: Photographs and Documents*, 53).

This poster is in fact a reproduction of Katsushika Hokusai's ukiyo-e woodblock print, "The Ghost of Oiwa" ("Oiwa-san," c. 1831–32).⁵⁹ "The Ghost of Oiwa" is one of the most famous Japanese ghost stories, in which Oiwa's ghost takes revenge against her adulterous husband Iyemon, who murdered her father and poisoned her when she was pregnant with their child. Afterward Oiwa's ghost continually haunts him. Her twisted face appears everywhere, even in a lantern which sways over his head, which is depicted in the ukiyo-e print.⁶⁰ The poster sells *Harakiri* as a chilling, macabre story and does not evoke *Madame Butterfly* at all. Although the Buddhist bonze and the Dutch sailor commit injustice against O-Take-San, posthumous revenge

against the perpetrators is nowhere indicated in the film. Thus the film turns out to be quite different from the story behind the poster.

A second poster in the style of Japonisme is visually more appealing and elaborate, despite its clichéd imagery. It portrays Mount Fuji in the back, a kneeling Japanese samurai holding a sword on the side, and a geisha decorating her hair with possibly a flower. The two figures could allude to the father and the daughter in the film. In addition to listing the cast, the poster foregrounds a text-block that credits Heinrich Umlauff and his museum for providing the Japanese paraphernalia and sets (Fig. 1.10). Interestingly, the text-block cuts into the image of the geisha, leading one to wonder whether it has been superimposed onto a preexisting drawing. Perhaps this poster was repurposed from another Japonisme advertisement.

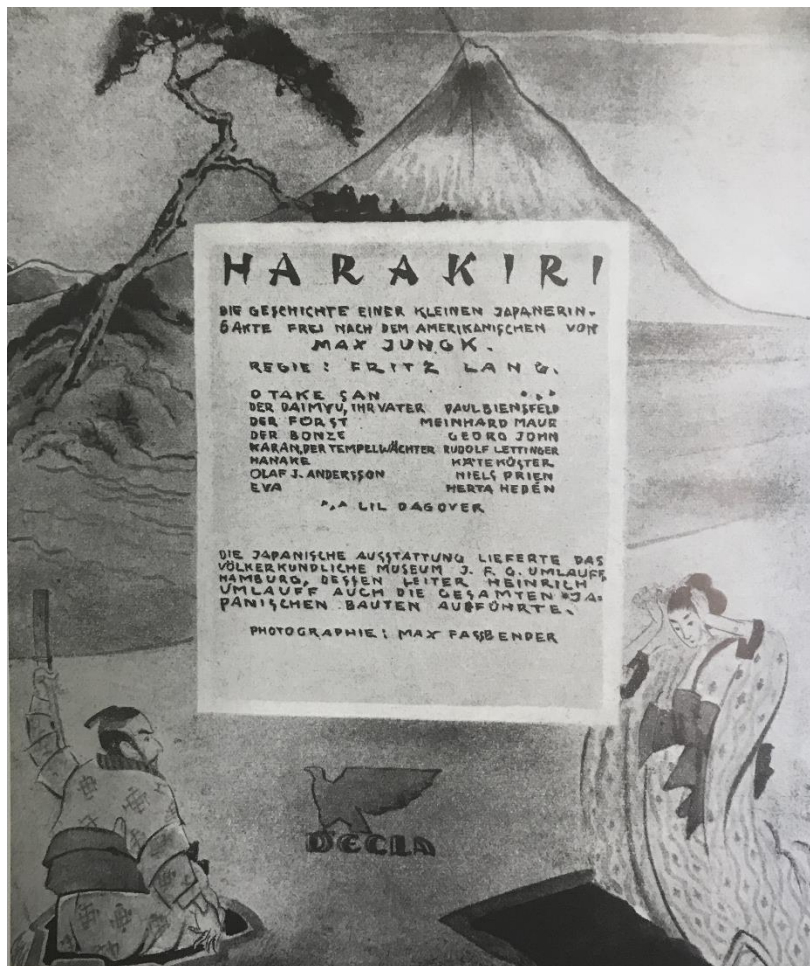


Fig. 1.10. *Harakiri* poster (Source: Aurich, *Fritz Lang: His Life and Work: Photographs and Documents*, 54).

The third poster is in color and was apparently designed specifically for *Harakiri* because the background illustrates what the film calls the “Festival of Falling Leaves,” even though the trees in the film and on the poster have not lost their foliage (Fig. 1.11).

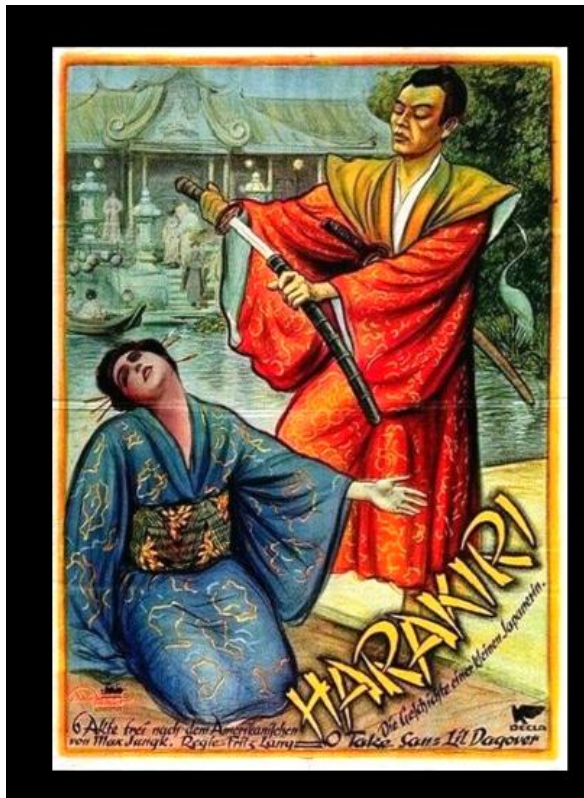


Fig. 1.11. *Harakiri* poster (Source: “Harakiri,” IMDB).⁶¹

This advertisement is truer to the plot, depicting the father unsheathing a sword and O-Take-San kneeling and holding out her neck. However, the proximity of the two characters misleadingly suggests that the woman is about to be executed by the man standing next to her. The text at the bottom of the poster includes the title *Harakiri* and a short description: “The Story of a Small

Japanese Woman” (Die Geschichte einer kleinen Japanerin). The line—“6 Akte frei nach dem amerikanischen von Max Jungk”—also credits the American tale, not Puccini’s opera, as the source for this film. According to Georges Sturm, Puccini’s opera was seldom mentioned by the film’s production team due to legal issues.⁶² But the influence of Puccini’s opera on *Harakiri* was stronger than the studio acknowledged, given the film’s borrowing of the bonze and its similar shift of responsibility for the abandoned woman’s suicide from the European lover to Japan itself.

Contemporary reviews of *Harakiri* were overwhelmingly positive and praised the film’s faithful and painstakingly detailed portrayal of Japan.⁶³ The report in *Der Kinematograph* reveals a general fascination with the Japanese aesthetics brimming over in the film:

The film provides opportunities for delightful images of Japanese gardens. The house where O-Take-San spends her honeymoon is set in a fairy-tale sea of blossoms and the pictures from the “Festival of Falling Leaves” are equally wonderful, with hundreds of little boats covered with colorful paper lanterns. Tiny bridges lead across narrow waterways, bushes of brightly lit chrysanthemums are so enormous that young Japanese women can almost vanish in them. There are typical buildings and lively street scenes. When O-Take-San is abducted from the tea-house we are given interesting views of Nagasaki’s Yoshiwara, the street of ill repute where geishas sit behind bamboo screens and love is a profession of which no one needs to be ashamed.⁶⁴

In *Lichtbild-Bühne*, F. v. B. lauded the film: “What also makes the film interesting is the work, the extremely meticulous work of the director Fritz Lang, the photographer, and the actors. The

director successfully studied the mannerisms, the essence of that yellow race (*Gelbe Rasse*), foreign, culturally superior, nonetheless adhering to old, ancient customs and traditions. He knows how to deftly breathe some of that spirit into the film and not only create a plausible painting of Asian pomp.”⁶⁵

The reviewer’s use of “yellow race” smacks of racism, despite the high respect the reviewer shows for East Asian culture. On the question of whether the film is imbued with a Japanese spirit, another reviewer differed: “Japanese is the costume, but extremely un-Japanese is the spirit of the film (*der Geist des Films*), in which Georg John bares his teeth as the despotic bonze.” This critic recognized that the film’s depiction of Buddhism was not really Japanese. He lamented that the picture had to rely on beautiful landscapes to make up for the sluggish story.⁶⁶

A contemporary reviewer brushed over the use of non-Japanese actors: “Here the Japanese are ordinary central Europeans. But this is in no way noticeable.”⁶⁷ In contrast, when the film was rediscovered and screened in Berlin in 1987, one reviewer found the fake Japanese wanting: “Any Berliner can discern that the extras consist of all possible nationalities, not just of Japanese; that the actors and actresses, once they sit on their heels, do not get up as elegantly as we know from other Japanese films by now.”⁶⁸ One could also add that the Japanese characters on the lanterns hanging in Yoshiwara are fake *kanji* drawn by a non-Japanese artist.

In Leipzig the film ran for a good six months. An anonymous critic in *Der Drache*, a weekly satirical Saxon magazine, pointed out that “there were evidently still tasteful directors,” since the act of hara-kiri “is fortunately not shown on the screen.” He also felt it remarkable – “worth underlining in red” – that there were no cars in the film. And: “We see no half-naked women in this film, nor any lying in bed” (No. 42, July 14, 1920).⁶⁹ In December 1920, the film was distributed in Japan and was very successful, a sign of “respect for German capabilities.”⁷⁰

In late 1923 or early 1924, the Japanese student Kawakita Nagamasa (1903–1981) who came to Lingen, a small city near Hamburg, watched a stage production of *Madame Butterfly* in Hamburg. He was appalled by its unbearably distorted portrayal of Japan. It is unclear which version he watched, but he deemed the play a distasteful example of failed transculturality. This experience launched his career as a film businessman and producer who sought to use film as a medium to improve exchanges of ideas and understanding between different cultures.⁷¹ At the end of his career, Kawakita produced another *Madame Butterfly* film (1954), directed by the Italian director Carmine Gallone, and filled all the Japanese roles with Japanese actors and actresses. However, the result did not meet the high expectations of Kawakita and his crew.⁷²

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that *Harakiri* dramatizes an evil and oppressive Buddhism to explain the exotic and barbaric practice of hara-kiri. This version of the Madame Butterfly story shifts the responsibility for Butterfly's tragedy from an unfaithful European lover to Japan itself. The menacing image of Buddhism recalls the kaiser's equation of that religion with the "Yellow Peril." *Harakiri* portrays an Orient awaiting for European enlightenment because its own religion leads to the oppression of women and to death. In actuality, however, hara-kiri was a secular practice without explicit religious connotations. Thus the film misleadingly suggests Buddhism condones or even facilitates the barbaric ritual. In the early interwar years, Japan and Germany fell out over the inflammatory "Yellow Peril" speeches, the Triple Intervention, and the First World War, which might explain the hostile portrait of the Buddhist monk, and hence of Buddhism.

Harakiri is an early instance of yellowface performance. The film whitewashes the cast by using German actors for the leading and supporting roles. O-Take-San is portrayed by Lil Dagover, who played the Sun Priestess Naela in Lang's previous film, *The Golden Sea*, and her interracial child is played by a young white actor, Loni Nest. The only Asians to appear in the film are a few extras. Yet casting a white male actor, Georg John, in the role of the evil Japanese monk might have had an unexpected advantage, namely, of mitigating the Japaneseness of the villain, thus reducing the chances that the film's depiction of the bonze would be seen as racist. It might have been different if an ethnic Japanese actor had played the role of the villain, as in Joe May's *Die Herrin der Welt* (The Mistress of the World, 1919), an eight-part serial whose first installment was released a few weeks before *Harakiri* premiered. May employed ethnic actors as stereotyped Chinese characters involved in white slavery. The only positive Chinese character, the westernized Dr. Kien-Lung, played by the ethnic Chinese actor Henry Sze, turns out to be a rascal in the end. May's racist portrayal of Chinese characters provoked protests from Chinese students, journalists, and diplomats in Germany and led to a ban on the film's export and the shooting of some new scenes.⁷³ Asian viewers might have been similarly irked if the evil bonze had been played by an ethnic actor.

Finally, both the visual and narrative quality of *Harakiri* seem subpar in comparison to Lang's well-known films. According to Michael Töteberg, *Harakiri* was only a "B-Picture" that the director managed to fit in between two parts of his giant adventure cycle *The Spiders*.⁷⁴ But it is important to note that the restored *Harakiri* released in 1987 does not represent the film that Lang envisioned. Reviewing the three-DVD Kino set *Fritz Lang: The Early Works*, Noel Murray acknowledged this problem: "It's hard to draw firm conclusions about the films in *The Early Works*, because in some cases they've been reconstructed from badly damaged, incomplete

prints, found in archives without the original German title cards. But even the pieces of these movies that exist are only intermittently Lang-like, stylistically. *Harakiri* in particular is very plain, with Lang doing little visually to enliven a predictably melodramatic plot (or to alleviate the awkwardness of a Japanese story being played by a European cast).⁷⁵

The original *Harakiri* was billed as containing six acts, which according to the usual practice should have been clearly labeled in the intertitles. But no such title cards appear in the restored version, which may suggest that the version of the film represented in the Dutch print did not preserve the original six-act structure. The 1920 version was 2,238 meters long and the January 1921 version 2,525 meters.⁷⁶ However, the length of the restored version is only 1,598 meters.⁷⁷ In their very technical article about the restoration performed in Bologna, Italy, Nicola Mazzanti and Luigi Pintarelli write that they “discover[ed] a film with exceptional photographic and chromatic qualities, ‘buried’ under a severely decayed copy.” The nitrate substrate was seriously damaged and the restorers had to repair all the sprocket holes “frame by frame, meter by meter,” and polish the substrate to eliminate scratches. The colors “had suffered the most, having largely lost their original characteristics.” The restorers worked to restore “the splendor and photographic quality that the film must have originally had,” using a technique developed by Noël Desmet.⁷⁸ Mazzanti and Pintarelli do not explicitly mention excluding any footage in the Dutch print from the restored version. However, it is not unlikely that significant sections of film had been cut from the print at one time or another, given the relatively short length of the restored version.

Viewers today cannot know exactly what has been cut. However, Lang made at least one effort to enliven the narrative with a striking visual. According to Margot Meyer, who visited the set of *Harakiri* during production, the original footage included a scene in which the daimyo

asked a servant to unroll a Japanese scroll painting before O-Take-San. The scroll painting depicts, as on a movie screen, a battle being fought by samurai warriors. Lang used special effects to create an action scene that brings a painting to life.

In order to dispel his daughter's fear that the father would soon fall from grace with the Mikado, the daimyo asks a servant to reveal a precious kakemono (hanging scroll), an erstwhile present from the emperor, which depicts the heroic battles his ancestors fought. The scroll slowly glides down. In front of the girl's amazed eyes a picture unfolds, and at first sight one hardly knows: Is this real or painted? A vignette from an ancient battle in Japan and the warriors are dressed in marvelous bizarre outfits. It is painted – I see clearly Japanese kanji characters on the side. Then – “Camera!” It is *not* a painting. The battle rages. But no – the Japanese writing is still there. How do Japanese letters appear on a moving image? I forget them due to the impression that this rare battle turmoil makes on me. Now the cavalry charges toward the horses that are strangely bridled. One doesn't know where to look first. – The servant obediently rolls up the painting. What a pity!

[Lang calls out:] “Faßbender, let's take a photo of that!” Faßbender nods in a thoughtful way, always composed. So, to the battlefield! The turmoil of battle is quickly restored....⁷⁹

Unfortunately this spectacular scene is missing from the restored version of the film, and one is left to wonder what other scenes were cut or lost from the original. Meyer's report suggests that Lang's *Harakiri* was a richer film than the available version. Compared to *The Spiders*, however,

which Lang had just finished making, *Harakiri*'s sedate plot gave him little to work with: The battle scene offers a glimpse of the kind of Japonisme Lang would have projected throughout the film if he had scripted as well as directed it.

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⁴ *Der Kinematograph* (Düsseldorf), vol. 12, no. 595, May 29, 1918; *Lichtbild-Bühne*, vol. 11, no. 23, June 8, 1918, 34; *Erste Internationale Film-Zeitung* (Berlin), vol. 12, no. 33, August 17, 1918, 24; see Brill, “Harakiri.”

⁵ *Lichtbild-Bühne* (Berlin), vol. 11, no. 25, June 22, 1918, 64; see Brill, “Harakiri.”

⁶ Giacomo Puccini, *Madam Butterfly: A Japanese Tragedy*, Italian libretto by L. Illica and G. Giacosa, English version by R.H. Elkin (New York: G. Ricordi, 1904/05), http://opera.stanford.edu/Puccini/Butterfly/atto2.2_a.html.

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¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 49.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 27.

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²¹ Sturm, *Die Circe*, 51.

²² Brill, “Harakiri.”

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Lotte Eisner, *Fritz Lang* (1976; repr., New York: Da Capo, 1986), 25.

²⁵ Margot Meyer, “Japan in Stellingen,” *Film-Kurier*, no. 94, September 24, 1919, 1–2.

²⁶ Peters, “Harakiri.”

²⁷ Enno Kaufhold, ed., *Berliner Interieurs 1910–1930: Photographien von Waldemar Titzenthaler* (Berlin: Nicolai, 1999), 22–23, 98–103, Tafeln 59–64; Rolf Aurich, Wolfgang Jacobsen, and Cornelius Schnauber, eds., *Fritz Lang: His Life and Work: Photographs and Documents*, in collaboration with Nicole Brunnhuber and Gabriele Jatho (Berlin: Jovis, 2001), 65–68.

²⁸ Paul M. Jensen, *The Cinema of Fritz Lang* (New York: A.S. Barnes, 1969), 10.

²⁹ Patrick McGilligan cites Lang’s claims that “my wanderings took me over half the world, to North Africa, Turkey, Asia Minor, and even as far as Bali,” but in light of accounts given by Lang’s close friends, he believes that Lang exaggerated the extent of his travels. See McGilligan, *Fritz Lang*, 29.

³⁰ Aurich, *Fritz Lang*, 7.

³¹ McGilligan, *Fritz Lang*, 29.

³² Eisner, *Fritz Lang*, 17–23.

³³ Fumio Kabubayashi, “An Historical Study of Harakiri,” *Australian Journal of Politics & History* 39, no. 2 (1993): 217–25.

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³⁵ Algernon Bertram Freeman-Mitford Redesdale, *Tales of Old Japan* (London: Macmillan, 1919); Arnoldus Montanus, *Denckwürdige Gesandtschafften der Ost-Indischen Gesellschaft in den Vereinigten Niederländern an unterschiedliche Keyser von Japan ...* [Memorable embassies of the East India Company of the United Netherlands to various emperors of Japan] (Amsterdam, 1669), <http://www.mdz-nbn-resolving.de/urn/resolver.pl?urn=urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb11055598-5>; Montanus, *Gedenkwaerdige Gesantschappen der Oost-Indische Maatschappy in 't Vereenigde Nederland, aan de Kaisaren van Japan* [Memorable embassies of the East India Company of the United Netherlands to the emperors of Japan] (Amsterdam, 1669).

³⁶ Doris G. Barga, *Suicidal Honor: General Nogi and the Writings of Mori Ōgai and Natsume Sōseki* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2006), 1–2.

³⁷ *Der Film*, no. 51, December 21, 1919.

³⁸ ---s., “Harakiri,” in “Filmschau,” *Vossische Zeitung*, December 21, 1919; Pierre Loti, *Madame Chrysanthème* (London: Routledge, 1887).

³⁹ Christian Reed, *The Chrysanthème Papers: The Pink Notebook of Madame Chrysanthème and Other Documents of French Japonisme* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2010), 22.

⁴⁰ John Long, *Madame Butterfly* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 32–33.

⁴¹ David Belasco, *Madame Butterfly: A Tragedy of Japan* (New York: Little, Brown, 1928), 13, 32, available online at

http://www.columbia.edu/itc/music/NYCO/butterfly/images/belasco_sm.pdf.

⁴² Puccini, *Madam Butterfly: A Japanese Tragedy*,

http://opera.stanford.edu/Puccini/Butterfly/atto2.2_a.html.

⁴³ P., “Harakiri: Pressevorstellung im Mamorhaus,” *Der Film* (Berlin), vol. 4, no 51, December 21, 1919, 39–40; see Brill, “Harakiri.”

⁴⁴ Before the film was restored and made available, scholars who wrote on *Harakiri* assumed that the father committed suicide because his daughter had brought dishonor upon the family.

Frederick W. Ott wrote in his synopsis of *Harakiri*: “When [Olaf] deserts his young bride, the father of O Take san, believing that his daughter has brought dishonor to the family, commits hara-kiri. Afterward, O Take San, grieved by all that has transpired, follows her father in suicide.” Frederick W. Ott, *The Films of Fritz Lang* (Secaucus, NJ: Citadel, 1979), 75. E. Ann Kaplan made the same assumption: “Unable to live with the dishonour brought on his family, O-

Take-San’s father commits hara-kiri, and this is soon followed by his daughter’s suicide.” Kaplan, *Fritz Lang*, 26.

⁴⁵ Daisuke Miyao, “The Hand of Buddha: Madame Butterfly and the Yellow Peril in Fritz Lang’s *Harakiri* (1919),” *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, vol. 33, no. 8 (2016): 707–21, here 708.

⁴⁶ McGilligan, *Fritz Lang*, 60.

⁴⁷ “Three Wise Monkeys of Nippon,” Cardcow, <https://www.cardcow.com/236735/three-wise-monkeys-nippon-animals/>; “Mizaru, Kikazaru & Iwazaru (See No Evil, Hear No Evil, Speak No Evil), c. 1910,” Old Tokyo, <http://www.oldtokyo.com/mizaru-kikizaru-iwazaru-c-1910/>.

⁴⁸ Mark L. Blum, “Collective Suicide at the Funeral of Jitsunyo: Mimesis or Solidarity?,” in *Death and the Afterlife in Japanese Buddhism*, ed. Jacqueline I. Stone and Mariko Namba Walter (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2008), 137–74, here 164.

⁴⁹ Heinrich Dumoulin, “Buddhism and Nineteenth-Century German Philosophy,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 42, no. 3 (1981): 457–70; Martin Baumann, “Culture Contact and Valuation: Early German Buddhists and the Creation of a ‘Buddhism in Protestant Shape,’” *Numen* 44, no. 3 (1997): 270–95.

⁵⁰ Yamamoto Hirofumi, “The Edo Shogunate’s View of Christianity in the Seventeenth Century,” in *Christianity and Cultures: Japan and China in Comparison, 1543–1644*, ed. M. Antoni J. Üçerler, 255–268 (Rome: Institutum historicum Societatis Iesu, 2009); “A History Timeline of Our Church,” Catholic Kawaramachi Church, <http://catholickawaramachi.kyoto/en/06.shtml>. Timon Screech has written on the role the English language played in bringing about a definitive change in shogunal attitudes toward the Jesuit missions from 1613 to 1616. See Timon Screech, “The English and the Control of Christianity in the Early Edo Period,” *Japan Review* 24 (2012): 3–40.

⁵¹ Iikura Akira, “The ‘Yellow Peril’ and Its Influence on Japanese–German Relations,” in *Japanese–German Relations, 1895–1945: War, Diplomacy and Public Opinion*, ed. Christian W. Spang and Rolf-Harald Wippich (London: Routledge, 2006), 80–97; Rolf-Harald Wippich,

“Japan-Enthusiasm in Wilhelmine Germany: The Case of the Sino-Japanese War, 1894–5,” in *Japanese-German Relations, 1895–1945*, ed. Spang and Wippich, 61–79.

⁵² Akira, “Yellow Peril,” 83.

⁵³ Ibid.; Heinz Gollwitzer, *Die gelbe Gefahr: Geschichte eines Schlagworts. Studien zum imperialistischen Denken* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962): 206–13.

⁵⁴ Akira, “Yellow Peril,” 88.

⁵⁵ Takenaka Toru, “The Myth of ‘Familiar Germany’: German-Japanese Relationships in the Meiji Period Reexamined,” in *Transnational Encounters between Germany and Japan: Perceptions of Partnership in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, ed. Joanne Miyang Cho, Lee Roberts, and Christian W. Spang, 19–34 (New York: Palgrave, 2016), 21; Akira, “Yellow Peril,” 81.

⁵⁶ Domingos de Mascarenhas, “Beyond Orientalism: The International Rise of Japan and the Revisions to *Madama Butterfly*,” in *Art and Ideology in European Opera*, ed. Rachel Cowgill, David Cooper, and Clive Brown (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2010), 281–302, here 285, 302.

⁵⁷ Brill, “Harakiri.”

⁵⁸ “Retrospektive Fritz Lang” Info-Papier, Filmmuseum Berlin – Deutsche Kinemathek, Berlinale 2001; Brill, “Harakiri.”

⁵⁹ Miyao, “The Hand of Buddha,” 707.

⁶⁰ Catrien Ross, *Japanese Ghost Stories: Spirits, Hauntings and Paranormal Phenomena* (Tokyo: Tuttle Publishing, 1996), 152–56; Thersa Matsuura, “Episode 42: Story Time – Yotsuya

Kaidan (The Ghost of Oiwa),” *Uncanny Japan*, <https://www.uncannyjapan.com/episode-42-story-time-yotsuya-kaidan-the-ghost-of-oiwa/>.

⁶¹ “Harakiri,” IMDB, https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0010208/mediaindex?ref =tt_pv_mi_sm.

⁶² Sturm, *Die Circe*, 49.

⁶³ Fgd. [Karl Figdor], “Harakiri. Die Geschichte einer Japanerin,” *Erste Internationale Film-Zeitung*, no. 50, December 20, 1919; F. v. B., “Harakiri,” *Lichtbild-Bühne*, no. 52, December 27, 1919.

⁶⁴ Cited from Aurich, *Fritz Lang*, 55–56; see also Ott, *The Films of Fritz Lang*, 75.

⁶⁵ F. v. B., “Harakiri.”

⁶⁶ ---s., “Harakiri.”

⁶⁷ *Berliner Börsen-Zeitung*, December 21, 1919, quoted from Ott, *The Films of Fritz Lang*, 75.

⁶⁸ Frieda Grafe, “Einen Berliner Bären für Madame Butterfly: Zu zwei verloren geglaubten Filmen von Fritz Lang,” *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (Munich), August 27, 1987.

⁶⁹ Cited in Aurich, *Fritz Lang*, 56.

⁷⁰ *Film-Kurier*, December 7, 1920, 3.

⁷¹ Sierek, *Der lange Arm der Ufa*, 43.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 540–41.

⁷³ Tobias Nagl, “6 March 1920: Chinese Students Raise Charges of Racism against *Die Herrin der Welt*,” in *A New History of German Cinema*, ed. Jennifer M. Kapczynski and Michael D. Richardson (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2012), 73–79.

⁷⁴ Töteberg, *Filmstadt Hamburg*, 15.

⁷⁵ Noel Murray, “Fritz Lang: The Early Works / Die Nibelungen,” *AV Club*, November 21, 2012, <https://film.avclub.com/fritz-lang-the-early-works-die-nibelungen-1798175049>.

⁷⁶ It is to be noted that the 1921 version was longer than the one in 1920. A “final” cut may have been shortened for initial release and the full version released later.

⁷⁷ Brill, “Harakiri”; Kaplan, *Fritz Lang*, 26–27; Ott, *The Films of Fritz Lang*, 74.

⁷⁸ Nicola Mazzanti and Luigi Pintarelli, “La trama della Setta, Il restauro di ‘Harakiri,’” *Cinegrafie*, no. 7 (1994): 22–26.

⁷⁹ Margot Meyer, “Harakiri,” *Film-Kurier*, no. 97, September 27, 1919, 2.