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ENGL 272 - 01  
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Outline: The Aftermath of World War II for the Losing Side

1. Introduction
  - a. Background
    - i. In the wake of World War II, one side celebrated the end of an era of conflict, while the other side was left in destruction, regardless of each individual's connection to the conflict.
    - ii. The aftermath of the war had a profound impact on the countries that lost, leading to widespread chaos and decimation.
  - b. Film's Connection
    - i. Lars Von Trier's "Europa" follows Leopold as he strives to make a difference as an American in post-war Germany. He finds himself lost in a nation struggling to rebuild, entangled with various individuals who use him for the betterment of their agendas.
    - ii. Isao Takahata's "Grave of the Fireflies" explores the direct impact of World War II on Japanese civilians and communities, focusing on two siblings as their known world gets turned upside-down. The film showcases the struggles of children and families caught in the crossfire of nations, highlighting how the war's effects crush one's opportunity and shatter the routine of everyday life.
  - c. Thesis Statement
    - i. **Despite their different cultural contexts and cinematic techniques**, both "Europa" and "Grave of the Fireflies" **depict broken communities** after World War II, arriving at a **similar conclusion** about the war's devastation and long-lasting negative effects on society.
2. Lars Von Trier's "Europa"
  - a. Overview
    - i. Lars Von Trier's "Europa" is a story about an American man with an idealistic perspective on his purpose on this new journey to Germany. He soon learns the harsh realities of post-war Germany, where he finds himself involved in deceit, manipulation, and moral ambiguity.
  - b. Key Scenes Analysis
    - i. Scene 1: Leopold's beginning journey by train
      1. From the start, we see this country in a bad spot, with Leopold finding the community ravished with the lower class ravished with poverty and the upper class vying for power in this place that will be newly shaped.
    - ii. Scene 2: Hartmann Villa Scene
      1. These scenes taking place in the Hartmann showcase these people's willingness to backstab and manipulate to no extent. Rather than growing as a community, the power-hungry work to take hold of the direction before they lose grip.
  - c. Themes and Techniques
    - i. Monochromatic Noir Aesthetic
      1. Evokes the atmosphere of a post-war Europe, depicting a sense of dislocation and despair.
      2. The sharp contrast of light and shadow heightens tension and uncertainty.
    - ii. Exploration of character interactions as a reflection of societal breakdown.
      1. Leopold and Katharina
        - a. **Their relationship serves as an example of power, manipulation, and moral compromise, highlighting the desperation and power** sweeping through the landscape in this post-war environment.

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### 3. Isao Takahata's "Grave of the Fireflies"

#### a. Overview

i. Isao Takahata's "Grave of the Fireflies" follows siblings Seita and Setsuko as their innocence and sense of security are ripped away from them by the war and they fight to survive in a place where a helping hand does not seem to exist.

#### b. Analysis of Key Scenes

##### i. Scene 1: The firebombing of Kobe

1. Analysis of animation techniques in illustrating the immediate destruction.
2. Serves as a catalyst for all of the upcoming challenges our protagonists
3. Showcases the normality of these events in this period

##### ii. Scene 2: Seita and Setsuko's struggle for survival

1. Seita and Setsuko's struggle gets much harder and much worse through the runtime
2. Being left alone to themselves, there is not much Seita can do to prevent the malnourishment Setsuko faces.
3. Seita spends all of his time working to save his sister but is unable to because of the societal landscape he finds themselves in.

#### c. Themes and Techniques

i. This film utilizes a realistic animation style in everyday moments to contrast the tragic nature of their situation.

##### ii. Themes of loss and innocence

### 4. Comparing the Films

#### a. Differences in Technique

##### i. Visual Style

1. "Europa's" gloomy, monochromatic visuals
2. "Grave of the Fireflies" detailed, colorful animation

##### ii. Narrative Approach

1. "Europa" fragmented, disorienting narrative
2. "Grave of the Fireflies" straightforward, emotionally driven narrative

#### b. Similarities in Themes

##### i. Destruction:

1. Both films emphasize the physical and emotional devastation left by the war.

##### ii. Broken Communities:

1. Both films showcase the breakdown of social structures and communities in their unique way.
2. No help from "neighbors" as most people have nothing themselves.

##### iii. Similar Intentions

1. Von Trier and Takahata use their unique techniques to reach similar conclusions about how the war created broken communities, struck with hunger, loss, and the dissolution of social structure for much of the country.

### 5. Conclusion

a. "Europa" and "Grave of the Fireflies" converge on the theme of broken communities despite their different approaches and context of their post-World War II reconstruction era films.

b. Regardless of the nation, war devastates a country economically, socially, and psychologically, leaving behind hardships that will endure for generations

c. These films put into perspective the hard truths of what happened to the individuals and communities over whom we celebrated victory.