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Transcending the Victim's History: Takahata Isao's *Grave of the Fireflies*

Grave of the Fireflies (*Hotaru no Haka*), a film directed by Takahata Isao in 1988 and based on the Naoki Award-winning short story by Nosaka Akiyuki (published 1967), was paired as a double feature with Miyazaki Hayao film, *My Neighbor Totoro* (*Tonari no Totoro*).¹ These two films, however, could not be more dissimilar. Miyazaki's work is a gentle fantasy of childhood imagination in the pastoral setting of 1950s Japan, a time seemingly untouched by war. *Grave*, on the other hand, set in Kobe 1945, in the waning days of World War II, is a realistic drama, focusing on the suffering and eventual starvation deaths of fourteen-year-old Seita and his four-year-old sister, Setsuko. The film opens with Seita's sore-ridden, emaciated body falling over in a train station. His voice, emanating from a spirit bathed in red light, tells us that on September 21, 1945, he has died. A worker looking through Seita's belongings finds a beat-up tin can, which he throws into the bushes. Pieces of bone roll out which turn into Setsuko's spirit, likewise cast in red light. She sees her brother's body and rushes to go to him, but she is restrained and then joyfully reunited with his spirit. The film then retraces how the two of them reached their moments of death.

Grave unflinchingly examines how these children suffer. The tragedy of this realistic depiction is compounded by the fact it is partly autobiographical. The author, Nosaka Akiyuki, was separated from his family during a bombing raid and was the only caretaker of his sixteen-month-old stepsister, who eventually perished from malnutrition under his care. Critic Igarashi Yoshikuni argues that “writing for Nosaka was a form of exorcism” and that by killing off his proxy, Seita, he attempts to assuage his guilt over his sister’s death.² Likewise, Takahata Isao became drawn to this project not only for the critical acclaim of the original story (as well as by Miyazaki’s urging and assured financial backing) but because he, too, with one of his siblings was separated from his family for two days during a firebombing. He calls it “the worst experience of his life.”³

In addition to these autobiographical moments, with their painful examinations and unsuccessful exorcisms, is a biography of Japan’s recent past—a defining era for generations of Japanese who lived through the time of the war and for those born after. In looking contextually at *Grave*, the film raises questions about how Japanese should talk about their history—one full of terrible suffering and yet also one of atrocities enacted against other Asian countries in the name of nationalism. How can discussions about the past both acknowledge the great suffering as well as come to terms with Japan’s complicity in that suffering?

At first viewing, *Grave* is a terribly tragic film, which would lead one to label it simply as a historical document of suffering. Susan Napier states that, indeed, *Grave* is a “victim’s history.”⁴ Does the film present a picture of victimhood, playing off the viewer’s sentimental feelings toward the slow, starving death of an innocent girl, aestheticizing her suffering without addressing larger historical questions? Or is there something deeper at work in the film?

I argue that, while the film presents a realistic picture of suffering, it is also critical of a blind patriotism that masks selfish impulses during the war and, afterward, of Japan’s inability to confront this past. Seita, who is not only the author’s doppelganger of guilt, is also a figure who expresses selfishness masked by nationalistic fervor. When he, like others in the film, acts in the “name” of communal ideals, he is really performing for personal gain or pleasure. Throughout the film, Seita dreams of his father rescuing or revenging their wrongs (overtly, against Japan’s enemies who are bombing their town, and, tacitly, against the alienating Japanese society) and pays the ultimate price for this choice. His fantasy world of righteousness and revenge is a mirror to the society in which he lives; visually and textually, Takahata links

him to this national fantasy of war. Setsuko, on the other hand, is as much his victim as a victim of the war.

Is there a way out of Seita's self-delusion and Setsuko's suffering? Does the story, as critic Igarashi Yoshikuni suggests, "reject the time after the war," which leaves no place for the future to develop?⁵ I argue that the film attempts to provide an alternate, natu-

ral history in order to reconcile this ideological split. To bridge this gap, both Nosaka and Takahata use the images of the fireflies, which are beautifully animated and are one of the only events that signify joy in the film. However, they also gesture to the fires that burned Japan and for the lives lost in the war. For the audience, the image of the fireflies is likewise contradictory: at once transcendent, unfixed from time, and yet at the same time nostalgic for a past that never was—or perhaps nostalgic for a future that never came to be. Since Japan has rebuilt and, especially in the 1980s, has thrived economically, the film asks the viewer to remember this wartime history paradoxically through the act of viewing the natural.

The dominant thread in the film, however, is that of Setsuko's suffering; her innocent death looms over the narrative and makes it difficult to discern a message in the film, let alone a hopeful one. In this section, I will explore how Takahata and Nosaka heighten the pathos in the texts, which leads viewers to ask, "Why does she have to die in such a terrible way?"

What makes Setsuko's suffering so terrible is that her portrayal of a little girl rings true with her play. In an early scene, she is taking a bath with her brother, and when he creates an air bubble with the washcloth, he splashes it into her surprised, then delighted, face. In another scene, Seita asks Setsuko to close her eyes and open her mouth. He gives her a candy. She calls out "fruit drop" and dances merrily around, until, in her excitement, she almost swallows it.

In tandem with these scenes of delight, the viewers see her utter dependence on her brother. She has constant needs that she cannot fulfill herself. At one point, early in the film, she whines that she is tired and asks Seita to carry her. Then, when they move to the cave by the side of the pond, she often complains that she is hungry. In another scene, in the middle of the road, Setsuko throws a fit. To placate her, Seita searches for a fruit drop from the tin can but it appears to be empty. Setsuko begins to cry and is only mollified

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when Seita finds a few stuck to the bottom. Setsuko's scenes of delight and of need heighten the viewer's sorrow over her suffering.

Setsuko's age was carefully chosen to produce this effect. While Nosaka's stepsister who died during the war was only sixteen months old, he raises her age to four years old in the fictional version. At this age, she is old enough to communicate wants and needs in a more direct way than a younger child. Film critic Roger Ebert offers a compelling reason for why Setsuko's suffering elicits such empathy in the audience. On the special edition of *Grave of the Fireflies*, rereleased by Central Park Media with a variety of commentaries and interviews, Ebert argues that when we see images of Setsuko starving and finally dying, because she is animated, she becomes the *idea* of a child starving and not the child herself. Should we watch a young actress play this role, we would be distracted, argues Ebert, by watching this individual girl perform. He says that the animated Setsuko is a "purer statement" about the horror of war.⁶

WHILE WE MAY FOCUS ON SETSUKO'S GREAT SUFFERING THROUGHOUT THE FILM, WE ARE ALSO ASKED TO EXAMINE SEITA'S FAILURE TO PROTECT HER. HIS CHOICES REFLECT THE SOCIETY AT LARGE.

But there is a level of realism to her portrayal. Takahata eschewed older children to play the roles of the children. Instead, during voice casting he selected a four-year old girl to play the part of the four-year-old Setsuko.⁷ While this caused some challenges in animating the film—for instance, they had to record her voice first and then animate, as opposed to the other way around, which is common in Japanese

animation—by doing this, Takahata aims for a purer, more realistic image through the child's voice, yet still stylized by the animation.

At the end of the film, Setsuko's spirit seems comforted by her brother's spirit, but she is reunited with neither her mother nor her father, suggesting that she is eternally in her brother's care. Spirit Seita is now able to protect Setsuko, and it is a place where candy tins are always full. However, this is not a place of ease and respite—at least for him. Rather than rejoicing in their safe haven, his spirit restlessly runs after his living double, grieving over the choices he made while still alive.

At the beginning of the film, Seita's dying thought is "what day is it?" but his spirit knows, because he tells the viewer. The fact that he knows the date suggests that this is a day that he will not easily cast aside, ranking it even above more significant dates of the war, such as the atomic bombings at Nagasaki and Hiroshima and the Emperor's surrender. At the end of the film, Seita holds Setsuko's sleeping figure, his face stoically looking at the



FIGURE 1. The spirits of Seita and Setsuko from *Grave of the Fireflies* (*Hotaru no Haka*), a film directed by Takahata Isao in 1988.

audience. The film begins and ends with Seita's death and the circularity suggests that this is a cycle that he cannot escape, even in death (Figure 1).

While we may focus on Setsuko's great suffering throughout the film, we are also asked to examine Seita's failure to protect her. His choices reflect the society at large. There are numerous subtle reminders throughout the film of Japan's nationalistic fervor at this time. During the first harrowing bombing scene, as the children run to safety through fire, a lone figure in a uniform, silhouetted in front of the burning town and behind cowering survivors, waves a mop and calls out "Long Live the Emperor!" The gesture, in light of so much devastation seems brazen as well as pointless—especially since the mop is part of the equipment of the fire brigade, tasked with putting out the flames from the bombs. We know this because as Seita runs out with his sister, we see him pause to look, in a sequence of stills, at the untouched bucket, mop, and water supply as the buildings catch on fire. The fire brigade have failed in their job to help the community, which makes this gesture of the lone figure, hoping for a miraculous resolution even as he fails at a practical solution, all the more hopeless.

However, Seita wears this same uniform of the fire brigade, and he is linked to the failure of this group. His pause is not only to implicate the others who have failed, but also his choice to spirit his sister out of the town without

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doing his duty, thus emphasizing that, like many, he has chosen personal preservation over the community. He wears this uniform throughout the film, and we see it literally decay off his body, only to be replaced perfectly when he is a spirit (as if he cannot rid himself of these responsibilities). Brian McVeigh, in his study of Japanese school

uniforms, states: “History was often invoked to account for why Japanese wore uniforms: ‘the uniform system’ (*seifuku seido*) we see today is connected to the wartime period. A sense of comradeship (*nakama ishiki*) and group consciousness (*minzoku ishiki*)” says one student.⁸ The uniform in Japanese society, so often seen today in the sailor and military suits of schoolchildren, is a marker of group identity and solidarity. However, it is also a coded gesture in order to force these individual members to comply with that group’s standards. The uniforms evoke the Japanese word, *seken*, or a “normalizing gaze.”⁹ McVeigh writes, “in order to ensure that everyone properly presents his or her part, the *seken*, a generalized audience, or, perhaps more ominously, a sort of omnipresent social spook, keeps an eye on everybody. Literally, the word means ‘in the world,’ but may be translated as public, the world, community, people, or society.”¹⁰ Uniforms represent the specified role of each individual, made visible to the Foucauldian panopticon. In Seita’s case, as the normalizing gaze is also his spirit’s gaze, his social role is as member of the fire brigade—a function we never see him fulfill. As *Grave* was marketed as an educational experience for Japanese schoolchildren, who likewise would be wearing school “military” uniforms, the message would be unmistakable. They are asked to see themselves in Seita.

Takahata explores these militaristic roots of the school uniform because Seita’s appearance also links him to images of his father, whom we always see pictured wearing the uniform of a navy officer. When he imagines his father rescuing them, Seita decides to take on the role of rescuer of his sister. Despite the death and destruction around him, he is comforted by his unswerving belief that the war will be won and that his father will return to save them. After the bombing that destroys their house, Setsuko asks what they will do. Seita says, “Dad will make them pay.”

Later, in the beautiful scene in the cave where he and Setsuko capture fireflies to light up the dark night, he refigures the glowing lights into images of battleships and cityscapes, recalling the naval review that he once witnessed. He tells Setsuko that she never saw this scene but he remembers

it vividly. The viewer sees Seita's father again, saluting. In Seita's memory, fireworks shoot into the air, and then he sings about protecting the homeland, a song he most likely heard at that time. He shoots at imaginary enemy planes, as if he could be the soldier like his father who will protect his family and his nation. Ironically, Seita transforms the lovely image of the fireflies in the cave into propaganda. Fed by the ideologies that surround him—the grand spectacle of military might as well as a personal connection to them by his father, whom he emulates and admires—Seita's understanding of the war is not that deep. On some level, however, he is not certain what will happen in the future, even as the song promises victory. His face falls, and he says, "I wonder what dad is doing now?" In many ways, he is still a boy, feeling out a path to find his own way of being that hero.

That Japan will lose is made clear when, the next morning, Setsuko digs a grave for the fireflies that have died during the night. At this point, she says that mother must have such a grave too, revealing that she is aware that her mother has died. This grave of the fireflies is not only for her mother, and eventually for the children, but also signifies the destruction of the battle-ships that Seita had imagined the previous night.

Even as uniformed individuals represent the hopes of Japan at this time, we see other voices in the film using nationalism to mask resentment for personal sacrifice. As the aunt praises those who work for the good of the country, she singles Seita and his sister out for the special treatment they receive: "lucky your father is in the navy, he gets a truck and help to move their things." Again, when she admires the pickled plums he brings with them: She comments "soldiers get the best stuff." Upon their arrival, she tells Seita to write to his father, not only with news of his mother's death but also, it seems, to ask for more assistance for them and, by extension, her family.

In her quest for survival, the aunt demands further sacrifices from the children. She pulls out a box of their mother's kimonos and tells Seita that since his mother doesn't need them anymore, he should trade them for rice. Seita then remembers his mother's "uniform"—her kimonos that she wore on special occasions. Brian McVeigh writes: kimonos "tightly link Japanese femininity with national identity."¹¹ They are worn on important events (weddings, funerals, other festivals).¹² To sacrifice them is to let go of an identity connected to a happy past. Those sacrifices are made in the name of survival for the children but also for the survival of the nation, because, as the aunt tells Seita, "you can't be a soldier if you don't grow up strong," using the language of nationalism to cover her selfishness. Setsuko, who they did not realize was awake, however, tries to stop her from taking the kimonos. She



FIGURE 2. A family portrait in *Grave of the Fireflies*.

begins to cry loudly. The ghost Seita holds his ears, trying to keep her cries from his consciousness and the painful memories of his mother. Cherry blossoms, a common image in Japanese literature and film, representing both beauty and its transitory nature, float down.

Seita then remembers the day they took a family portrait, with his mother in her kimono and his father in his uniform. Seita stands next to him in his school uniform, linking himself visually to his father, the person he wishes to become (Figure 2). The cherry blossoms transform into falling rice and the viewer is transported to the present. After he has sold the kimonos, Seita is thrilled by the bounty. The aunt makes rice balls for her boarder and her daughter. Seita says to Setsuko that they will have rice balls for lunch, but the aunt says they will not because food is for those who work for their nation. She tells him, "Seita, you're old enough to know everybody has to cooperate." Even though the sacrifice of his mother, both by her physical death and the symbolic one through her kimonos, brings food, Setsuko's instinctual objections to the loss of her mother and the fleeting happiness that the rice brings, shows that the gesture is as insubstantial as the cherry blossoms. Seita, in reaction to his aunt's harsh statements, becomes increasingly unwilling to make these sacrifices for such little gain. The children will move out of the house and into the cave soon after.

Seita is on the cusp of adulthood, able to make decisions on his own,

and is probing the boundaries of his own identity as a man and as a protector. When we look at the pair in this light, in the scenes where the aunt insults his ability to contribute to the war effort as a “soldier” (therefore, a man), his ego is wounded. He takes Setsuko away so he can protect her in the manner of his own choosing, without anyone’s critique. By caring for her, he will show that he is a “man.”

Nosaka Akiyuki states that when the children move into the fantasy world of the cave, “For Seita, it’s like he can try to build a heaven for just the two of them . . . After all, it’s a double-suicide story.” Here, Nosaka refers to the plays of Monzaemon Chikamatsu (1653–1725), who composed more than a dozen highly successful plays on the theme of *shinjūmono* (love-suicide).¹³ In the typical plot, reminiscent of Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*, the male figure falls in love with a woman of a different social class. They run away together, refusing their prescribed social roles; their only solution is to die in a mutual pact.¹⁴

Although it may be difficult to see erotic overtones between the brother and his much younger sister, we can see some elements of similarity between the film and the plays. The first is the rejection of society; in moving them to the cave and away from the social network of food and services, Seita tries to replicate a “world” for just the two of them. They play house by the pond and take on socially proscribed roles that mirror the outside world. Nosaka states that Setsuko “assumes the role of his mother at times.”¹⁵ Setsuko, in her eagerness to model her play on her mother, is happy to “play house” with him, in order to complete his fantasy of maturity and control. Even in the aunt’s house, after they decide to cook and eat their meals separately from the rest of the family as a protest to their “second-class” treatment, Setsuko scolds Seita for lying back after the meal, an example of bad manners. He responds that they do not need to follow social conventions anymore. At the cave, they play house; Setsuko sets the table as Seita cooks the rice. Even in the moments before her death, she still “plays” at homemaking by offering her brother a “rice ball” she has made from mud (Figure 3).

It is rather easy to see the aunt and other members of society as antagonists to these children. However, Takahata complicates this simplistic vision. Throughout the film, people’s casual reactions, even indifference, to the devastation of the war reminds us that Seita and Setsuko’s story is only one of

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FIGURE 3. Setsuko's dying act of offering a rice ball to Seita in *Grave of the Fireflies*.

many tragedies. The viewer sees subtle, but horrifying, pictures of the extent of the bombings' devastation that affected other people. Early in the film, as Seita and Setsuko walk through the wreckage, trying to get back to their mother, they see other survivors walking as well. They also see many burned bodies lying in the street and hear a woman crying out for her mother. One person comments in an almost casual way: "It's not like I'm the only who lost his house. We are all in the same boat." These words reflect a level of resignation to the horrors of war.

The danger of this resignation, however, is that it leads to a desire to "return to normal" and put the past behind, even if it means to forget the suffering. In the moment of Seita's death in the very first scene of the film, Seita is only one among a group of dying children. Some unseen people, walking through the station, comment how shameful it will be to have these figures around when the Americans come. Seita's body has become trash that someone has carelessly left behind. That this person becomes ashamed that the enemy will see this reflects a need to cast off the history of the war and return to "normal," a state of being, the film suggests, that will be impossible for the nation to experience, seeing as they are haunted by both Seita and Setsuko's spirits. The many dying and the dead bodies have numbed human compassion. Another boy has died at the same time as Seita; a worker pokes the body and says "another one."

This desire for survival and lack of compassion transform nationalism into weary resignation. Near the end of the film, when Seita stands in line at the bank, finally withdrawing his mother's money that he had been saving, he hears people talking about the looming typhoon, and they note ironically that they get the "divine wind" after the surrender. The shallow nationalism shown throughout the film is now exposed as the joke that it is. Now that the fighting is over, the people have resigned themselves to the reality of defeat. Seita, still living in this fantasy world, realizes that all his hopes were pinned on rescue by his father; his hope, with the death of his father, is destroyed. The fact that he was not aware of the Japanese surrender makes it clear that he has completely removed himself from society. Shortly after, Setsuko dies at the cave.

Seita, who has lost the one person who he has tried to save throughout the war, has nothing with which to build a future. When he prepares for Setsuko for cremation, he sees nicely dressed people return to their homes and hears a phonograph play "there's no place like home," a heartbreaking song that has no meaning. For others, however, homes can be rebuilt. Seita's presence on the fringes of these homecomings destabilizes the idea that life can return to "normal" even for those who may, on the surface, be less touched by the war.

The final image the viewer sees of Setsuko is not her death but a montage of Seita's vibrant memories of her play. These brief moments flicker like a firefly, causing joy at their illumination but also pain at their loss. At first, the viewer sees shots of the empty cave, discarded items, and bugs crawling on the watermelon. Then, a child's voice cries. We see Setsuko dance after butterflies then disappear. We see her on the swing, fall, and then disappear. We see her cleaning up the house with her doll on her back, like a mother doing housework with her baby. Now, she's fanning the stove, watching a butterfly go by and chasing it. Now, she has the umbrella, mud *odango* (little dumplings), and runs with a sheet flying out behind her; the image mirrored in the water of the pond (Figure 4). This montage is a farewell to her life and captures more fully not only what Seita remembers but also her childhood games and her joyful spirit. Takahata states that the image of the firefly also represents the "shortness of life—fireflies die in one day or so, and that links to the children."¹⁶

Since Japan has rebuilt and prospered after World War II, there are few direct daily reminders of the pain caused by the war. By using a natural image that many people in Japan could experience, Takahata and Nosaka use the image of the fireflies as a persistent natural reminder of this history in all its facets. The fireflies are a multivalent symbol, signifying the children's deaths and their spirits; the fires that burned the towns; Japanese soldiers and the



FIGURE 4. From Seita's memories of Setsuko after she has died: Setsuko runs back and forth in front of their cave with a sheet billowing out behind her. The image is mirrored in the water.

machinery of war; and the hopeful regeneration of life through nature—something pure and untouched by grief and war.

This natural history is also a nostalgic history, one that touches on happy memories of childhood (ironically portrayed in a film where childhood memories are not happy). Okpyo Moon, in her essay “Marketing Nature in Rural Japan,” states that in the 1920s and 1930s, “fireflies were caught in abundance and it is said that hundreds were caught per person each night.” However, their populations began to decline, and it was not until the 1960s and 1970s that people sought to recapture this “pure” past through “*hotaru* revival movements.” Moon states “there are now eighty-five ‘firefly villages’ (*hotaru no sato*) or ‘firefly towns’ (*hotaru no machi*) in Japan, registered at the Ministry of the Environment under the programme of ‘The living creature of our hometown’ (*Furusato no ikimono*).”¹⁷

Though threatened by encroaching urbanization and pollution (although that has been disputed), the firefly, on one level, represents an alternative history that transcends the suffering of the war. They are regenerative and linger, if not in reality, then in memory. While fireflies were thought to be lost out of environmental mismanagement, which is not the theme of the film, the overlapping sense of loss in the film is manifested by the sense that “we have lost something within ourselves” as a result of war. To visit the fireflies is

to reconnect with that which has been lost. It is a potent symbol for present-day Japanese audiences, because they may not be of the generation who lived through and survived the war. This idea of purity is one where the war never took place—no suffering and no nationalism. The marketing of rural spaces in Japan (as also seen in Takahata's film, *Omohide Poroporo* [1991]) becomes a place of remembrance of a cleaner, simpler past for these communities (but also, as Moon notes, a profitable, economic one). Takahata's film, coming as it did in the 1980s, while such festivals and towns prospered (even today, people attend firefly festivals in June and July throughout Japan) heightens the sense of loss in the film.

Ultimately, however, the fireflies upon which the film seems to pin all its hopes, is a not a simplistic answer. Fireflies are a constructed, artificial sign within present Japanese society of a compartmentalized purity—a perception of a time that can only be visited, not lived in, revealing the gap between pre- and postwar history. Their flickering essence in the flashing of their lights, as in the lives of these two children, suggests something that is paradoxically eternally transitory (like the two spirits living perpetually in the red-washed world).

Takahata and Nosaka further complicate the symbol. Visually and textually, fireflies are connected to something deadly beautiful (such as the firebombs and the planes that drop them from the sky). In one instance in the story, Setsuko says the kamikaze plane she sees looks like a firefly—an appropriate metaphor, although she does not know it, because of the swiftness at which this plane will destroy itself. Streaks of fire that rain down onto the towns are brief and bright like the fireflies, but horribly destructive. Further, Takahata does not use the normal *kanji* for “firefly” in the title and instead uses the character “fire,”¹⁸ one that would clearly resonate with destruction, such as the widespread burning of the wooden houses in Kobe and other places in Japan. Critic Dennis Fukushima notes that Takahata's alteration to the title is “an appropriate image considering the parallels drawn in the film between fireflies, the M-69 incendiary bombs, the B-29 bomber planes, naval vessels, city lights, and human spirits, as well as eyewitness accounts of the bombings.”¹⁹ To draw parallels between both devastation and beauty is unsettling. Although what replaces historical text in the film is a nostalgic and transcendent fantasy of nature, Takahata destabilizes this “easy answer.”

The power of the film is that the image of the fireflies attempts to transcend the suffering at the same time Takahata and Nosaka question the attempted transcendence. Their texts are about pain and suffering, but they are also critical of a nationalistic past. Japanese schoolchildren are asked to identify with

both figures at the same time—not only to grieve over Setsuko’s terrible death but also to connect with Seita whose poor choices led them down this path. But neither can we despise him; the film asks us to be critical of his refusal to be a part of this society at the same time we are asked to critique this society’s patriotism and its attempt to revert to normal (i.e., life before the war). Society, Takahata argues, cannot return to a “normal” that never was, haunted as it is by the twin figures of suffering and of blind nationalism.

Notes

1. *Hotaru no Haka*, dir. Takahata Isao (1988); translated as *Grave of the Fireflies*, subtitled DVD (Central Park Media, 2002). *Tonari no Totoro*, dir. Miyazaki Hayao (1988); translated as *My Neighbor Totoro*, subtitled DVD (Walt Disney Home Entertainment, 2006). Nosaka Akiyuki, “A Grave of Fireflies,” translated by James R. Abrams, *Japan Quarterly* 25, no. 4 (1978): 445–63.
2. Igarashi Yoshikuni, *Bodies of Memory: Narratives of War in Postwar Japanese Culture, 1945–1970* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000), 179.
3. Takahata Isao, “Isao Takahata on *Grave of the Fireflies*,” subtitled DVD commentary for *Grave of the Fireflies* (Central Park Media, 2002).
4. Susan Napier, *Anime: From “Akira” to “Princess Mononoke”* (New York: Palgrave, 2000), 165.
5. Igarashi, *Bodies of Memory*, 176.
6. Roger Ebert, “On *Grave of the Fireflies*,” DVD commentary, *Grave of the Fireflies* (Central Park Media, 2002).
7. Takahata, “Isao Takahata on *Grave of the Fireflies*.”
8. Brian McVeigh, *Wearing Ideology* (New York: Oxford, 2000), 86–87.
9. *Ibid.*, 20.
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Ibid.*, 105.
12. *Ibid.*, 106.
13. “Interview with Nosaka Akiyuki and Isao Takahata” *Animage*, June 1987; translated in *Animerica Anime & Manga Monthly* 2, no. 11 (1995).
14. The central conflict in these plays is that of “*ninjo* (‘passion’) conflicted with complex *giri* (‘duties’ or ‘obligations’) to family.” These plays were performed in *yoruui* “puppet” plays. “*Shinjū* Introduction,” <http://etext.virginia.edu/japanese/chikamatsu/shinju/kennelly-shinju.html> (accessed October 15, 2005).
15. “Interview with Nosaka Akiyuki.”
16. Takahata Isao, interviewed by Eija Niskanen, Japan, June 2005.
17. Okpyo Moon, “Marking Nature in Rural Japan,” in *Japanese Images of Nature*, ed. Pamela J. Asquith and Arne Kalland (Surrey, U.K.: Curzon Press, 1997), 224–25.
18. Takahata Isao interview, June 2005.
19. Dennis Fukushima, “The Lost Fireflies,” <http://www2.hawaii.edu/~dfukushi/Hotaru.html> (accessed July 30, 2005).