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Umi Matsuzaki's representation of war trauma: A semiotic approach to Studio Ghibli's *From Up on Poppy Hill*

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ABSTRACT

Japanese films that explore war trauma are relatively rare, and this research departs from that gap by analyzing Studio Ghibli's *From Up on Poppy Hill*. The film reflects the conscience of Japanese society by depicting the realities of post-war life in the 1960s. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, this study examines how the main character, Umi Matsuzaki, represents war trauma through eight selected scenes and how such trauma encodes myth. By applying Roland Barthes' semiotic theory, the findings reveal that Umi embodies symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), manifested primarily through avoidance and intrusion. Her trauma is deeply rooted in the loss of her father during the Korean War, which becomes a recurring source of psychological distress. Specific symptoms identified include her reluctance to speak about her father, involuntary memories embodied in his shadow, nostalgic recollections of raising signal flags as he once taught her, distressing dreams of meeting him, recurrent war imagery such as the explosion of his supply ship, and prolonged psychological suffering. These elements demonstrate that the myth of war trauma extends beyond collective national memory into intimate family experiences. Ultimately, the study highlights how *From Up on Poppy Hill* not only portrays post-war recovery but also reinforces the pervasive impact of unresolved war trauma in Japanese cultural narratives.

Keywords: *From Up on Poppy Hill*, semiotics, Studio Ghibli PTSD, war trauma

Introduction

Various genres of production and literary work (film, poetry, play-performance, short story, novel, series, and podcast) embody different complicated matters. Those productions and work do not merely embody aesthetic matters. In fact, they play a crucial role in shaping value, collecting memory, and forming identity. These matters are artistically articulated in them. They do tell, remind of, describe, narrate, and vividly portray psychological, social, political, and economic situations.

Film as a genre with massive production and wider scope also serves significant participation in society in relation to shaping value, collecting memory, and forming identity. Screen representations in film include survival, environment, movement, empowerment, trauma, and struggle. Various film companies produce their films to remind their audiences of struggles the characters undergo, such as Oliver Stone's series on Vietnam War. The use of film as a media

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production enables researchers and audiences to gain psychological evidence regarding impact of war and to develop the understanding (Hunt, 2010). Their productions reveal the characters' flashback, victimhood, binary-opposition, and memory. Film portrays the process and manner of how traumatized people deal with their traumatic experiences (Hunt, 2010).

In film industry, there are three big countries to mention worldwide, i.e. Japan, India and America. In India, big film industry called Hollywood has coloured cinematic experience of people around the globe. Meanwhile in Japan, Studio Ghibli as one of the most acclaimed film studios is home to highly crafted animated films. Studio Ghibli is a home where key figures in Japanese animation were born (Rendell & Denison, 2018). The films produced by this studio are widely studied for their representation of character's distinctive portrayal, nationalism, and artistic and cultural aspect as in *Pompoko* and *Kiki's Delivery Service* (Taskin & Inanc, 2023; Wedhowerti, 2024a; Wedhowerti, 2024b). Animated films are also challenging to study due to their association with a range of subaltern social groups (Denison, 2015). Besides, they are also examined for their historical and traditional aspects of Japanese culture.

Historical and traditional aspects of Japanese culture are truly embedded in the production. Levi states that animated films have special links to Japanese history (in Denison, 2015). Besides, Ue also observes that Studio Ghibli's films deal with time and memory where they both operate in rich and complex manner (2015). Studio Ghibli's films become a vehicle of engaging audience emotionally trying, yet they are trying to clearly cut the separation between children's film and adult's film (Ue, 2015). Apart from historical and cultural aspects and aesthetic point of view, animated films produced by Studio Ghibli also represent mid-war Japan and post-war Japan as in *Pompoko*, *Grave of the Fireflies*, and *Wind Rises* (Akimoto, 2014; Gibney, 2001; Penney, 2012; Racel, 2009; Wedhowerti, 2024a). This is psychologically understood that after the war, Japan has been developing cultural consciousness. All images of the traumatized are ingrained and rooted in this consciousness particularly in the film.

Japanese films on war trauma, however, are rarely addressed. This view is supported by Stahl stating that Japanese films are approached in terms of gender, history, style, postmodernity, tradition, and ideology, however, hardly have any researchers directed their analysis on war trauma (2018). Departing from this fact, then this study is devoted to analyzing Umi's war trauma in Studio Ghibli's *From Up on Poppy Hill* semiotically. Postwar Japanese films including *From Up on Poppy Hill* depicts an ideal case study to be further investigated for the occurrence of social, historical, political, and structural factors as well as their nature of being local (Coates, 2022).

Released in 2011, Studio Ghibli's *From Up on Poppy Hill* was based on *manga* series of the same title by Tetsurō Sayama and Chizuru Takahashi. Hayao Miyazaki and Keiko Niwa were the writers of the screenplay. This animated film continues the common nature of Studio Ghibli's production by depicting the life of a *shōjo*. Sixteen-year-old Umi Matsuzaki was just at her high school moment when she had to undergo the feeling of trauma, nostalgia, and undertone of sorrow caused by the demise of her father in the Korean War (Sulivan, 2013). Korean War itself took place in 1950-1953 (Dew, 2016). Taking the

set of the 1960s Yokohama after the war, the film centered on Umi's daily activity and experience. Her father had been on a supply ship when the ship sank after hitting a mine and was lost in Korean War. Nobody could find him.

The film gives the researcher a sense of academic calling in response to the traumatic Umi Matsuzaki in accordance with the need to examine post-war trauma of a character in Japanese animated film. Umi Matsuzaki as the main character in the film shows an empty gap in her life due to her loss of her father, generating psychological damage and fear of the future. In order to engage with the representation of Umi Matsuzaki in her after-war trauma, Semiotics gives its hand to portray her trauma and how it is represented in the film.

Semiotics deals with signs. There are semiotic theories proposed by different semioticians. This study, however, employs Barthesian semiotic model. Continuing and integrating Saussurean semiotic tradition, Barthes expands semiotic theory to apply for film analysis and becomes the first person stating the importance of film analysis through semiotic lens. His theory enables researchers to go deep into the messages the character delivers in film through verbal and non-verbal signs and different levels of signification. Barthesian semiotic model introduces levels of signification or levels of meaning ([Barthes, 1957](#)). According to Barthes, denotation or denotative meaning is the actual and direct meaning, meanwhile, connotation or connotative meaning is interaction of signs and culture (1957).

One of the most influential terms in media or film semiotics is Barthesian term of myth. Myth is a set of ideas widely accepted and understood by society when it is defined by its message or discourse. Therefore, there can be many myths created in a certain society. One example of Barthes' myth is concerning the campaign of red wine as being good, having fine substances, and referring to its production as involving French capitalism. To summarize, Figure 1 below describes levels of signification in Barthesian semiotics (in [Chandler, 2022](#)).

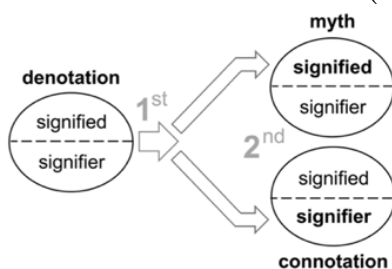


Fig. 1. Barthes levels of signification

Semiotics believes that film is a meaning-making convention with language as its primary means. In the sense of Film Semiotics where Barthes becomes its pioneer, language includes words, sounds, notes, gestures, clothes, and expressions. Then, language signifies (construct meaning then transmit it). Language in this case works at representational system where sound, word, and image represent notion, idea, or feeling ([Hall, 2013](#)).

In relation to the object of the study, the representation of Umi in *From Up on Poppy Hill* departs from fact that in the history of post-war, Japan and its people had been going through a process of renewal and moving forward to transformation. There was collective war trauma. Japan during the 1960s was

at a crossroad between the nation's traumatic war and metamorphosis into a big nation with huge advancements ([Balanzategui, 2018](#); [Sullivan, 2013](#)).

Victims of war, including soldiers and their family and children, are often neglected. Moreover, the discourse of war itself is consistently considered as something taboo to talk about, merely ignored, biased, eliminated, hidden, and concealed ([Stahl & William, 2010](#)). In fact, post-war situation is way more complex than disaster that it needs deeper concern ([Raeburn-Gibson, 2022](#)). In this sense, *From Up on Poppy Hill* is a product art serving as the conscience of community by complex set of artistic representation of the actualities of the past ([Nilson & Thorell, 2018](#)). Therefore, choosing to stand with the victims by analyzing their representation academically helps develop understanding on individuals' mental health, stress symptoms, coping strategies, daily functioning, and worries across demographic changes ([Castro et al., 2024](#)).

In so doing, the study of Umi Matsuzaki as the victim of war benefits victims of wars in Japan and around the globe to regain their awareness and their strength psychologically as being recognized, felt, and understood. This semiotic study also benefits readers in relation to the nature of Semiotics. Semiotics enables readers to be in the meaning-making process by understanding Umi and her representation in order to relate those to their own life and their understanding of the world. In the light of academic inquiry, this research benefits other researchers to continue doing research to respond to, uncover, and engage with the post-war trauma by understanding the representation from the lens of Barthian semiotics.

Since this film deals with Umi Matsuzaki's war trauma, then another theory is applied, i.e. theory on war trauma ("What is Posttraumatic Disorder (PTSD)?" [Hunt, 2010](#)). In relation to trauma or traumatic memories of war, society has to understand the nature of war itself and how it impacts victims and their family. Accordingly, understanding the nature of war and its impact means examining other approaches to understanding through film ([Hunt, 2010](#)). Furthermore, Hunt elaborates that traumatic memory is cognitive, emotional, and behavioural and it is fixed within mind (2010).

In understanding war trauma, there is a term to note down, i.e. PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder). PTSD is a psychiatric disorder that occur in people who have experienced and/or witnessed a traumatic event or a series of traumatic events including war ("What is Posttraumatic Disorder (PTSD)?"). PTSD does not only happen to combat veterans or soldiers, but it also happens to anybody affected by the war. In particular, women are usually more likely to suffer from PTSD than men, or to be exact, women are twice as likely as men to have PTSD ("What is Posttraumatic Disorder (PTSD)?" [Hunt, 2010](#)).

A person with war trauma usually exhibits symptoms of PTSD ([Hunt, 2010](#)). American Psychiatric Association categorizes PTSD symptoms into intrusion, avoidance, alteration in cognition and mood, and alteration in arousal and reactivity ("What is Posttraumatic Disorder (PTSD)?"). Intrusion can take the form of flashback, repeated nightmares, and involuntary memory. A person with PTSD also tends to avoid places, people, objects, activities, situations, and nuances which may trigger her/his distressing memory. A person with PTSD may have distorted thoughts; wrongly blame self or others; feel continuing fear,

anger, shame, horror, and guilt; and feel alienated or detached. The last symptom of PTSD is difficulty in sleeping or concentration and behaving in a self-destructive manner (“What is Posttraumatic Disorder (PTSD)?”). Furthermore, [Hunt](#) proposes six diagnostic criteria for PTSD where he terms them as falling into Diagnostic Criteria A-F (2010). Table 1 below shows the list of those diagnostic criteria.

Table 1. Diagnostic criteria

Criterion	Symptom and Stressor
Criterion A	a. Experienced, witnessed, seen any events involving death, injury, threat b. Responses include fear, horror, helplessness
Criterion B	Recurrent or repetitive image, perception, thought, feeling, flashback, dream of the event
Criterion C	a. Efforts to avoid thought, conversation, activity, feeling, place, people associated with the trauma b. Detachment feeling c. No loving feeling d. Foreshortened future
Criterion D	a. Difficulty in sleeping and concentrating b. Anger outburst and exaggerated responses to something
Criterion E	Symptoms in Criteria B, C, D, E last for more than one month
Criterion F	Symptoms occurring generate significant defects in social, occupational, and other areas in society

Umi Matsuzaki in *From Up on Poppy Hill* is a typical Japanese female character called *shōjo*. *Shōjo* means young girl, teenager or any girls aged between twelve to eighteen. In this film, Umi Matsuzaki is sixteen years old. Past studies yielded various perspectives on how *shōjo* main character, history, environment, mobility, and minor character were represented in Studio Ghibli’s films ([Difitrian & Saleh, 2023](#); [O’Brien, 2022](#); [Singh, 2023](#); [Tjus, 2018](#)).

Kaonashi, a “no face” character with innate ability to absorb the emotions of other creatures around it has sparked Difitrian & Saleh’s academic attention. They studied Kaonashi’s symbolism to unveil the meaning of Kaonashi through signs, objects, and interpretants in the framework of Peircean semiotic tradition. Difitrian & Saleh’s study is truly inspiring in the way that Kaonashi represents emptiness, loneliness, and confusion while interacting with other characters or creatures in *Spirited Away*. Both Difitrian & Saleh’s and this study approach the characters’ emotional aspect through semiotic lens. This study, however, offers a perspective of the importance of understanding war trauma as a form of social responsibility.

Seita and Setsuko have ignited [O’Brien’s](#) academic interest to study the two characters in Studio Ghibli’s *Grave of the Fireflies* (2022). Seita and Setsuko suffered from Japanese war tragedy. O’Brien asserted that to understand the historical tragedy depicted in a film, one needs to fully observe the details of the historical events that took place during the setting of that film (2022). On the one hand, [O’Brien’s](#) analysis of Seita and Setsuko gives insight into the aspect of children’s trauma during and after the war and the importance of familial ties. This study, on the other hand, offers an understanding on how Barthian semiotics reveals the representation of Umi in her post-war trauma.

Mobility and environment or climate-consciousness were proof of Studio Ghibli’s concern and integrity. At least those occurred in [Singh \(2023\)](#). Singh’s research is insightful because it explained about post-war Japan’s development

that impacted all social and environmental aspects of life including identity formation and the relationship between nature and humans. This study, however, offers a novelty in the form of representational aspect of post-war Japan particularly seen from the framework of Umi Matsuzaki, the main character.

Popular culture, including film, has been a vehicle for the Japanese to deal with war trauma of World War II (Tjus, 2018). This is evident in Studio Ghibli's *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*, *Porco Rosso* and *The Wind Rises*. Employing textual analysis, Tjus worked on the depiction of war, conflict, and impact of war on the characters (2018). Tjus' research focused on how historical context of the three films is used to remember and cope with the past and future. Tjus' analysis is indeed insightful because it provided textual explanation on how children were victimized by war historically and had to bear all traumatic consequences. In spite of the fact that this study and Tjus' have similarity particularly in exploring children war trauma, this study focuses on one main character's representational emotions by analyzing representative scenes. To end this section and to response to the fact stated earlier, two research questions are formulated: (1) How is Umi Matsuzaki's war trauma represented? (2) What myth is encoded?

Method

Research design

From Up on Poppy Hill is cultural and social product involving artistry. Audiences are encouraged to understand the dynamics of the social world through Umi Matsuzaki. Accordingly, qualitative research is employed. This method is implemented since it seeks in-depth understanding of Umi Matsuzaki's representation by teaching her social circumstances, experience, and history (Snape & Spencer, 2003). In so doing, this research method thoroughly elaborates and assesses Umi Matsuzaki's representation using words, images, and descriptions (Lune & Berg, 2017).

Umi Matsuzaki in *From Up on Poppy Hill* shows her representation that is best analyzed employing Barthian semiotic theory. Barthian semiotics is able to go deeper into her journey of dealing with post-war trauma. This semiotic tradition captures Umi Matsuzaki's representation in the film showing her trauma and it scrutinizes any of her representations in relation to her war trauma. Then, semiotically, her representation is categorized into denotative and connotative levels to arrive at the myth regarding her psychological state and the setting (of time and place) of the film itself.

There are eight data taken from *From Up on Poppy Hill*. All data are in the form of images. Those images are taken from particular scenes where Umi Matsuzaki shows her representation of war trauma. Any scenes containing no symptoms of PTSD are not selected. Therefore, two theories are implemented in this research. The first theory is Barthes' semiotic theory. This theory is applied to seek deeper representation of Umi Matsuzaki's war trauma through levels of signification to arrive at myth. The second theory of war trauma by *Psychiatry.org* and Hunt (2010) is required to identify all semiotic elements (symptoms of PTSD) conforming Umi Matsuzaki's war trauma.

Semiotic research framework

There are four steps taken in this research. The first step is watching the entire *From Up on Poppy Hill* with total running time of 92 minutes. The second step is classifying each scene containing any symptoms of PTSD in accordance with the theory of PTSD symptoms as Umi Matsuzaki’s representation of war trauma. The third step is coding and numbering the data in accordance with the sequence of film’s running time. Therefore, the numbering and presentation of each datum in the Results and Discussion Section is made based on the appearance of each scene in *From Up on Poppy Hill*. The fourth step of data analysis comprises identification of signifier and signified in the denotation level and identification in the connotation level to arrive at the myth. All of the steps in semiotic research framework are summarized in Figure 2 below.

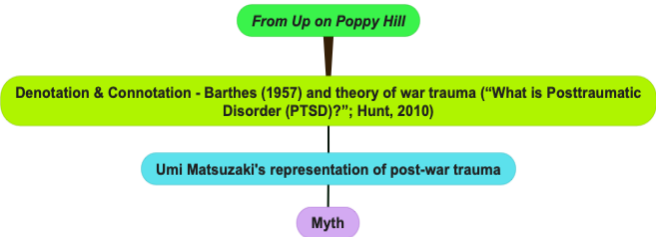



Fig. 2. Semiotic research framework

Results and Discussion

As mentioned in the Method Section before, there are eight findings to analyze from the total of 92 minutes of film’s running time. These eight findings are collected from particular scenes depicting Umi Matsuzaki’s symptoms of PTSD as her representation of war trauma. In this section, Umi Matsuzaki’s representation of her post-war trauma in all eight data is elaborated. This starts with denotation level then followed by connotation level. After analyzing all eight data, then the myth is concurred. The discussion of each datum is presented as follows.

Datum 1

Table 2. Datum 1

	10.40-11.33
Denotation	Umi was having a conversation with her grandmother. Grandmother told Umi that she understood how Umi missed her father seeing that Umi raised signal flags every single day. When grandmother said something about Umi’s father and the fact of Umi raising signal flags to her father, Umi decided not to respond to her and left the room.


Connotation	Umi avoided the conversation with a specific topic on her father and her daily activity of raising signal flags to the father.
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Umi was at home preparing dinner when she told her grandmother that the dinner was ready. Grandmother opened up a conversation by telling Umi how good she was at managing her time between her study and doing the house chores. Grandmother also felt sad seeing Umi raise signal flags every single day hoping that Umi would meet somebody wonderful soon that she did not have to raise those flags anymore. When Umi was reminded of her late father, she stayed silent and left the room leaving her grandmother alone without responding to the conversational topic.

In this scene, Umi shows her PTSD symptoms by avoiding or not responding to her grandmother’s conversational topic on her late father. She avoids the topic by giving her grandmother reason to say that she must prepare dinner for the family and soon leaves the room. Umi clearly shows her refusal to talk about nor to respond to anything that can remind her of her late father. This avoidance and resistance talking about her late father is evident in the scene and it becomes one of the common symptoms that Umi exhibits as a person with PTSD. Referring to the diagnostic criteria, Umi exposes Criterion C of PTSD symptoms ([Hunt, 2010](#)). Her symptom of PTSD truly reveals how deep her war trauma is.

Datum 2

Table 3. Datum 2


		12.15-12.30
Denotation	Umi was doing her usual daily activity of lowering signal flags when suddenly she saw the shadow of her father along with the lowering flags.	
Connotation	Umi had involuntary memory	

It was in the afternoon and Umi was doing her usual daily task of lowering the signal flags. While she was lowering the flags, the shadow of her father suddenly appeared. This made her shocked. She then took a second to stare at the flagpole. This involuntary memory struck her.

A person with PTSD tends to be struck with involuntary memory ([American Psychiatric Association, n.d.](#)). The shadow of Umi’s father appearing along with the lowering signal flags is a form of involuntary memory. In [Hunt’s](#) diagnostic criteria, what Umi experiences in this scene is categorized into Criterion B where she has a perception, image, and thought of the event when her father is still with her (2010).

Datum 3

Table 4. Datum 3


	38.25-38.40
Denotation	Umi and Shun had a conversation mostly with Umi's family. Umi told Shun about her father, particularly about how her father passed away.
Connotation	She remembered her father by reminiscing the past

Umi invited Shun together with other classmates to have lunch in her house. In a separate occasion during that lunch, Umi asked Shun to walk around her house and told him about the history of her house, her family, including how her father passed away. The scene depicted a moving picture when she was little standing in the balcony raising signal flags. She mentioned how his father told her to raise the signal flags to make him make his way back to the family. Therefore, Umi rose those signal flags every single day on the balcony until his ship docked again. One day, the family got the news that the father's ship sank during the Korean War and nobody could find him. Umi, however, kept raising the signal flags hoping that the father would find his way back and return to his family.

Umi as person with war trauma exhibits her PTSD symptom as having flashback and repetitive feeling of the event (Hunt, 2010). She still maintains feeling of her togetherness with her father and has flashback of what happened in the past when her family life was still in happy state. Her flashback even goes to when she was told by his father about raising the signal flags every single day. In the present moment, knowing that his father passed away already in the Korean War, Umi still raises the signal flags hoping that his father will see them and make his way back to the family. In this scene, Umi's symptom falls into Criterion B in Hunt's diagnostic criteria (2010).

Datum 4

Table 5. Datum 4

	55.33-55.53
Denotation	Umi was crying all alone in the middle of nowhere
Connotation	Umi had nightmare


It all started when Umi talked to Shun on the way back home from school concerning his choice not talking to her and avoiding her. Shun told her to stop the special feeling of loving each other and showed her the picture of Yūichirō Sawamura, Umi's father, who turned out to be Shun's father too. It meant that

they were brother and sister. Shun was completely broken hearted and it broke Umi’s heart as well. At home, Umi skipped bath and grew depressed feeling. Then, Umi cried and soon fell asleep. In her sleep, there was picture of her curling up and floating. Then, the scene showed a picture of the family. After that, she was walking all alone in the middle of nowhere crying. There was voice of her mother calling her name repeatedly.

Umi had nightmare. This nightmare was manifestation of her memory of war and her late father, Yūichirō Sawamura. Yūichirō became the main cause of her sadness and tears. The fact that Shun was her biological brother made her must stop her special feeling of love to Shun. Umi’s nightmare of war trauma was categorized into Criterion B ([Hunt, 2010](#)).

Datum 5

Table 6. Datum 5


		56.25-57.45
Denotation	Umi was dreaming of meeting her mother. She then also met and hugged her father crying in his arms	
Connotation	Umi had distressing dream	

In the scene, Umi woke up and suddenly saw her mother in the kitchen cooking. She was surprised to see her mother at home because her mother was supposed to study in the US. She then asked her mother why she was home. Her mother replied that she was always home all the time. Right after she had a conversation with her mother, her father called her to help him raise the flags. To her surprise, her father was standing in front of her holding and extending the flags. He told her that the signal flags helped him home. She ran towards her father and cried in his arms.

Umi exposes her PTSD symptoms by having distressing dreams. Her symptoms fall into Criterion B ([Hunt, 2010](#)). Her war trauma was represented in the way all things were packed up in her dream where Umi was being with her mother and father. Her distressing dream was representation of the war trauma. War had separated her from her parents. The demise of her father whose supply ship hit the land mine was severely heart-breaking. Accordingly, her mother had to continue her study in the US and left Yokohama for quite some time leaving Umi and her siblings. Therefore, the PTSD symptom in this scene truly reflected Umi’s loss and expectation of being together again with both parents.

Datum 6

Table 7. Datum 6


	1.08.20-1.09.18
Denotation	Umi told Mr. Tokumaru in detailed manner about how her father’s supply ship exploded. After that, the picture of her family appeared again
Connotation	Umi reconnected to the past

At school, there was emergency news saying that the school board planned to demolish the building of Latin Quarter Club House. This club house building was very significant for all students. Then, the students made campaign of anti-demolition and sent three representatives (Umi, Shun, and Shiro) to hold an emergency meeting with Mr. Tokumaru (the school board’s chairman) in Tokyo.

During the emergency meeting with Mr. Tokumaru, Umi again exhibited her PTSD symptoms. It started when Mr. Tokumaru asked about her name and year. Umi suddenly insisted on her argument stating that the club house building was more than just a building because it made everybody feel connected to the past. After that, Umi talked about the detailed description including images and visuals of how his father’s supply ship hit a land mine and exploded. Those recurrent images and visuals represented Umi’s symptom of PTSD that fall into Criterion B ([Hunt, 2010](#)).

Datum 7

Table 8. Datum 7

	1.11.53-1.12.44
Denotation	Umi talked to Shun regarding the signal flags she always raised every day to her father as a message to her father for his safe return. However, she eventually realized that the father could not make it, and he sent Shun instead.
Connotation	Umi believed that Shun was a figure sent to her to take care of her


After an emergency meeting with Mr. Tokumaru, Umi and Shun walked along the Harbor and talked about future plans after graduation. Umi enthusiastically told him that the signal flags she always raised everyday was a message to her father to guide him safely. Then she realized that the father would never go back home but sent Shun instead to her. She believed that her father

chose and sent Shun as a figure to take care of her. This made her fall in love with Shun no matter what.

The distressing reminiscence of war trauma was present. Umi had thoughts and perceptions about her father, Shun, signal flags, and feeling of love. This fell into Criterion B (Hunt, 2010). Umi focused her thoughts and perceptions on her father. She believed that her father was the one choosing and sending the right figure in charge of taking care of her. Therefore, it is understandable how deep her feeling of love was.

Datum 8

Table 9. Datum 8

		1.14.50-1.17.39
Denotation	Umi asked her mother's explanation about Shun Kazama of whether he was Umi's biological brother. After listening to the explanation, Umi burst into tears.	
Connotation	Umi was in deep connection with Shun yet had intensive psychological suffering	

Umi arrived home when she found out that her mother was just back home from the US. Soon in the evening, she talked to her mother about Shun straightforwardly. She asked her mother to explain about their family history. Her mother then explained thoroughly about Shun Kazama's history of adoption. It turned out Shun had been adopted by Yūichirō Sawamura, Umi's father. Shun's biological father, Hiroshi Tachibana, had been killed in an accident of border repatriation ship. At the same time, Shun's mother had died from complication during childbirth. Yūichirō then registered Shun as his son in order that Shun was not placed in an orphanage. In the meantime, Umi's mother was already pregnant with Umi. Then, another family, the Kazamas, lost the child and took Shun as their son.

The scene truly represented Umi's war trauma. She showed her intensive psychological distress over Shun's background that was closely related to her family history. She was burdened by it that she needed parental support. That heavy burden concerning family history rooted at her father. Her PTSD symptoms emerged in the form of severe psychological suffering that was classified into Criterion B (Hunt, 2010).

Umi Matsuzaki's symptoms of PTSD as represented in eight scenes are significant to understand. Through the lens of Barthian semiotic theory to understand Umi's symptoms of PTSD of her post-war trauma, everybody can get involved in the process of meaning-making to finally relate those symptoms to their own life within current context. War generates massive destruction physically, psychologically, socially, and culturally. The findings of this research increase the understanding of the nature of war and its impact on victims, humanity, and civilization. Umi's symptoms of PTSD are evident that war impacts the Japanese even on a family level.

Conclusions

To conclude, Umi's symptoms of PTSD of her post-war trauma are categorized into avoidance and intrusion. Those symptoms of PTSD are all rooted in the loss of Umi's father. Her need, agony, and longing for his father's presence and love is represented in the avoidance of talking about him, involuntary memory in the form of his father's shadow, reminiscing the past moment on how her father taught her to raise the signal flags, distressing dream of meeting her father, recurrent images and visuals of the war, and intensive psychological suffering. The myth of war causing war trauma that deeply impacts on the family level is then concurred. All of these are foundational to future research in the field of semiotics with more discussion on PTSD of post-war trauma generated by wars around the world. All research on PTSD of post-war trauma are proof of social support to the veterans, the families, the dead, the victims, and the affected that they are heard, felt, understood, and recognized.

Author contributions

Wedhowerti: conceptualization, data curation, formal analysis, funding acquisition, investigation, methodology, project administration, resources, writing (original draft preparation), and writing (review and editing).

Conflict of interests

The author has no conflicts of interest to declare.

Data availability statement

The author confirms that the data supporting the findings of this study are available within the article.

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