

The Meaning of *Joushou* Song Lyrics in *Touken Ranbu* Musical Theater

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Abstract

The term *joushou* (prologue) is usually placed at the beginning of a story. However, musical theatre *Touken Ranbu Musubi no Hibiki Hajimari no Ne* does the exact opposite. This raises the question whether there is a particular purpose for using the term *joushou*, and not using the term *kessho* (epilogue). To answer this question, the author uses Riffaterre's theory of poetry semiotics in interpreting the song *Joushou*. This research uses a qualitative descriptive method by analyzing the data collected and explaining the results of the analyzed data. The data used are the lyrics of *Joushou*'s song from *Touken Ranbu*'s musical theater. The research steps taken are heuristic reading, connecting *Joushou*'s song lyrics with the musical theater story, performing hermeneutic reading, looking for discontinuity of expression, determining matrix, model, and variant. After analysis, the results show that the song titled *Joushou* (prologue) is sung at the end of the musical theater performance because there is a message contained in the song in the form of the end of a story is the beginning of the following story. The term *kessho* (epilogue) is not used since it does not show that the story has ended.

Keywords:

Joushou; *Touken Ranbu*;
Riffaterre's semiotics.

Article Info:

First received: 27 July 2022
Available online: 30 Nov 2022

INTRODUCTION

Musical theater is a type of theater art that combines acting, song, and dance. According to Riantarto (2011), in musical theater, emotional content is presented in the story through words, music, movements, and all technical aspects that are entertaining in one unit. Musical theater features not only original stories but also adaptations of novels, films, and animations. Such example is Broadway Musical Theater, which performs many adaptations of novels, such as *Les Miserables*, *The Phantom of the Opera*, *Hamlet*, and *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*. In Japan, the *Takarazuka* theater group also performs adaptations of plays such as *Les Miserables*, *The Rose of Versailles*, and *Singin' in the Rain*. In Indonesia, many musical theaters are adapted from folk stories such as *Sangkuriang*, *Malin Kundang*, and *Timun Mas*.

The rapid development of Japanese pop culture, such as *manga*, *anime*, and video games, has created a new genre in the world of theater in Japan. The genre is widely known as *ni ten go jigen myujikaru* (2.5次元ミュージカル) or 2.5-Dimensional Musical in English. According to the Japan 2.5-Dimensional Musical Association, that term refers to theater performances adapted from *manga*, *anime*, and video games originating from Japan.

One of the most popular musical theaters in Japan is *Touken Ranbu Musical* (ミュージカル「刀剣乱舞」). *Touken Ranbu* musical theater is a musical series adapted from an online game of the same name. *Touken Ranbu* musical theater was first performed in October 2015, a few months after the game's release. As of 2021, the musical theater has had seven main performances with different titles, casts, and stories for each performance. The main story of *Touken Ranbu* is that in the year 2205, Japan has a group of historical revisionists

whom tried to change the course of history, invading the past. The government at the time sent a *saniwa* (審神者), a 'sage' or priestess who usually serves as a *miko* (shrine maiden) in the Shinto religion, to the past to protect history. A *saniwa* has the supernatural ability to awaken the spirit of *tsukumogami*, which resides within the sword, into a warrior known as a *touken danshi* (刀剣男子). *Saniwa* gives the *touken danshi* the task of defeating historical revisionists and ensuring that the flow of history does not change.

The fifth musical theater performance of *Touken Ranbu* is titled *Myujikaru: Touken Ranbu ~Musubi no Hibiki, Hajimari no Ne~* (ミュージカル「刀剣乱舞」結びの響、始まりの音) ran from March 2018 to May 2018. This performance focuses on the historical story of the *Shinsengumi* (a special police force of masterless samurai organized by the *Bakufu* military government) during Japan's *Bakumatsu* period (the end of the Tokugawa Shogunate) in 1863-1869. Historical revisionists' objective was to protect Hijikata Toshizo (vice-captain of the *Shinsengumi*) from dying. The *touken danshi* sent to this time period were Tomoe-gata Naginata as *taichou* (team captain), Mutsunokami Yoshiyuki (Sakamoto Ryoma's sword), Nagasone Kotetsu (Kondo Isami's sword), Yamatonokami Yasusada (Okita Souji's sword), and Izuminokami Kanesada and Horikawa Kunihiro (Hijikata Toshizo's sword).

Like other musical performances, *Touken Ranbu* musical theater also includes songs. Songs are one of the essential elements in musical theater. Usually, dialogs and monologues in musicals are converted into song lyrics and performed with music and choreography. By understanding the lyrics, the meaning of the lyrics, and the message contained in them, the audience will be able to

understand the storyline of the musical theater.

Songs in *Touken Ranbu*'s musical theater usually also express the feelings of the characters who sing them. It is common for the audience to get carried away just by listening to the song. One that caught the author's attention was the song sung at the end of this musical theater performance. The song is called *Joshou* (序章), which means opening or prologue. The term *Joshou*, is usually used at the beginning of a story. However, in this musical theater it is sung at the end. This raises the question if there is a specific purpose why this musical theater uses the term *joshou* (prologue) and not *kessho* (epilogue).

In addition, the author found it difficult to understand the meaning of the lyrics of the *Joshou* song. For example, the lyrics in stanza 1 line 2 are *itsuka naru kyokugen he ippo* (one day will be a step towards the limit). The lyrics have an implied meaning and cannot be understood by just reading and deciphering the lyrics. This is one of the examples why it can be difficult for non-Japanese audiences to understand the overall meaning of *Joshou*'s song.

The above explanation is the reason why the author is interested in examining if there is a specific purpose of using the term *joshou* (prologue), and not using *kessho* (epilogue). Therefore, the research questions can be formulated as follows:

- (1) What is the meaning of the lyrics in *Joshou*'s verses?
- (2) What is the interpretation of the song *Joshou*?
- (3) Why did the scriptwriter of *Touken Ranbu Musubi no Hibiki, Hajimari no Ne* place the song *Joshou* at the end of the show?

This research was conducted to understand the message contained within

the song *Joshou* which means prologue. Since this song is titled *Joshou* (prologue), it is expected to include an introduction to guide the audience in understanding the storyline or message of the musical theater performance *Touken Ranbu Musubi no Hibiki, Hajimari no Ne*.

To be able to understand the meaning of *Joshou's song*, the author looks for the meaning of the song lyrics by applying Riffaterre's semiotic theory of poetry, which include: 1) poetry is an indirect expression, which states one thing with another meaning (non-continuity of expression), 2) heuristic and hermeneutic reading, 3) matrix, model, and variant, and 4) hypogram (Riffaterre, 1978, pp. 13-15).

Ratih Pratiwi Wate, *Interpretation of Kim Sowol's Poem Sanyuhwa Through Riffaterre's Semiotic Approach* (2014). In this study, Wate used a qualitative descriptive method. The author stated that the poem *Sanyuhwa* at first glance, has a theme of natural beauty because it uses symbols such as mountains, flowers, and birds. However, after using Riffaterre's semiotic approach, it was concluded that *Sanyuhwa's poem* does not only talk about the beauty of nature but also the circle of life. Through this interpretation, Wate revealed that Kim Sowol wanted to show the situation that the Korean people had experienced during the Japanese colonization.

Riris Kesawarmurti Anggraini, *Language Style in Song Lyrics of the Musical Theater Roméo et Juliette - de La Haine à L'Amour* (2017). Anggraini said that the language used in the musical theater's song lyrics is a mix between everyday conversational language and figurative language. The use of language styles in the song lyrics made the theater more unique, so Anggraini was interested in researching further. Anggraini used a descriptive qualitative research method to describe the type and meaning of language style. The

data used were all song lyrics in the musical theater *Roméo et Juliette - de La Haine à L'Amour* that contained stylistic language. This research results show several things, such as 1) There are 135 data with 18 types of language styles. 2) There are three meanings in the musical theater song lyrics: denotative meaning in 28 data, connotative meaning in 51 data, and affective meaning in 56 data.

Hasna Aufa Afifah, Isnin Ainie, *The Meaning of the Lyrics of the Traditional Children's Song Amefuri (Semiotics Study)* (2017). The main reason for Afifah and Ainie to conduct this research is the existence of one of the traditional Japanese songs protected by the Japanese government entitled, *Amefuri*. In addition, the meaning in *Amefuri's* song does not appear directly but needs to be dissected using the trichotomy of icons, indices, and symbols. The research method used is descriptive qualitative, using Charles Sander Peirce's Trichotomy theory. The results of this study reveal that the song *Amefuri* has 1 icon, 5 indexes, and 1 symbol. Based on these three things, it was found that *Amefuri* song expresses the meaning of love.

Fajria Noviana, Akhmad Saifudin, *The Meaning of Ujo Noguchi's Shabondama Song Lyrics Based on Michael Riffaterre's Semiotic Analysis* (2020). Noviana explained that the song *Shabondama*, a children's song, has a sad feeling when listened to. *Shabondama* songs are not like children's songs in general, which are cheerful, with positive connotations. The words used in *Shabondama* are words that have negative connotations. Using Riffaterre's theory of poetry semiotics, Noviana and Saifudin studied Ujo Noguchi's *Shabondama* song and looked for the true meaning contained in the song. Noviana and Saifudin used a qualitative paradigm with a semiotic approach as their research method. The results of this study show that the song *Shabondama* has a

meaning that is not as common as other children's songs related to the cheerful world of children, but this song expresses helplessness. In this case, the thing that represents this meaning is a plea and hope raised in the song.

Mandala, Dewi, Dwipayanti, *Riffaterre's Semiotics Analysis in Naotaro Moriyama's Sakura Song* (2021). Mandala et al. said that the word "sakura" in the song *Sakura* by Naotaro Moriyama is used as a sign of separation. On this basis, Mandala et al. examine more deeply the meaning and messages contained in this song. The methods used by the authors are descriptive, literature study, qualitative and hermeneutic methods. Riffaterre's poetry theory is used to examine the song. Through the assessment process, Mandala et al. found that the meaning contained in this song is separation, dreams, and the desire to meet again.

The similarity of the five previous studies is that they conducted research intending to interpret the content or message of a poem or song lyrics. Like some previous studies, Riffaterre's semiotic theory is used in this study. However, this study takes data in the form of one song taken from musical theater.

Song lyrics are literary works in the form of poetry containing outpourings of the heart as the composition of a song (Moeliono, 1990, p. 628). This shows that song lyrics are expressions or outpourings of the poet or songwriter arranged like a poem. Similarly, songs in musical theater performances can contain outpourings or descriptions of the musical theater storyline. Songwriters often use various figure of speech and language styles, so it could be a challenge to understand the meaning contained in the song lyrics. Therefore, the author will analyze *Joshou's* song using the semiotic theory of poetry proposed by Michael

Riffaterre. The following will explain the theory used in this research.

In his work *Semiotic of Poetry* (1978), Riffaterre suggests that indirect messages can be conveyed in poetry. This implies that poetry can have multiple meanings, regardless of what is explicitly written in the poem. In addition, Pradopo (2009, p. 112) defines poetry as a collection of signs that have meaning based on the rules that apply in literature.

According to Riffaterre, to understand the overall meaning of poetry, several things are needed, namely: (1) heuristic reading, (2) hypogram, (3) hermeneutic reading (retroactive reading), (4) discontinuity of expression, and (5) matrix, model, and variant. Heuristic reading is a stage of reading that moves from the beginning to the end of the text, from the top to the bottom of the page, based on normative grammar, morphology, semantics, and syntax. The result of heuristic reading can be called the first level of the semiotic system (Lantowa, Marahayu, & Kharussibyan, 2017, p. 10).

Hypograms can be found in the setting of the literary work in the form of the condition of society, historical events, and the environment and life experienced by the author.

After heuristic reading, the next stage is hermeneutic reading. Hermeneutic reading is a retroactive reading by interpreting the meaning behind the text in the poem (Pradopo, 2009, p. 135). The result of the reading can be said to be the second level of the semiotic system. The poem is searched and scrutinized for its overall meaning at this reading stage.

In a poem, the meaning shown is not the same as what is stated. In other words, poetry indirectly expresses a message. According to Riffaterre (1978, p. 2), the indirectness of expression is caused by three things, namely (1) *displacing of*

meaning, (2) *distorting of meaning*, and (3) *creating of meaning*.

- 1) Substitution of meaning is a change of meaning from one meaning to another, occurring when a word represents another word. Substitution of meaning is usually found in figurative language (Riffaterre, 1978, p. 2).
- 2) Deviations of meaning occur due to the use of words that contain ambiguity, contradiction, and *nonsense*. Ambiguity occurs when words, phrases, sentences, or discourses have more than one meaning (*polyinterpretable*) and are interpreted differently depending on the context. Contradiction occurs when words, phrases, or sentences that contain irony, paradox, and antithesis are used. Meanwhile, *nonsense* is a word that has no meaning in the dictionary.
- 3) The creation of meaning is due to the spatial organization of the text, which includes: (a) *enjambement*, (b) rhyme, (c) typography, and (d) *homolog*.
 - a. *Enjambement* is the skipping of lines in rhyme that causes a shift of attention to the final word or words that are "skipped" to the following line.
 - b. Rhyme is the repetition of the same sound found in the poem's chapters and at the end of the chapters. It is in the form of words or sentences that intermittently relate to each other. Rhyme gives the poem an emotionally charged meaning.
 - c. Typography is the arrangement of letters in a

text that can produce meaning.

- d. *Homologue* is the alignment of forms or lines in poetry. The alignment of the forms will produce similar meanings.

In semiotic studies, the matrix is known as the source of the overall meaning contained in the poem, although sometimes, the matrix does not appear in the text of the poem. The matrix is hypothetical and can be in the form of words, phrases, or sentences, which rarely appear explicitly in the text. Simply put, the matrix is the implied meaning in the poem. The matrix is interpreted through actualization in the form of models, which can take the form of words, phrases, or sentences that represent the matrix and then be elaborated in the form of variants. Variants are elaborations that usually explain the model. Unlike the matrix, the model is the explicit meaning in the poem (Riffaterre, 1978, p. 19).

METHODS

The method used in this research is the descriptive qualitative method, by analyzing the data collected and explaining the results of the analyzed data. The data source used in this research is the musical theater *Touken Ranbu Musubi no Hibiki, Hajimari no Ne*. The data taken is the lyrics of the *Joshou* song found at the end of this musical theater performance.

The research steps taken are to interpret the lyrics of *Joshou's* song in a literal sense, then to analyze the data using semiotic analysis of poetry from Riffaterre (1978). To be able to find the meaning of *Joshou's song*, heuristic reading is carried out, linking *Joshou's* song with the musical theater storyline (hypogram), searching for discontinuity of expression, and finding matrices, models, and variants.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the heuristic reading of the *Joshou* song lyrics show that this song contains a prologue (*joshou*), which is the beginning of a story. Any story will lead to the end. After reaching the end, the story is not finished, but the end will be the beginning of a new story. Since in this heuristic reading, the meaning of the song could not be understood directly, the song is then associated with the context or background of the creation of the *Joshou* song to be interpreted more deeply in the hermeneutic reading.

The hypogram of the song *Joshou* is the story of the musical theater *Touken Ranbu Musubi no Hibiki, Hajimari no Ne*. Afterwards, *Joshou* is interpreted as a story of the journey of *touken danshi* in a hermeneutic reading. At the beginning of their story as a sword until they become a *touken danshi*. In the hermeneutic reading, there is also a lack of continuity of expression in the poem, namely the three replacements of meaning in the form of figure of speech called personification.

In *Joshou's* song, there are three matrix, three models, and three variants. Matrix 1) is that there is no end to a *monogatari* (story), the word *joshou* (prologue) is the model, and the depiction of the beginning of the *touken danshi* story is the variant. Matrix 2) is the purpose of a journey, the word *tabi* (journey) as its model, and the events and experiences of *touken danshi* as its variants. Matrix 3) is a dilemma, with *muzukashii* (difficult) as the model and the inner conflict experienced by the *touken danshi* as the variant.

HEURISTIC READING

Heuristic reading is done based on the language structure to find the meaning of a poem. The reading is done by translating and clarifying the meaning of the sentences in the lines of the song lyrics. This song

consists of 5 stanzas, and each stanza consists of 3-7 lines of sentences. Heuristic reading is done stanza by stanza.

Stanza 1

- (1)

<i>Kore</i>	<i>wa</i>	<i>Joshou</i>
this	TOP	opening
<i>monogatari</i>	<i>no</i>	<i>hajime</i>
story	GEN	beginning

This is the prologue, the beginning of our story

- (2)

<i>Itsukanaru</i>	<i>kyokugen</i>
someday	limit
<i>he</i>	<i>ippo</i>
P	one step

Someday will be one step toward the limit

- (3)

<i>Michibiku</i>	<i>no</i>	<i>wa</i>	<i>hoshi</i>
Guide	GEN	TOP	stars
<i>ka?</i>	<i>Tsuki</i>	<i>ka?</i>	
QP	moon	QP	
<i>Kaze</i>	<i>ka?</i>	<i>Wataru</i>	
Wind	QP	cross	
<i>nami</i>	<i>ka?</i>		
wave	QP		

Will the stars, the moon, the wind, and the rocking waves be our guide?

Through a heuristic reading of this stanza, it can be understood that this song is a prologue (*joshou*), the beginning of a story. What cannot be understood is what is meant by the statement of one step towards the limit and the stars, moon, wind, and waves that guide.

Stanza 2

- (4)

<i>Owari</i>	<i>wa</i>	<i>kuru</i>
The end	TOP	come
<i>Itsuka</i>		<i>mukashi</i>
One day		past
<i>ni</i>	<i>naru</i>	
P	become	

The end is coming. Someday it will be the past

(5) *Soredemo imi wo*
Even so meaning ACC
motometeshimaunda
search

Even so, will continuing to search for meaning

ore no naka no
my GEN inside GEN
kaku
core

Determine the core that is in me

(6) *muzukashii koto wa*
difficult things TOP
shou ni
personality P
awa ne
not suitable FP

Difficult things are not suitable for me

(10) *Tadoritsukitai hazukashi*
Achieve shame
kunai tsuyosa
not strength

Want to achieve it, the strength that not shameful

(7) *Demo genkai tte no*
But limit QUOT GEN
wo koete mitee
ACC overcome try
Tamani wa atama
Sometime TOP head
tsukattesa
use

But I will use my head once in a while to go beyond my limit

(11) *Kore wa Joshou nagai*
This TOP prologue long
tabi no Hajime
journey GEN Beginning

This is the prologue, the beginning of a long journey

Through a heuristic reading of stanza 2, it can be understood that the story, previously mentioned in stanza one, will come to an end and will one day become the past. The part that cannot be understood is what is meant by the statement of continuing to search for meaning, difficult things, and going beyond the limits.

Stanza 3

(8) *sariyuku jidai*
passing era
utsuriyuku keshiki
changes scenery

An era that has passed, scenery that has changed

Stanza 4

(12) *Hoshi wa matataki*
Stars TOP twinkle

The stars twinkle

(13) *Tsuki wa michi kake*
moo TOP full lack

The moon waxes and wanes

(9) *misadameru no wa*
Determine GEN TOP

(14) *Kaze wa*
Wind TOP

Hoonade
caressing the cheek

The wind caressing my cheek

monogatari no hajime
story GEN beginning

This is the prologue, the beginning
of our story

- (15) *nami wa oshiyoseru*
wave TOP come closer

The waves approach

- (20) *Itsukanaru kyokugen*
someday limit
he ippo
P one step

Someday will be one step toward the
limit

- (16) *Kawaru mono*
change thing
kawaranai mono
unchanged thing

Things that change and things that
are unchanged

- (21) *Kore wa Joshou nagai*
This TOP prologue long
tabi no Hajime
journey GEN Beginning

This is the prologue, the beginning
of a long journey

- (17) *umareru mono*
Birth thing
kuchiru mono
rotting thing

Things that are born and things that
decay

- (22) *atarashii jibun*
New myself
to deau tame
QUOT meet for

To meet a new self

- (18) *Hajimari to owari*
Beginning QUOT ending

Beginning and ending

- (23) *Kore wa Joshou nagai*
This TOP prologue long
tabi no Hajime
journey GEN Beginning

This is the prologue, the beginning
of a long journey

Through a heuristic reading of stanza 4, it
can be understood that a long journey is
characterized by the presence of twinkling
stars, the changing moon, the blowing
wind, and the surging of the waves. It can
also be understood that there will be things
that change, things that are unchanged,
things that are born, and things that decay,
and there is a beginning and an end.

Stanza 5

- (19) *Kore wa Joshou*
This TOP prologue

- (24) *Kore wa Joshou nagai*
This TOP prologue long
tabi no Hajime
journey GEN Beginning

This is the prologue, the beginning
of a long journey

Through a heuristic reading of this
stanza, it can be understood that in this
song, there is a prologue to a story and a
prologue to a long journey. What is not

understood in this stanza is the statement of one step towards the limit and meeting a new self.

Thus, what can be understood from the heuristic reading is that this song tells a prologue (*joshou*), which is the beginning of a story or tale. After that, the story will come to an end, and one day it will become the past. It can also be understood that the era has changed, and the scenery has also changed. The statement is repeated that in this song, that there is a prologue or the beginning of a story, which in this stanza refers to the story of a long journey. The part that cannot be understood will then be interpreted in the hermeneutic reading section.

HYPOGRAM

As mentioned in the introduction, the relationship between one literary work and another is known as a hypogram. A hypogram can be defined as the setting for the creation of a literary work which includes the state of society, historical events, and the environment or life lived by the author.

In the previous heuristic reading, the overall meaning of *Joshou's* song has not been understood yet, so the next thing to do is to interpret *Joshou's* song according to its context. Context, according to KBBI (The Great Dictionary of Indonesian Language), is part of a description or sentence that supports or adds clarity to meaning, and context is a situation related to an event. The context (situation) of *Joshou's* song can be seen from the background of *Joshou's* song creation. As mentioned earlier, the background of the creation of a literary work is called a hypogram. So, it can be concluded that the hypogram is the context (setting of creation). *Joshou's* song is sung at the end of the musical theater performance *Touken Ranbu Musubi no Hibiki, Hajimari no Ne*. Referring to the previous explanation, the hypogram

of *Joshou's* song is the story of *Touken Ranbu Musubi no Hibiki, Hajimari no Ne* musical theater.

Touken Ranbu tells the story of a group of *touken danshi* sent back in time by a *saniwa* to fight an army of historical revisionists and protect history. The *touken danshi* are *tsukumogami*, an object believed to have a spirit that has been used for 100 years from a Japanese sword resurrected by a *saniwa* (sage). When resurrected, the *touken danshi* will obtain a human-like body and abilities. The *saniwa* assigns the *touken danshi* a mission to protect the past from historical revisionist forces and ensure that the flow of history stays undisrupted. The history in question is the true history that has occurred in Japan.

Touken Ranbu Musubi no Hibiki's musical theatre, *Hajimari no Ne*, focuses on the history of Hijikata Toshizo as vice-captain of the *Shinsengumi* (a special police force of masterless samurai organized by the *Bakufu* military government) during Japan's *Bakumatsu* period (the end of the Tokugawa Shogunate) from 1863-1869. Historical events began with Hijikata's leadership after the death of the *Shinsengumi* chief, Kondo Isami. In 1868, a war broke out between the *Shinsengumi* and imperial forces in the Aizu region. The *Shinsengumi* troops were divided into two, some stayed to continue the battle in Aizu, and the rest, along with Hijikata, retreated from the battle. The remaining *Shinsengumi* forces joined the Ezo Republic forces in the north of Japan (Hokkaido Island). A few months after the formation of the Ezo Republic forces, war with the imperial forces broke out again. This war was called the Battle of Hakodate, since it took place in the Hakodate area of Hokkaido. In this battle, Hijikata was killed. After Hijikata's death, the remaining *Shinsengumi* forces were forced to surrender, and the Republic of Ezo was also disbanded. These two events marked

the end of the Bakumatsu era. In addition, Hijikata was named the last person to fight with a sword. As a result, Hijikata's death is also considered to mark the end of using the sword as a means of warfare (*katana no jidai*).

In this musical theater, it is told that the historical revisionist forces tried to change the flow of history that occurred during the Bakumatsu era. The historical revisionist forces wanted to preserve the Bakumatsu era. Therefore, the historical revisionist forces must prevent Hijikata from dying. On the other hand, the *saniwa* (sage) has a mission to preserve history, so he sends a group of *touken danshi*, namely Yamatonokami, Nagasone, Horikawa, Izuminokami, Mutsunokami, and Tomoegata to fight to thwart the plans of the historical revisionist forces who are trying to preserve the Bakumatsu era. The *touken danshi*'s mission in this performance is to stop the plans of the historical revisionist forces. Although the *touken danshi* feel sad, they must maintain the flow of history.

As a samurai, Hijikata has several swords. One of them was Izuminokami which was Hijikata's favorite sword. Before the battle of Hakodate took place, Hijikata had a premonition that the battle of Hakodate would be his last battle. Therefore, Hijikata sent Izuminokami to his hometown so that the sword would not become a spoil of war. As a sword, Izuminokami was made to protect Hijikata. Izuminokami harbors a deep sadness for not being able to protect Hijikata. After being resurrected into a *touken danshi*, Izuminokami still feels she wants to protect Hijikata. However, this is contrary to her mission as a *touken danshi*.

HERMENEUTIC READING (RETROACTIVE READING)

After doing a heuristic reading and connecting the song with its hypogram (context), the next stage is a hermeneutic reading. Hermeneutic reading is carried out

by interpreting the meaning behind the poetry text. Through hermeneutic reading, the poem will also be interpreted as a whole. To facilitate the hermeneutic reading of *Joshou's* song, a hermeneutic reading of each stanza is previously carried out.

Hermeneutic Reading of Stanza 1

Joshou means opening or prologue. A prologue is the beginning of a story, and it can be a story or an event that leads to another event. Prologue, according to KBBI, can be said to be the background or reason for an event. The word *kore wa* (this) refers to the following lyrics of this song. *Monogatari no hajime* (the story's beginning) explains the word *Joshou*. The *monogatari* referred to in this stanza refers to the stories of Yamatonokami, Nagasone, Horikawa, and Izuminokami as *touken danshi*. A *touken danshi* is a *tsukumogami* (an object believed to have a spirit that has been used for 100 years) of a Japanese sword resurrected by a *saniwa* (a sage with supernatural abilities). When resurrected, the *touken danshi* will have a human-like body and abilities. In *Touken Ranbu's* story, the *touken danshi* is tasked to protect the past from historical revisionist forces and ensure that the flow of history runs appropriately. The *monogatari* tells the story of Yamatonokami, Nagasone, Izuminokami, and Horikawa as *touken danshi*, so it can be concluded that the *Joshou* of the *monogatari* refers to the story of the four *touken danshi* before becoming *touken danshi* when they were sword members of the *Shinsengumi* (Kyoto police corps during the *Bakumatsu* era).

In stanza 1, line 2, *kyokugen*, which means limit, refers to the absolute limit of *Joshou*. As a story, it will have a beginning and an end. In the previous lyrics, *Joshou* is the prologue of the *touken danshi* as a sword. The limit referred to is the absolute limit of the story of Yamatonokami, Nagasone, Horikawa, and Izuminokami as a

sword. Furthermore, the word *ippo* (one step) represents the journey of their story as swords of the *shinsengumi*. This line mentions the abstract concept that the story of Yamatonokami, Nagasone, Horikawa, and Izuminokami's journey as swords will end.

The word *michibiku* means to guide or direct to go in a specific direction. The word *michibiku* is an everyday human activity. *Hoshi*, *tsuki*, *kaze*, and *wataru nami* are inanimate objects. In this stanza, the perpetrator of *michibiku* is questioned, whether it is the stars, the moon, the wind, or the waves. Keraf's (2009, p. 140) statement that personification is figurative language that describes inanimate objects as if they have human characteristics, the lyrics in stanza 1, line 3 contain personification. Line 3 of this stanza represents the story of the journey of Yamatonokami, Nagasone, Horikawa, and Izuminokami as swords. There is the word *michibiku*, which means guide, followed by the four elements of nature, namely *hoshi*, *tsuki*, *kaze*, and *wataru nami*, as the guides of the journey.

Hermeneutic Reading of Stanza 2

In the previous stanza, the prologue represents the story of Yamatonokami, Nagasone, Horikawa, and Izuminokami when they were still swords used by the Shinsengumi. In stanza 2, line 1, *owari wa kuru* states that their story as swords will reach its end. When they become *touken danshi*, the story will become part of their past.

Soredemo, which means even so, is a conjunction that has the function of stringing together words or sentences and informing that the statement mentioned first is opposite to the statement mentioned after it (Sudjianto, 2004). By Masao's explanation, *soredemo* in the lyrics *soredemo imi wo motomete shimaunda* (even so, will still seek meaning) shows the desire of *touken danshi* to

continue to seek the meaning of their purpose, which was initially a sword to protect their master, then resurrected as *touken danshi*. Because, in fact, their existence as swords has ended. Through the lyrics of this song, it can be understood that *touken danshi* are still looking for the meaning of their existence that has changed from a sword, now a *touken danshi*. Even though the *touken danshi* got a new mission as a protector of history, the *touken danshi* are still looking for the meaning of their existence because the mission as a sword and the mission as a *touken danshi* are contradictory.

The lyrics of this song in this stanza refer to the swords used by the Shinsengumi. As swords, they were created to protect their masters. So, it is rooted in their souls, and even when they are resurrected as *touken danshi*, they still want to protect the master who once used them. Meanwhile, the *saniwa* gives the *touken danshi* a mission to protect history.

Muzukashii koto (difficult things) refers to the dilemma that they experience. This dilemma occurs because of the conflict between their desires and goals. The conflict in question is when their desire to protect their master can hinder the purpose of the mission they currently receive. As happened in this musical, the *touken danshi* have a mission to protect the history of the Bakumatsu era. In carrying out his mission, the *touken danshi* must ensure the death of Hijikata. However, as a sword once used by Hijikata, Izuminokami still has the desire to protect Hijikata. With this conflict, Izuminokami has difficulty carrying out his mission.

Koete mitee (trying to overcome) refers to the *touken danshi*'s awareness of putting aside their feelings of sentiment towards their master so as not to hinder them in completing their mission. Indirectly, it also implies that they are determined to make peace with their inner conflicts.

Hermeneutic Reading of Stanza 3

The word *jidai* (era) referred to in stanza 3 line 1 is the era when Yamatonokami, Nagasone, Horikawa, and Izuminokami were still the *Shinsengumi's* swords. This era is known as the Bakumatsu era. After the Bakumatsu era ended, the use of swords in Japan also ended. Thus, the *Shinsengumi's* four swords lost their role as tools of war. They had accepted that the era of the sword had ended, and so had their role as tools. They have also gained a new role as *touken danshi*. This stanza contains the word *misadameru*, which means *to determine*, showing that the *touken danshi* have determined what they will do with their new roles.

The word *hazukashii*, which means shame, represents the shame of Yamatonokami, Nagasone, Horikawa, and Izuminokami for having experienced a dilemma during the mission. The dilemma they experienced was that as the *Shinsengumi* once used swords, they did not want the story of the *Shinsengumi* to end. However, it was the duty of the *touken danshi* to ensure history happened adequately. In the same line, there is the word *tadoritsuku*, which means to achieve, representing that the four *Shinsengumi* swords want to achieve new strength so that the events that are considered shameful do not happen again.

The word *nagai tabi* (long journey) refers to *kiwame*, a journey taken by *touken danshi* to train and seek new powers. The word *kore wa joshou* refers to the lyrics in stanza 3 line 1 to line 3, which tells the story of the *touken danshi* while on his mission at the end of the Bakumatsu era. In the previous lyric, it is said that the *touken danshi* wants to achieve new power so as not to experience a dilemma again. To achieve this, the *touken danshi* goes on a long journey, namely, *kiwame*. The story is an opening or a reason for the *touken danshi* who wants to achieve new power.

Hermeneutic Reading of Stanza 4

Stanza 4 of the song *Joshou* represents the story of when Yamatonokami, Nagasone, Horikawa, and Izuminokami were on a long journey (*kiwame*). Just like in stanza 1 line 3, the journey is again represented by the natural elements *hoshi*, *tsuki*, *kaze*, and *wataru nami* as the guides of their journey.

In this stanza, there is again a change of meaning in the form of personification, namely in *kaze wa hounade* (the wind caresses the cheek) and *nami wa oshiyoseru* (the approaching waves). The word *hounade* means to caress the cheek. The verb to caress is usually done by someone using their hands. *Kaze* or wind is an inanimate object that is not even tangible and does not have hands. Then the word *oshiyoseru* is made up of the words *oshi*, which means to push, and *yoseru*, which means to come closer. Pushing and approaching are activities performed by humans, while waves are inanimate objects. Therefore, the two lyrics contain personification.

Line 5 to line 7 in this stanza show the events experienced by *touken danshi* while traveling. In life, they see that life always has two different sides. There will be something that changes and does not change, something that is born and decays. Moreover, every life will have a beginning and an end.

Hermeneutic Reading of Stanza 5

This stanza is a repetition of the previous stanzas. Stanza 5 lines 1 and line 2 are repetitions of stanza 1. Stanza 5 line 3 is a repetition of stanza 3. Stanza 5 lines 5 and line 6 are again repetitions of stanzas 1 and 3. Line 4 represents the purpose of the *nagai tabi* (long journey) undertaken by *touken danshi*, as described in stanza 3. In stanza 3 it is said that the purpose of the *touken danshi* doing *nagai tabi* is to gain new strength. In line 4, the new power is

represented in the word *atarashii jibun* (new self).

After a hermeneutic reading of each stanza of the *Joshou* song lyrics, the entire *Joshou* song lyrics can be understood as follows: the song *Joshou* tells the story of Yamatonokami, Nagasone, Horikawa, and Izuminokami's journey that began when they were still a sword. Although their story as swords has ended and they have now taken on new roles as *touken danshi*, they still have difficulty determining their meaning and purpose as *touken danshi* is apart from their primary duties. After feeling an inner dilemma between their sentiments towards the desire to protect or their duty as protectors of history, *touken danshi* are determined to become stronger and find their new selves.

Matrix, Models, and Variants

In semiotic studies, the matrix can be words, phrases, or sentences that do not appear in the text but are implied. The matrix can be found through the interpretation of the text, which can be expressed as a model in the form of sentence patterns, repetition of words, or utterances. The model is then clarified in the form of variants. With the discovery of a matrix, the reader can also find the significance (meaning) of *Joshou's* song as a whole.

Matrix (1) in *Joshou's* song is that there is no end to a *monogatari* (story). The absence of an ending in a story is not conveyed directly, but is implied in a word that is a model. The model is the word *joshou* (prologue) in stanza 1 line 1. The variant (translation) of *joshou* depicts the story's beginning of *touken danshi*.

Matrix (2) in *Joshou's* song is the purpose of a journey. In this song, it is implied that the purpose of the journey is to complete the mission. This can be seen in the model word *tabi* (journey) in stanza 3 line 3. A variant of *tabi* (journey) is that the events

and experiences of *touken danshi* are just flowers of life or travel. However, the core of the journey is the mission.

Matrix (3) in *Joshou's* song is a dilemma. This can be seen in the model word *muzukashii* (difficult) in stanza 2 line 3. A variant of *muzukashii* (difficult) is the inner conflict experienced by *touken danshi*. The conflict in question is when their desire to protect their master can get in the way of their mission as *touken danshi*.

CONCLUSION

After being analyzed using Riffaterre's semiotic theory, the author interprets *Joshou's* song as a story of the journey experienced by *touken danshi*. The story begins from the time they are still a sword until the time they are resurrected as a *touken danshi*. This result could be achieved after finding the connections between the *Joshou* song to the storyline of the *Touken Ranbu* musical theater. By singing *Joshou's* song at the end, the scriptwriter seems to imply that this journey is not the end of the *touken danshi* story. This can be seen from the lyric's *kore wa joshou nagai tabi no hajime* (this is the beginning of a long journey). The lyrics show that with the journey they took, there is a new story that they will live. Therefore, the term *kessho* (epilogue) is not used as it does not indicate that the story has ended.

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