CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL REVIEW

This chapter discusses the theories used in this study. The theories include several concepts on cyberliterature by Piret Viires (2005) and authorship in computer games using the ideas of Wolfgang Iser (1972), Harold Love (2002) and Britta Neitzel (2005).

2.1. Cyberliterature

In order to cope with the development of technology, everything needs to be 'upgraded'; one of it being literary texts that need to adapt to the environment, thus expanding the traditional concept of literary work. This expansion emerges new forms of literature, including cyberliterature. According to Piret Viires (2005), cyberliterature can be roughly defined as a derivation from digital literature's concept, or using computer as a media to create and present literature itself. Categorized as post-modern literature, in cyberliterature, every elements characteristic of post-modern writing, for an instance "intertextuality, obscuration and disappearance of genre limits" as well as "the codes, links, and other elements of the internet" (Viires 2005:155), need to be put into consideration. Cyberliterature is used as an umbrella term which serves three categories, one of them being non-professional literary texts available at the Internet; independent

place of publication e.g. amateur writers' home pages group and portals of unrecognised authors, text-based role playing games, etc. (Viires 2005:154).

Text-based role playing game is both played as games and read as narrative. According to Domsch (2013:8), text-based role playing game can be categorized as a dynamic-active part of a narrative experience by the user. The players in a text-based role playing game take turns in fabricating narrative plot as well as the reader of the narrative itself. The interaction of the players in fabricating narrative plot is categorized as interactivity.

Thus, in text-based role playing game, readers play an important role in the process of narration conducting of the game. It will be elaborated in the next sub chapter.

2.2. Authorship in Computer Games

In the reading process, the interactivity between readers and the text is also significant in bringing literary works and texts into life, as the literary work can be brought by existence by the convergence of the text and the reader (Iser, 1974). No matter how vocal the text can be, if there is no one to read then the voice is silenced. No matter how great of a literary work can be, the intelligibility of the text is needed as it is used to create a "virtuality of the work" (Iser, 1974:50) for the reader, as the reader uses the text itself in the reading process in order to create various perspectives offered by the text.

Iser (1974:51) suggests, by making the observation of Virginia Woolf's study of *Jane Austen* in 1957 as an example, that the many outlines and

possibilities unspoken in the text lead the reader to create their own version of the story. This is the beginning of a dynamic process, which is when the written text imposes certain unwritten implications that is elaborated by its own reader's imagination resulting a greater significance of the text which it might seem to possess alone. This significance shapes an "enduring form of life" in trivial scenes of the written text, thus in the end produces the interaction between text and reader. The outlining of Woolf's theory is also taken by Iser into consideration that the reader is, too, reconstructed with the idea of a reader which the author had in mind, also known as the intended reader.

The intended reader can embody the desire of the author "both to link up with these concepts and to work on [the concepts]" (1974:33), and sometimes they act upon the concepts offered by the author. Even though the intended reader is present in the text, it is fictitious as it is not independent of the other textual perspectives. The intended reader is merely one of several perspectives which interlink and interact: narrator, characters, and plot-line. These perspectives frequently overlap with each other and develop in a way that they all dwell in the meaning of the text. Therefore, the perspectives of the text are interrelated to one another. The system of these perspectives is to transmit the individuality of the author's vision and to provide guidelines originating from different standpoint to convey the meaning of the text. The role of reader itself is called upon to mediate between the interplay of perspectives

However, as the reader relies only on the text, Iser (1974:51) argues that the text itself must be created as captivating and provoking as possible for the

readers to be progressively engaged. The text should not take too slow to proceed, or too fast, or form such a great boredom which will make the reader leave the field of play as it will not create the dynamic interactivity between the text and the reader (1974:51). The interaction of the text and the reader produces "the aesthetic object", and the meaning conveyed in the text is rather a dynamic happening instead of a detachable message. Nevertheless, Iser admits that such reader-oriented theory is "from the very outset open to the criticism that it is a form of uncontrolled subjectivism" (1974:23). Due to the reading process being an uncontrolled subjectivism, different interpretations of the readers are inevitable. This uncontrolled subjectivism and broad interpretation might trigger dissatisfaction in the reader's mind, thus it is not impossible for them to create or find their own version of the story.

This dissatisfaction and desires towards a certain text in order to conduct their own version of the text. A text-based role playing game, taking form as cyberliterature explained earlier, is one of the media for the reader. In the text-based role playing game, the reader therefore is allowed to create their own reality and even pretend to be inside of the said reality itself. When performing this, the reader experiences a shift from readership to authorship. As Iser suggests the reading process prioritizes the text and the reader, Rosenblatt adds writing to the picture. She proposes that reading and writing "encompasses a network of parallelism" (1986:7), as the reader also "composes hence writes an interpreted meaning" of the text itself. Therefore, it is not impossible for the reader to become author.

The concept and typology of author itself is various. Berensmeyer Ingo *et al* (2012) propose, though not focused merely on that matter, several typologies of authorship context, one of them is precursory authorship by Harold Love (2002). Love suggests that precursory authorship is a situation where works that directly embodied a relatively large amount of material from a previous work into a new one. A precursory author, then, is someone with function as "source" or "influence" who makes a "substantial contribution to the shape and substance of the work" (2002:40). This means that the contribution and co-existence of the precursory author in the subsequent work help shape and fill the page with slight or immense differences, though it does not imply that the originality of the subsequent work diminishes nevertheless. Love proposes an example of a musicologist named Franz Liszt and his "paraphrasing and reworking" habits of other previous works, of his precursory authors that he looked up to in his works. By this proposal, Love suggests that even in parodies that deprave the precursory authors' work the contribution and co-existence of the precursory authors are still present.

Love introduces a second mode of precursory authorship and states that it is "found in works that directly incorporate extensive material from a preceding work into a new one" (2002:40). Nowadays, this mode is called plagiarism, though Love agrees that it is still a form of authorship—which is greatly shaped and takes contribution from its precursory authors. This mode is usually found in the writing of the Middle Age and the Renaissance, when taking a significant amount of work from the precursory author and making it into a new creation was

considered “loyalty to the precursory author”. Giving Clint Eastwood as “the auteur of the sub-genre of action movies” and Sergio Leone with his spaghetti western genre, Love elaborates that precursory author is also a collaborator (2002:41). In working the film-genre, both Eastwood and Leone ‘collaborate’; Leone as the precursory author helps improve the film-genre in the preceding works of Eastwood, resulting the film-genre that what we know nowadays.

There are two kinds of precursory authorship, multiple and collective. A collective precursory authorship is such as Synge’s preface of *The Playboy of the Western World* (1968). In the preface, Love quoted (2002:41), Synge admits that the country people of Ireland helped him through their conversations and such as he had heard the phrases he employed from the people. Therefore, the people mentioned in Synge’s preface are also the collective precursory author, while Synge’s role was simply, according to Love, “that of an arranger of words and phrases contributed by a host of the others” (2002:42). On the other hand, Love discusses multiple precursory authorship by also using examples, which is of the works of Josephus. The works of Josephus was written by a Hebrew or Aramaic native speaker, had become fluent in Greek, but was doubted his mastery of Greek literary style. The writer experienced a significant inconsistency in style, one was of Thucydides and the other was of Sophocles. This issue was then concluded that Josephus was written with works of other authors under circumstances similar to the topic, and that the writer’s own style was also influenced, resulting in inconsistency.

Love's discussion emphasizes that there are some ways which make the preceding speakers and writers collide in the work of authorship (2002:42). For example, many novelists admit that they have used and/or written down real-life conversations and real-life people (such as their own friends) as characters and plotline in their works, thus indirectly creating a web of collaborative precursory authorship. Love suggests that such manipulation is often done by most writers, and they argue that these "pre-existing materials" give certain power to construct the work. In Synge's case, the process is said to be "one of an intricate interaction of the external with the personal" (2002:43); the external being words and stories people had said, and the personal being himself as a writer or arranger for that matter. These phenomena raises the awareness that in writing a certain work themselves, the writer and the speaker (or its soon-to-be reader, even its intended reader) experience an interaction which involve them in the work of authorship itself.

This involvement of the reader can be applied in many cases, including in text-based role playing game. The reader who creates a certain work for themselves, which is their own version of the precursory author's work poured in text-based role playing game, are therefore experiences a series of precursory authorship. However, as the game is one of the variety of computer games, it is necessary to consider the authorship in computer games.

Computer game needs to have a definite construction, but then the construction itself cannot be realized without the players. According to Neitzel (2005:60), the player of the game also has a role to determine "the order of a

concrete sequence of events in the course of playing game". The game will be more dynamic and interactive with the contribution of the players. Throughout the game, when a player constantly inputs (textual) information, the player prompts the computer—in this case, the creator of the game world—to process the sequence of events. Only when the chains of actions are formed, any potential narrative comes into existence. In computer games, the act of narration is understood as the selection and arrangement of events by the player. It comes *after* the game, not before, for a game can only be considered a narrative when it is actually played (2005:53). This initiates a concept of shared authorship.

Neitzel suggests that since the players give a contribution in carrying out the narrative actions, they could be described as co-authors (2005:61). If connected to Love's idea, the players therefore experience multiple authorship, as the action is conducted by more than one player in order to create the dynamic and interactivity of the narrative actions and games. Even so, Neitzel disagrees to put player's role in such significant light; instead, she proposes a term the 'implied author' from the literary theory as a description of the player's function as an author implied by the game (2005:61).

The implied author, according to Neitzel, though originally introduced by Wayne C. Booth, is a reference of an authority created by a superior text to the narrator and spans the entire text. Neitzel describes it analogously as a "necessary condition for the game to be a series of events, to be a narrative". The term also reflects the number of players that view their involvement in computer games as

they see themselves as symbolic actions' source that take place in the game (2005:61).

As Iser's intended reader, the implied author is not independent in producing the game narrative that it needs another "entity" as its primacy, which is the implied creator. The implied creator has the responsibility to form the virtual world, for the setting, the characters, and what happens in that world. Similar to Iser's intended reader and textual perspectives, in this case, both implied author and implied creator also correlates to one another. In text-based role playing game, the player is *both* the implied author and the implied creator. They are responsible for creating the narrative, which is the implied author's responsibility, *and* for creating the setting, the characters, and what happens in that world, which is the implied creator's responsibility. The representation of the implied creator's responsibility carried by the text-based role playing game players are the characters that they own and play.

Therefore, the players of text-based role playing game are responsible for Neitzel's system, resembling Gunning's filmic narrator system, of the four levels of representation identifiable in computer games: the world design (the implied creator's responsibility), the visual design (the implied creator's responsibility), the plot design (the implied author's responsibility), and the chronological design (the implied creator's responsibility).

The world design is identifiable with the rules applied in the virtual world. Neitzel (2014:10) states that, as the environment in computer games involves technology, the environment therefore is a digital environment. In text-based role

playing game, for example, before the players may enter the world, the implied creators have suggested a digital environment in which rules, terms and condition are applied in order to create a harmony in the game world itself. These rules must be obeyed all time, as there are consequences for those who rebel, such as a warning, a suspension (players are not allowed to post within days) and a banning of the players as in they are not allowed to register the game anymore in the future. The players may then join the world once they have agreed to the world design. It is necessary to make the world design first as it becomes the foundation of the world itself. After that, the creators then need to create the visual design in order to describe the visualization of the world.

The visualization of the world may take form in both narrative description of texts and pictures. Neitzel gives an example using the text adventure game called *Zork* (1972). She describes that the term 'text adventure' itself is only a form of representation (2005:51). In *Zork*, the players are met with a display of a statement as follows:

> **West of House**
>
> You are standing in an open field west of a white house, with a boarded front door. There is a small mailbox there. (*Zork*, 1972)

The display is a form of narrative description of texts; it offers a visualization of the world by statements which can be identified by the players. As for the narrative description of pictures, Neitzel offers a scene from *Blade Runner* (1997) as an example, where the players are met with a visualization of the world

in which they will be playing. In text-based role playing game, the players also include their own character's visualization in form of an avatar and signature[2], and by doing that they combine the textual and visual presentation altogether. Nonetheless, in order to get the world going, the creators must also create a plot design for the players to follow.

Neitzel suggests that the players must be aware of what they are playing (2014:11). The plot needs to be flexible as in the players are open to explore the plot given themselves. Neitzel elaborates that it is affected by the way in which the player takes part in a game (2005:41). She quoted Aarseth (2001) that the game presents not only an interpretive task but also with exploratory and configurational tasks. These tasks are done not in a fixed way, as it can be selected by the player themselves. The author of the tasks also provides a range of possibilities basis as the player's selection. This provision of possibilities of the selection also affects the story, as Neitzel has said that the narrative in computer games can only be identified when it is actually played (2005:47). In other words, the plot in the digital environment needs to be created for the players to intervene and choose amongst the given possibilities and choices for which events or actions to realize. According to Neitzel, this process of intervention and selection can be understood as "a process of making sense" (2005:53). Neitzel, quoted Luhmann, describes sense as a "selective relationship between system and environment" (1985:34, cf. Neitzel 2005), which means that other possibilities

[2] An avatar is a picture of the character's visualization, usually a picture of their close-up face, put below the character's name, sized no more than 100x100 pixels; a signature is a larger picture that can represent the character in a more elaborative way, sized no more than 500x200 pixels.

and selections not chosen by the players are still present as they remain in the background. Only when the plot and the players have met and understood each other, the narration will unfold chronologically according to the players' selections.