

## Cyber Literature: A Reader – Writer Interactivity

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**Abstract:** Cyber Literature is a term known since the coming of the internet which brings a convenience, changing habit and world view. This study is a survey-based on respondents' opinion about the existence of cyber literature on social media; of its benefit and impact to the reader. This study limits to the poems on Facebook group. The reason is simple; it favors the short form. For the study of a reader-writer interactivity in cyber literature is more likely on poetry. The approach is reader response literary theory with focus on the reader-writer interactivity on Facebook. This research aimed at uncovering the motivation of readers to response the uploaded text, the reasons why they love it and what its advantages. The results showed that cyber literature is successfully to introduce a new literary genre as well as to raise motivation and creativity of authors to make use the internet space.

**Keyword:** Cyber Literature; Poetry; Social Media; Facebook; Interactivity; Reception Theory; Reader Response

### 1. Introduction

Literature is a reading that contains elements of entertainment, education, and information. It is an author's creative work poured in beautiful language. Literature stimulates the sensitivity of its readers. It presents various aspects of life and even constantly parses life, or may be, a reflection of life. Literature was born since humans inhabit this earth. Even since before humans know writing system, literature has already become the part of human life. Literary works are a part of the culture. As a cultural product, literature develops in line with the development of human life. Human history has noted various developments of literary media. One of them is the birth of the internet as one of the media of information and science development, which in turn is also being used as a media of promoting literary works. Numbers of works that are read through the internet media are categorized as cyber literature. One of the hallmarks of this genre is it can offer 'reader-writer interactivity. It is not easy in conventional literary work.

Many terms used so far for cyber literature such as literary machine (Nelson, 1993), cybertext (Eskelinen, 2012), digital literary (Hoover, et al. 2014), digital media (Ryan, 2013), digital literature (Sanz, 2007), and electronic literature (Hayles, 2001). The electronic literature also has close affinities with the digital arts, computer games, and other forms associated with networked and programmable

media. It is also deeply entwined with the powerful commercial interests of software companies, computer manufactures, and other purveyors of apparatus associated with the networked and programmable media (Katherine, 2008).

In this article, the writer will be using the term 'cyber literature' to refer to the written literary texts, distributed (uploaded) and read on screen of computer. Because the formation of computer networks, together with the volatility of inscription of digitized information, allows fictional worlds to grow, to be modified from the inside and outside, and to give birth to other worlds (Ryan, 2013). The reason for preferring this term (cyber literature) to others is that it alludes to the two umbrellas of this broad category of text: the literary tradition and the literary on computer. In some cases, the study of cyber literature is closely related to the study of cybertext. *Cybertext* focuses on ergodic literature, where the user has to do non-trivial work to traverse the text (instead of merely interpreting it) after a thorough critique of existing paradigms (Eskelinen, 2012).

Cyber literature was born as the impact of technological development. The new following five centuries of domination of the book is moving into the "margins of literate culture" (Bolter, 1991). As he claims that print no longer defines the "organization and presentation of knowledge" or even the nature of knowledge itself. Electronic texts, shaped by readers as writers, will continue to replace single-voiced and unified print texts. The computer, like all technologies, defines a particular "physical and visual" field. Its writing space transforms writing to something fluid, not fixed.

If the previous literary media used newspapers and magazines as the medium, and so the medium of the cyber literature is electronic space (internet). Comparing to literary newspapers or magazines, in cyber literature, writers experience the ease in the appearance of their work to the reader because there is no strict selection of the literature. It is impressed, everyone can become a poet and everyone can become a literary critic. Therefore, it is likely that the electronic medium as a means of expressing one's expression will overwhelm and shift the previous medium. All that happens because of the rapid development of technology. The reader judges the quality of the work. However, a good work will certainly always have its own readers, and the loyal readers forever.

Cyber literature has emerged since the end of the last century, which is around the 1990s. Despite the fact, the birth of cyber literature in the world of literature is respected and appreciated differently. Even had time to cause pros and cons from various circles. On the one hand, there is a welcome it positively, but not rarely judged negatively. It was greeted to be negatively because the cyber literature is considered not to maintain quality and spontaneously folded alone. It is often regarded as an uncontrolled publication of literature. On the contrary, it is positively welcomed because the presence of cyber literature can be easily and quickly accessed by readers more widely. In addition, the presence of cyber literature through the internet provides an opportunity for authors who work in the field of literature to contribute, both in the form of works and thoughts, responses to the development of literary works. This is where a reader - writer interactivity occurs.

The reader - writer interactivity is a part of the theory of receptions developed by Hans Robert Jauss (1982). The theory was promoted in Germany when Hans Robert Jauss published a paper entitled *Literary Theory as a Challenge to Literary Theory* (1970). The focus of attention (reader response theory) is the acceptance of a text by the reader. Although it was not exactly what Jauss meant, but at least, in the reader - writer interactivity, this approach will involve two important things in the reader - writer interaction, they are immersion and self – reflexivity.

Digital media have made important contributions to both immersion and self-reflexivity. It is richly designed imaginary worlds, hypertext fiction explodes these worlds into textual shards, code poetry promotes awareness of the machine language that brings text to the screen (Ryan, 2013), and what Fruin (2013) calls “process-intensive” works direct attention away from the surface of the screen, toward the virtuoso of programming that generates the text.

Actually the development of technology, automatically will greatly affect the cultural aspects and social life of a nation, not least the literature. Of course the development of technology on the one hand will have a positive impact and on the other hand will bring a negative impact. So, it also againsts the presence of literature through electronic media. However, we do not have to worry too much about the presence of cyber literature in our midst.

## **2. Literary work and Internet Aids**

The presence of cyber literature through electronic media should not be underestimated. Supposedly, cyber literature can still be positively accepted because inevitably, the literature will become part of the history of literature. Through electronic media, it is expected at least for the future will bring up many new possibilities that will be done by the authors. These symptoms should be viewed as a breakthrough. The development of technology, especially the internet can be regarded as a great revolution of its influence in this life. Life becomes easier. One of the positive effects is on the world of literature. Now, the spread of information through internet media is unmatched. Such rapid and unlimited deployment makes life more global. Due to the influence of technology, culture also becomes a compound and complex. The culture of a nation would be easy to develop, along with the development of technology. With the internet, at least it can be used to force and help the development of literature becoming better. One of the proves, the internet by itself obviously gives a new space for writers to write and promote their works.

However, it cannot be denied that cyber literature on Facebook for example is regarded as an object that has two sides of the coin, in addition to the negative side, it also, of course, has advantages. Indirectly, the presence of senior writers in Facebook will give a positive influence to the novice writer. Through the posts, comments, and inter-wall communication they will provide some benefits. For beginner writers, they will get the points of how to write a good work. As for senior writers, in addition to promote the works for free, they will also get a direct correction via comments, either from fellow writers of Facebook users or from other readers as well.

This is one of the advantages cyber literatures on Facebook that opens the possibility of a reader-writer interactivity that is almost impossible to do with conventional works. In the conventional work (printed version), the most likely to do is reader response without interactivity. The reader of respondents is important enough to interpret the literary works from the reader side but may be the result of the response is not known by the author. Unlike the case with reader-writer interactivity, the interactive process will occur in writing between the reader and the author.

In this study, there are at least four methods contained in the response of readers to cyber literary works. The approach is critical comment, appreciation, criticism, and flattery. Because of the subjects of this research are students of literature learners, so the aspects to be traced are the extent to which the subjects respond to cyber literary works using the four methods of response of readers as mentioned before.

## 2. Cyber Literature and Social Media

The genre of literary works is divided into prose and poetry. Novel, drama, short-story belong to prose, while poem, verse, lyric, proverb, joke, minstrelsy, and Malay *pantun* belong to poetry. Poetry is a piece of literary work written by a poet in expressing various emotions which are expressed by the use of variety of different techniques including metaphors, similes personification and onomatopoeia. These methods are what commonly used to distinguish poetry from prose. Prose can be defined as an ordinary creative writing without any metrical structure. Poems often make heavy use of imagery and word association to quickly convey emotions (Wellek & Warren, 1956). Some poetry types are specific to particular genre and culture and they respond to characteristic of the language in which the poets write, such as Malay *pantun* and elegy.

Poetry is a work that consistently exploits the potential of words used strictly and meaningfully. The power of poetry lies in the use and selection of words and the forms of expression. The significance meanings contains, if not mostly, sometimes ambiguous and multi interpretation. Since their words are ambiguous and multi interpretation, so they provoke the readers to react and write comment. Cyber literature favors the short form.

In cyber literature, the relation between author and readers are cyberistic relation, where they never meet. Their meeting is only on internet of social media. They generally are incorporated in groups such as in Facebook. The wall of Facebook is then to make use for publishing poems and the like. It is of course not all members are poets. But they are people who are interested in literature or being learning literature. In education side, the Facebook group is very helpful for those who are interested in studying and studying literature, especially students of department of literature.

## 4. A Reader – Writer Interactivity

A reader – writer interactivity is one of the new strategies in literary appreciation. Through social media, the easiest thing to observe is the interaction between writers and readers on Facebook. Comparing to other social media, Facebook has its advantages because it provides comment and reaction space (like, love, wow, haha, sad and angry). Interaction occurs not only in writer and reader interactivity but between readers as well. The results of mutual opinions and sharing comment can be used by writers for the development of ideas in the future.

Nowadays, literary dissemination has evolved through various media; newspapers, magazines, books, and up to the most recent is the internet medium. Prior to the birth of the printing press, literary works were stored in oral form, papyrus scrolls, and parchments to printing books. The limitations of print media at high prices have hindered the spread of literature. It seems that the presence of cyber literature is a natural development and quite amazing because it has been the way out the birth of works from the opportunity to write on the internet space. Prior to the birth of cyber literature, computer and internet are two things cannot be separated each other. According to Ryan (2013) the computer provides not only a channel of transmission for the texts of fan fiction, it can also become a tool of production.

The functional approach to the reader in cybertextuality calls to mind Foucault's author function (1991) as a function of the discourse that has its social, historical and legal implications. The application of this can be applied in some social media such as Facebook, Line, WhatsApp, Myspace and even Blogs that

provide columns for interaction. But the most ideal today is on Facebook. A poem for example, someone can upload it on the Facebook wall as a status, the author will then get a response from the readers. The reader's response is then responded back by the author. This is what is called the writer - reader interactivity.

Why poetry?, once again, one of the benefits of this genre (in relation to cyber literature) is it can offer 'reader-writer interactivity'. This still includes a new study in literary research. In other words, the readers' responses contribute to the meaning of literary works. In the sociology of literature, such literary meaning is included in the study reception theory. Reader - writer interactivity is included in the reception theory area.

According to Holub (1984) reception theory is “a general shift in concern from the author and the work to the text and the reader.” It reflects a paradigm shift in the history of literature, and it is considered “a reaction to social, intellectual, and literary developments. This theory is defined as reader response literary that emphasizes each particular interpretation and reception in making meaning from a literary text.

Furthermore, reception theory (Tompkins, 1980) is a version of reader response literary theory that emphasizes each particular reader's reception or interpretation in making meaning from a literary text. Reception theory is generally referred to as audience reception in the analysis of communications models. In literary studies, reception theory was originated from the work of Hans Robert Jauss in the late 1960s

## **5. Objectives and Method**

### **5.1 Objectives of the research**

This research aimed at 1) revealing various forms reader response through online media, 2) tracing the advantage and disadvantages of reader-writer interactive on social media, and 3) finding out the motivation of the reader to response the uploaded text (poetry).

The objectives of the research are formulated based on this research topic. The first and the second objective can be reached through questionnaire. The third objective can be reached through in-depth interview. Through indepth interview, the subjects may express their motivation as to respond the questions as they expect from them. The data of this research was gathered for one semester (August 2016 - January 2017).

### **5.2 Method of Collecting Data**

This study observed cyber literature readers, especially students who like to read literary works uploaded on blogs, facebook and other sites online. Because those places have a comment for the reader. Through the reader's comment there will be an interaction between the author and the reader, or also between fellow readers. Their comments can be read on Facebook.

The data of this research are gathered from questionnaire and interview to elicit information from the subjects. The population of the research is English Literature Department on going Students of Hasanuddin University of 2016 academic year.

Of the 257 students who completed the questionnaire, 162 (63%) among the respondents answered that they actively read and responded to cyber literature on the internet, 37% said none at all. To 162 students, followed by giving a questionnaire to find out their opinions about cyber literature. The questionnaire question revolves around three important interrelated aspects: 1) what do you think about cyber literature ?, 2) how do you like cyber literature ?, and 3) is cyber literature relaxing (enjoyable)? In order to guarantee the question reliability, researchers have conducted a questionnaire test to measure validity. Summary of respondent answers can be seen in the following table:

Table 1: Response of the Respondents

Do you read cyber literature?	
<b>Yes</b>	<b>63%</b>
Cyber literature is exciting	29%
It is entertaining	14%
It is relaxing	13%
Others	7%
<b>No</b>	<b>36%</b>
Cyber literature is junk	16%
It is boring	9%
It is not interesting	7%
Others	4%
<b>not sufficient answer</b>	<b>1%</b>
<b>n= 257</b>	

Based on the 'yes' group (162 respondents) it might be explained that the reaction of respondents on the wall post on Facebook (especially poetry) varied.

Table 2: Reading & Response on Facebook

What is your reaction on the Facebook status?	
Commenting as response	27%
Commenting as response + reacting	44%
Reacting only	17%
Just reading	12%
<b>n= 162</b>	

Table 2 showed that 44% respondents, not only to comment on the post but to react as well. In other words, 71% (27%+44%) respondents certainly give a response. The amount is significant enough to state that cyber literature on Facebook attracts student interest and has a positive impact on literary readers, especially poetry.

Some examples of Facebook groups about poetry related to cyber literature (all groups are in Indonesian) are as follows:

Table 3: Facebook Groups for Cyber Literature

Name <sup>*)</sup>	Facebook Link
Penyair Facebook	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/groups/189468621244597/">https://www.facebook.com/groups/189468621244597/</a>
Pis – Puisi Indah Semua	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/groups/157770477661745/">https://www.facebook.com/groups/157770477661745/</a>
Rumah Literasi	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/groups/372516746452643/">https://www.facebook.com/groups/372516746452643/</a>
Gempita Biostory	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/groups/138479022979602/">https://www.facebook.com/groups/138479022979602/</a>
Puisi & Kata Bijak	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/groups/puisidan.katabijak/">https://www.facebook.com/groups/puisidan.katabijak/</a>

<sup>\*)</sup>**Legend:** *Penyair Facebook* (Facebook Poets), *Pis – Puisi Indah Semua* (All Beauty Poems), *Rumah Literasi* (Literacy House), *Gempita Biostory* (Vibrant Biostory) and *Puisi & Kata Bijak* (Poetry and words of wisdom)

## 6. Findings and Discussion

In principle, the single question in this study is “do you read cyber literature?”. After categorizing the responses, 63% respondents answer ‘yes’, 36% answer ‘no’, and 1% other has not sufficient answer. To whom answer ‘yes’, after the answers are grouped, it is found a number of reasons as follows 1) cyber literature is exciting (29%), 2) it is entertaining (14%), and 3) it is relaxing (13%), and others (7%) cover provide new experiences, hone skills, and encourage creativity. As for who answered 'no' because of 1) cyber literature is junk (16%), 2) it is boring (9%), 3) it is not interesting (7%) and others (4%), such as wasting time, less useful, and the like.

These reasons can be ascertained as a representation of respondents’ perceptions of the presence of cyber literature by utilizing social media (here is Facebook). As one of social media, Facebook can be used for sharing information, connecting people, introducing and promoting something, and for the sake of appreciation of literature. The appreciation of literature through online media is one of the opportunities to see the application of writer-reader interactivity in cyber literature.

Based on the response of the respondents, it is certain that a number of respondents (63%) reading cyber literature and doing an interaction with writers, or if they are writers, they also interact with their readers. This number is significant enough to state that cyber literature on Facebook is enough to have a positive impact on literary readers, especially on literary work of poetry.

Facebook is a representation of information technology to connect people in the world. It becomes an alternative means of learning literature. Facebook is groomed for the progress, goodness and development of the literary world. Facebook became one of the media alternatives for saving literary document. The coming cyber literature, it promotes the cyber writers in cyber space. The cyber space suddenly became something like a showroom for promoting literary expression especially poetry. Apart from its weaknesses and advantages, Facebook is just one form of technological advancement. It's not



fair if Facebook is avoided just because of some disadvantages. Facebook position if addressed properly, it can be used to become a medium of learning, one of which is a literary learning.

## 7. Conclusion

The birth of cyber literature is something that cannot be avoided. It was born by utilizing the facilities provided by cyber space. This situation is enriched by the fluid nature of digital media that serve as the medium of information dissemination. One of the social media is Facebook. The such social media as a two-sided objects, on the one hand it can be used for good thing and on the other it can be used for evil (cyberbully for instance). It depends on which side people will use it.

The research found that Facebook as one of the media of cyber literature is very popular with the reasons: a) it is easily accessible, b) authors and readers can interact directly, c) interaction between fellow readers is easy to do, d) it is a means of socializing with authors and readers, e) available public groups and closed groups, and f) special conversations can be made through inbox. However, Facebook is also not free with weaknesses. For example, Facebook can be misused among other: a) to cheat, b) to bully, c) to spread hoaxes, and d) to provoke. Maybe this is because Facebook cannot distinguish between the original account and the fake one. Profile picture is sometimes not identic with the owner.

Cyber literature is mediated by technology of computer. The technology has triggered the interest of many authors to allow their motivation and creativity to make use the space (internet wall). In some cases, both printed publication and cyber publication have differences and similarities. But the presence of media technology has changed the way of view and barriers of the world so far. The era of technology (internet) has at least shifted the perspective and attitude of the people about the importance of documenting a literary work. Through the internet space, the literary documentation becomes easy. It is just like a book or any pieces of literature that can be recorded as source of document where the writer and reader can look them back at what they have written. The research concluded that facebook can be a medium of cyber literature with unlimited space. This opportunity has been exploited by poet writers to introduce their works. In turn, literary learners can appreciate cyber literature through facebook with a writer-reader interactivity. The theory belongs to reader response of literary text.

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