

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter is the initial section of this paper. In this chapter, the writer explains about background of the research, statement of problem, objective of the research, research significance and previous studies.

### 1.1 Background

In literature study, absurdism is a genre that usually has unique mark: the works are strangely fun. This genre was originally a philosophical theory that related to existentialism. Departing from the philosophical thought, literary works with absurdism characteristic emerged—the features of the story are rather strange compared to other genres: human life is not meaningful and reality are strange. According to Martin Esslin in *The Theatre of The Absurd*, “Absurd originally means ‘out of harmony’, in musical context.” (Esslin, 1961, p. xix). In Theatre, it is kind of drama which give the impression of ‘nonsense’. Uniquely, this peculiarity seems funny when it appears as a work of literature. Hence absurdism often appears as a joke in comedy works.

The work that began the emergence of this absurdism thought is a philosophical essay from Albert Camus entitled "The Myth of Sisyphus". This thought is widespread, including to writer's and playwright's mind. One of the most famous drama with thick absurdity characteristic in it is "Waiting for Godot" by Samuel Beckett.

Literary works are progressing, many works adapted into other forms. In the early days literature are limited only in the form of written works. This is in

accordance with Terry Eagleton that stated literature is kind of imaginative writing in the form of fiction—not fact (Eagleton, 1983, p. 1). But as time goes by literary works changed into various forms. This is in accordance with Wellek and Warren who stated that literature is identical with the words: “the expression of ‘human’ feeling, imaginative process, and creativity” (Wellek, 1971, p. 2). Drama is also evolving with the discovery of film that allows people to watch drama in their television. Even *Waiting for Godot* has been adapted to a movie today. Throughout the course of literary evolution, absurdism as a genre in literature will always keep on following the transformation.

Many people love to watch movie today, but some people do not think the movie they are watching is also a work of literature. From the mentioned assumption, the author reviewed a movie—as a literary work—in case to make people realized, the way to enjoy a movie is not only by feeling the sensations they get while watching (fun, scared, sad, etc.) but there also moral message and values. One that many people may not realize has the absurdism features in it is *Spongebob Squarepants*, a popular genre comedy cartoon series.

The study used a cartoon series *Spongebob Squarepants* with an episode titled "Club Spongebob". *Spongebob Squarepants* is a cartoon show that tells the life of a sponge who lives under the sea with his sea-creatures friends. In fact there are many facets that can be studied from this cartoon series, for instances symbolic violence, children's view and sexual perversion. But the authors have not found a single study that examines *Spongebob* from the ideology presented in it. Therefore, the author are interested to study Absurdism, as a literary theory, in

one episode of *Spongebob Squarepants* which considered to have thick characteristic of absurdism.

Absurdism characteristics might be found in *Spongebob Squarepants*. Eventhough living as a sponge, Spongebob is clearly a reflection of human being proven by his physical appearance and behavior (Suhada, 2016). Even after people realized that this is a work of fiction, which is not fact, there are still many basic logical error in this series for example, there is fire under the sea, and the characters are doing 'stupid' nonsense action. As a popular literature, Spongebob is a television program from Nickelodeon—a popular cartoon channel among children. However this odd cartoon accepted by the viewers see the facts that this series becoming so popular to this day.

In accordance with the theory of absurdism which assumes that life is not meaningful, there also some absurdism elements in *Spongebob*, especially in episode "Club Spongebob". James Saunders in his article potrayed that in absurdism play, the characters are not convincingly motivated, yet this play often contain hardly any recognizable human beings and present completely unmotivated actions (Saunders, 2003). The story in episode "Club Spongebob" has a similar character compared to the statement above—Spongebob and Patrick worship a conch shell that obviously only a toy which able to speak random words. The audience might understand the whole story in the mentioned episode, but they probably do not aware of the concept behind the story.

Based on above reasons, the author analyze the presence of absurdism elements in *Spongebob Squarepants*. In addition, the author also try to find how

the absurdity characteristics take shapes through the movie of *Spongebob Squarepants*.

### **1.2 Scope of Problem**

In order to limit the problem of the study, the researcher restricted this study only by using structural approach and relates to absurdism that can be found in the work of *Spongebob Squarepants* episode “Club Spongebob”. In other words, the writer does not discuss the author, the audience and other extrinsic elements in this study.

### **1.3 Statement of Problem**

The very basic question of this study is to know whether *Club Spongebob* is counted as an absurdism literary work. To take the focus of this study clearly, the author wrote questions in the form of problem statement to be answered in this study. The statement of the problem to be analyzed are as follows:

1. What kinds of absurdity are appeared in the *Spongebob Squarepants* episode of “Club Spongebob”?
2. How absurdism is described in the *Spongebob Squarepants* episode of “Club Spongebob”?

### **1.4 Research Objective**

The purpose of this research are as follows.

1. To find out what kinds of absurdity appeared in the *Spongebob Squarepants* episode of “Club Spongebob”.
2. To find out how absurdism is described in the *Spongebob Squarepants* episode of “Club Spongebob”.

### 1.5 Research Significance

There are two types of significance in research, theoretical and practical. The theoretical significance is the benefit of this research for the development of literary science and as an insight into popular literature in the form of film or movie. The second significance, practical benefits is that this study can be used as an alternative source of literary research, especially in a subject about popular literature or literary theory of absurdism.

### 1.6 Previous Study

Research on literary works has been done since literature is researched long time ago. Especially today when many universities bring literary majors, every year the thesis and research is made by students who want to graduate from college. Considering it, of course, has been a lot of research conducted on the topic of Absurdism. In addition, there are also studies that use *Spongebob Squarepants* as its object. Here are two of research in literature related to the research being done by the author.

It was done a thesis with the title “The Absurdity of Drama on Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*”. This thesis was written by Rustandi in 2012. He used the theory of absurdism as his main theory and examined the elements of absurdity existed in the drama *Waiting for Godot*. The drama itself consists of two stage that told two people named Vladimir and Estragon who were waiting for a mysterious man named Godot. They talked while waiting and did things that were not important. They even had mad each other in the middle of their conversation but then they realized there was no place to go. During the drama, a man named

Godot whom they talked about never actually came. Many critics judge that the plot contained in this drama is a circular plot that does not end because once the drama ends, the story goes back to the beginning. Such an odd plots are considered to be characteristic of plots characterized by absurdism (Rustandi, 2012).

Next, it has been researched a thesis entitled Popular Antrophomorphisms in *Spongebob Squarepants* Series. This research was written by Suhada two years ago, exactly 2016. The study used the object of *Spongebob Squarepants* with the assumption that the characters that appeared in *Spongebob* inspired and indeed made based on human both physically and mentally. Sponges that were originally only marine plants were given legs and worked as a chef. Sandy who was a squirrel is depicted wearing an astronaut shirt and walking on two legs like a human. In the study, the researcher found out that the characteristics in *Spongebob* were picture of human being (Suhada, 2016).

From the literature review above, the writer finds that non of them really discussed exactly what the writer is trying to study, which is to understand the characteristics of absurdism that appear in the *Spongebob Squarepants* story. Therefore, the researcher is the first to examine *Spongebob* with the theory of absurdism.