CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

I.I. Background of the Analysis

Literature has some definitions. Roberts (1995: 1) in his book’s Literature: An Introduction to Reading and Writing states that literature refers to compositions that tell stories, dramatize situations, express emotions, and analyze and advocate ideas. This quotation emphasizes that literature pictures the life of society and its elements such as emotions, ideas, situation, etc.

According to Roberts (1995: 2), Literature can be classified into three categories: (1) prose fiction, (2) poetry, and (3) drama. These three genres have much in common, but they also have distinguishing characteristics. The essence of fiction is narration, the relating or recounting of a sequence of events or actions. Works of fiction usually focus on one or a few major characters as they interact with other characters and deal with problems. Poetry expresses a conversation or interchange that is grounded in the most deeply felt experiences of human beings. Drama is literature designed to be performed by actors. Drama may focus on a single character or a small number of characters, and it enacts fictional events as if they were happening in the present, to be witnessed by an audience.

Drama, as a branch of literature, also pictures the life of a society including the situations, emotions, and the ideas of human being as a part of society. In this thesis, I would like to analyze about the idea of escapism in Tennessee Williams’ play The Glass Menagerie.
Escapism is an action of turning away from reality. Apter (1982: 6), in his book’s *Fantasy Literature*, states that fantasy offers escape from reality, but the purpose and effect of the escape ranges from wish-fulfilment, excitement or sheer entertainment, to release from habitual assumptions, thus providing a vantage point from which new possibilities can be realized. This quotation emphasizes that the purpose of escapism or the escape from reality is to fulfill one’s expectations, to gain pleasure or entertainment, to free somebody from routine of real life. He also states that fantasy also serves as a means of escaping from habitual assumptions and expectations, but the purpose of this escape is to show how awful, how limiting and imprisoning, the human world is. This quotation cites the unpleasant life is the cause of human’s escape.

There are some causes of escapism. However, in this thesis I am just going to analyze three causes of it. They are tribulation, inferiority complex, and disappointment. Tribulation is a great trouble or suffering. The tribulation can be caused by certain situations such as poverty and the failure in fulfilling dreams. Inferiority complex is a feeling that one is less important, less clever or less admired than other people. This feeling can be caused by physical or mental disability. Disappointment, as another cause of escapism, is the state of being dissatisfied, sad or not pleased. This condition can happen if the desired events or situations have not happened.

Three characters of Tennessee Williams’ play *The Glass Menagerie*, Amanda Wingfield, Laura Wingfield, and Tom wingfield escape from the reality of their lives because of the above reasons. Amanda escapes from the reality of her life because of tribulation. In the play, she is pictured as a wife who is
abandoned by her husband and a mother of two children who are unable to circulate into society. She fails to sell magazine subscription and depends on her son’s salary. Amanda can not accept the reality and escape to her past as a belle from genteel Southern family.

Laura Wingfield, the daughter of Amanda, escapes from the reality of her life because of the inferiority complex. She is crippled and magnifies her crippled leg as a reason to withdraw from society and create her own imaginative world.

Tom Wingfield, the son of Amanda, escape from the reality of his life because of disappointment. He loves adventures and wants to be a merchant sailor. However, he is stuck in a shoe warehouse to live his mother and sister. The disappointment makes him escape to liquor and find adventures in movies.

In brief, this thesis offers the analysis of tribulation as the cause of Amanda’s escape, the inferiority complex as the cause of Laura’s escape, and the disappointment as the cause of Tom’s escape.

**I.2. Problem of the Analysis**

Tribulation is a great trouble or suffering. The suffering can be caused by certain situation such as poverty, the failure in fulfilling dreams, etc. Inferiority complex is a condition when people have less respect to themselves. They think that they are worse than others. They have no confidence in themselves. Disappointment, as another cause of escapism, is the state of being sad or dissatisfied.

In this thesis, I would like to analyze about tribulation, inferiority complex, and the disappointment as the causes of escapism in Tennessee Williams’ play
The Glass Menagerie. Prior to the analysis, the questions below are the problem, which I am going to analyze:

1. Does tribulation make Amanda Wingfield isolated from social living that make her have rude manners?
2. Does inferiority complex make Laura Wingfield safe living alone without having interaction with others?
3. Does disappointment make Tom Wingfield frustrated for being unable to satisfy his choices of life?

I.3. Objective of the analysis

In line with the problem I mentioned above, this thesis is meant to find out the answers of the above questions. Thus, this thesis is intended to:

1. Explain whether tribulation makes Amanda Wingfield isolated from social living that make her have rude manners.
2. Clarify whether inferiority complex makes Laura Wingfield safe living alone without having interaction with others.
3. Describe whether disappointment makes Tom Wingfield frustrated for being unable to satisfy his choices of life.

I.4. Scope of the Analysis

Tribulation, inferiority complex, and disappointment are the causes of escapism. In this thesis, the analysis is focused on tribulation as the cause of Amanda’s escape, inferiority complex as the cause of Laura’s escape, and disappointment as the cause of Tom’s escape.
I.5. Significance of the Analysis

The analysis in this thesis is conducted in order to enrich literary study about play especially Tennessee Williams’ play *The Glass Menagerie* related to escapism as an issue discussed in it through the description of characters. In addition, I hope the analysis of this thesis can become a comparative substance for the students of literature in analyzing play as a field of analysis, especially the works of Tennessee Williams.

I.6. Review of Related Literature

There have been some commentaries on Tennessee Williams’ play *The Glass Menagerie* especially commentaries on escapism as an issue discussed in *The Glass Menagerie*. Two commentaries are made by Roberts (1987: 1518) in his book’s *Literature: An Introduction to Reading and Writing* and Benjamin Nelson in Jacobus (1988: 989) *The Bedford Introduction to Drama*.

Roberts’s commentary focuses on the personalities of the three Wingfields. He describes that Laura Wingfield is the least competent member of the family. She is crippled by her own insecurity and withdraws into a world of glass figurines and old phonograph. Amanda Wingfield is a mother who always tries to provide for Laura’s future but her perspectives are skewed by her romanticized memories of a gracious Southern past of plantations, formal dances, and ‘gentlemen callers’. Tom is desperate to escape the trap of his impoverished family.

In Roberts’s commentary above, the three Wingfields are pictured as the characters who escape from the reality of their lives. His description above
encourages me to find out the truth of escapism in *The Glass Menagerie* and the causes of their escape.

Another commentator, Benjamin Nelson, in his commentary titled *Problems In The Glass Menagerie* focuses his commentary on escape, which is used by the characters as their private defense against destruction. Laura creates her own sparkling, cold world which gives the illusion of warmth but is as eternal in its unreality as the glass from which it is composed; Amanda strikes out with all her power against her fate by clinging to the past as to the shield; and Tom, recognizing the plight of his family, can do no more that drift away from them.

Benjamin’s commentary also focuses on the escape of the three Wingfields. This commentary encourages me more to prove that *The Glass Menagerie* tells about the escape of Amanda Wingfield, Laura Wingfield, and Tom Wingfield. Besides that, I am also interested in finding the causes of their escape.