CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

This thesis entitled Depression Reflected in Sylvia Plath's Selected Poems. The poem was chosen as the main subject of the analyzing. Poem is a product of literature and literature talks about life.

Literature is about life and living means the portrait of what happened in human lives such as birth, death, happiness, sufferance, love, hatred, loneliness, togetherness and other human living experiences. The definition of literature cannot stuck on the Latin term ‘letter’ which the word literature was taken, literature here involve the artistic merit which have more value. Shortly, literature is about people’s idea and feelings, the true one or kind of imagination. People who want to express their feelings or emotion can use this product of literature called literary works.

There are some kinds of literary works; those are poetry, drama, prose and many more including poem. “A poem begins with a lump in a throat; a homesickness or a love sickness. It is a reaching out toward expressions; an effort to find fulfillment. A complete poem is one where an emotion has found its thought and the thought has found the words”. (James Cox, 1962: 16). Through poem, people may reflect their individual emotion or about the phenomenon around them that catch their interests through language. The language of poem is not a language that used by people in daily conversation, but it is more like an arrangement of beautiful language which have special message in specific form.
As William Wordsworth says, “I have said that poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility: the emotion is contemplated till, by a species of reaction, the tranquility gradually disappears, and an emotion, kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind.”. The definition of poem may be different to each person, but there is the same idea about poem which is conveying feelings through the language. In this thesis the writer chooses Sylvia Plath as the poet and chooses some of her poem to be analyzed.

The reason of the writer gets interested in those poems is because mostly they talk about sufferings, depression and death. Those themes was the reflection of Sylvia Plath own life, known from her biography. In that period of time there were not many poets who wrote their works as the way Sylvia Plath wrote her poems. Because of the way Sylvia Plath wrote her poems, she was called conventionalist. It means, the poet writes their poem based on their own life and people’s lives around them. The other reason of the writer chose Sylvia Plath because her biography was full of tragedies and depression but in the same time she could write many poems that really unusual but interesting.

Those selected poems that were chosen by the writer were full of expression of depression. Those poems are Daddy, Lady Lazarus and Edge. Those poems talked about death and reflected the depression she felt when she wrote them. As in Daddy that was written in 1962, most of the words in this poem reflected how she hated her father because he was dead when she was just an eight-year-old girl. In Lady Lazarus, the overall poem also talked about suicidal. Finally Edge, was
known as Sylvia Plath’s last poem because she was finally committed suicide.

The writer intends to analyze the relationship between the depressions felt by Sylvia Plath as the main character in her selected poems. In analyzing those poems, the writer uses some theory and approaches. By biographical approach the writer uses all the information of Sylvia Plath’s biography to relate them into the poems. The biographical approach stresses the convention of the poet experiences of their own life that influence them to explain the meaning of imaginations and words used in their literary works (Wellek, 1993:88). The Expressive Approach by M.H Abrams helps the writer in finding and analyzing the expression of depression in those selected poems. The depression itself regarded as a disorder of mood in contrast to schizophrenia, a disorder of thought; there are cognitive disturbances in depression. (Snyder, 1980:8)

In analyzing the problem in this thesis, the writer will use the Dynamic Structural Theory. Through the Dynamic Structural Theory, the writer focuses on the character that reflected in those poems and the psychology of the poet in writing those poems. To do those analyses the writer uses qualitative method. As the opposition to quantitative method, qualitative method focuses on collecting data and makes interpretation based on the data. The main field of this method is about the thoughts and actions human which is suitable to use to this kind of analysis.

Finally, through this thesis the writer wants to show the reader that poem is not only about words or about the arrangement of words. Poem as a beautiful language is rich of meaning. Behind those beautiful language there may be hidden
a beautiful or even a sorrowful meaning. Poem is more complex than what is seen, it has meaning even message. The selected poems of Sylvia Plath: *Daddy, Lady Lazarus* and *Edge* are full of meaning and history. The history here means Sylvia Plath biography, everything that happened in her life, the sufferings, sadness, happiness, even loneliness. Through this analysis, the writer wants to show the effect of Sylvia Plath’s depression to the way she wrote a poem.

*Daddy, Lady Lazarus* and *Edge* are full of moral values that the readers can learn. Through the analysis of this thesis, the writer hopes that the reader will understand the depression in Sylvia Plath’s poems, in which the reader can feel the situation or the history when those poems were created.

### 1.2. Problem of the Study

Based on the background above, the writer establishes two problems that will be analyzed in this thesis. Those are:

1. How did Sylvia Plath express her depression through her selected poems?
2. Why did Sylvia Plath experience depression in her life?

### 1.3 Objective of the Study

The objectives of the study of this thesis as to answer the problem of the study above are:

1. To show the expression of depression used by Sylvia Plath in her selected poems.
2. To explain the reasons why Sylvia Plath faced the depression relates to her biography.
1.4. Scope of the Study

To do an analysis, it is important to limit the problem that will be analyzed. Limiting the problem makes the writer focus in doing the analysis. In this thesis, the writer focuses the analysis to Sylvia Plath as the main character in her selected poems and how the depression she faced in her life affects the way she chose the theme and the way she wrote the poems, such in: Daddy, Lady Lazarus and Edge and the way Sylvia Plath choose expression of words in those selected poems.

Through Sylvia Plath characters, the writer want to show the readers about the relation between Sylvia Plath’s depressions into her poems, in this case the poems that were chosen by the writer based on the same theme that is death and depression. The writer will use some theories and approaches that related to this topic of analysis.

1.5. Significance of the Study

In doing this thesis the writer hopes that there will be some significances of this proposal. Firstly, it will be useful for the students of English Literature department in understanding the relation between a writer and the works in this case relation of Sylvia Plath’s background of lives and her poems.

Secondly, the writer wants to show how the backgrounds of the poet’s lives can affect the way they wrote their poems, so that the reader of this thesis can get the information about lives and take the positive message of the poem and avoid about the bad things.