CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. RESEARCH BACKGROUND

America is a country where the culture is so diverse. A nation composed of people whose origin can be traced back to every races and ethnics around the world. Robert E. Spiller has described the case of American culture in his essay “Unity and Diversity in the Study of American Culture: The American Studies Association in Perspective”: “Until very recently this has not been the case for American culture. American experience has been that of a transplanted rather than a native growth; it has been characteristically heterogeneous rather than homogeneous, agglomerative rather than organic” (Spiller, 1973, p. 613). He clearly shows that ethnically, America is plural and heterogeneous, so there is no pure and genuine culture in America. In short, America is a land which has a wide range of culture.

Culture has many meanings since it deals with human’s life. When we transfer idea into objects, all of things that human created is called as culture. However, culture is not enough in that scope. Ingram, Musiol & Ryan in ebook “Cultural Studies: A Practical Introduction” have stated that “Everything from how we dress to what we eat, from how we speak to what we think, is culture” (Brett, I., Musiol, H., & Ryan, M., 2010, p.viii). It means
that culture is a complex thing. It represents that studying culture is not only knowing culture as objects but as a *way of life*. Here, *way of life* represents the way people produce a commonality of thought and behavior, as well as conformity with reigning standards, norms, and rules (ibid, p.ix).

Since America is diverse, it creates different pattern in its product of culture. It means that each culture composition is based on the political, economic conditions which are different among American people since America receives immigrants with the different backgrounds of races and ethnics. This is in line with the idea of Robert E. Spiller, about culture, as he states:

“It is not hard, for example, to recognize the validity of the concept of a Greek or Roman culture, an Indian or a Chinese, a French, German, British or even a Mexican or Australian. Such cultures are composed of basic political structures, economic conditions, and social instruments and patterns of behavior, on which are built, in an ascending scale of values, developments and configurations of language and literature, philosophy and religion, architecture and the graphic and plastic arts” (Spiller, 1973, p. 613).

It means that product of culture as well as literary work has its own ideas based on the concept of author in which the background of race and ethnic of the author take part in it. Jewish American author may have different values in term of religious freedom when compared with British American author. The projection of the author’s ideas within literary work is influenced by the social pattern of behavior of the author. The social condition, political condition,
even economic condition can influence the ways the authors construct their works. The important one when studying literary works is that we know the reason why they are constructed in which the background of author’s life takes a part in it. Therefore, studying literary work as part of American Culture will need a brief story about the historical background of the author to know why certain message is composed within literary work.

One of products of culture is literary work. American literary work as part of American Culture may reflects the idea of individualism; communicate what authors believe in individualism. This idea is formulated and presented within the American culture. Louis Adamic in his essay “The Passing Individualism”, states that “socially considered, the vital American Literature of the last decade is primarily a record of degeneration of individualism as a popular and working philosophy of life in the machine age” (Adamic, 1932, p. 423). That statement means American literature may express the individualism overtone as the attitude of the authors towards problems in America. Moreover, Individualism is also highly found in American literature as a theme of the work as stated by Ellwood Johnson in his essay “Individualism and the Puritan Imagination” (Johnson, 1970, p. 231). Thus, the existence of individualism value in America brings great influence upon the American cultures, especially literary works.

Individualism speaks about ideas, actions, values, needs, and goals. The ideas constructed and reconstructed within literary work by individuals
reflect their beliefs and attitudes. If this is something related to the beliefs, this simply means that this idea communicates what Americans assume to be true about how people should live in the world and make it meaningful to individuals who experience it. American people who believe in individualism value will see it as a way to face difficulties of life. When it is used to face difficulty of life, it creates an idealized pictures of whatever aspects of life it talks about.

The concept of individualism can be traced back to the myths which is perceived by Americans. American Society values success highly, and seems to place the individual above society as a whole. The notion of individualism is represented very strongly through the concepts of American Ideal. This notion of individualism takes place as important values, and its importance has led to the establishment of many practices which are perceived as American Ideal. Thus, this is important to study individualism within the literary work as a product of culture to know that American as well as immigrants highly value American Individualism as their belief.

*Bread Givers*, a novel by Jewish American author, Anzia Yezierska, is chosen for this discussion since this novel is one of the products of ethnic literature as part of American culture. This novel has strong individualism Overline tone since it talks about American Jews dreams living in America. The writer of the novel, Anzia Yezierska, clearly gives portrayal of Jews life in the novel through characterization in the novel. Living among tensions,
difficulties, discrimination have been successfully transferred in her novel. Her ideas, somehow, expresses her attitude towards problems in America as an American Jews immigrant. Thus, the ideas of the writer of the novel can be discussed here since the novel describes an individual who is thirsty of individual satisfaction and she wants to get liberty in her life. This liberty leads to the term of individualism which becomes the tool to face the problems in American societies.

Anzia Yeziarska is American Jews Author and she wrote the *Bread Givers* novel. She was born from a poor Jews family in the Russian-Polish village of Plotsk, around the year 1880. American Jews author becomes the main focus in this study since Jews immigrants are also part of America. American studies emphasizes heterogeneity of American society so it is more focused on the asymmetries of the representation of American ethnics in which this study includes formerly excluded or marginalized voices of minority, such as Jews, that is expressed in particular way. American Jews in the early Twentieth Century also made major contributions to the mainstream American culture (as retrieved on [http://www.icsresources.org/content/curricula/HistoryOfJewsInAmerica.pdf](http://www.icsresources.org/content/curricula/HistoryOfJewsInAmerica.pdf) on June, 05, 2015). This articulates the relationship between “ethnicity” and “American culture” in which this study supports the existence of ethnic literature. By studying American Jews author, somehow, can reveal the identity of American Jews and understand American diversity as a whole.
Anzia Yazierska and her family left their native village to get better life in the land of heaven --- America --- as a way to get rid of poverty in her native homeland. Moreover, Anzia stood as a woman who struggled to get out from her father’s straight and traditional life of Jewish orthodox. Living in patriarchal tradition made her feel to be limited in many aspects of her life as an individual. To get liberty for her own life that is away from old Jewish tradition, Anzia ran away from home and went to the college by herself to get better education.

The idea of individualism in *Bread Givers* novel can be revealed through Anzia’s narration of the character Sara Smolinsky. The main character of the novel, Sara Smolinsky, is described as a child who grew up in the New York’s Lower East Side to look for individual satisfaction to get liberty of her life. The character of Sara Smolinsky stood out as an outstanding individualist; the choices she made and the conflicts she got in her life can be interpreted as a representation of the ideas within American literature. Her interactions with American people represented her individual tendencies which was contrast with society as a whole. Just to take an example, the individualism in the character of Sara Smolinsky can be seen through the way she put the self above everything when she was in the college. Her individualism, somehow, is influenced by Anzia Yazierska’s idea on pragmatism in education. Anzia Yazierska had closely relationship with John Dewey. John Dewey is a philosopher who is well-known with his idea of pragmatism that influenced American education’s system. The idea of John
Dewey on pragmatism influenced Anzia Yazierska’s life including the way she constructed her idea of pragmatism in her works. “Pragmatists are individualists. They put maximum premium upon freedom in human life. Liberty goes beyond with equality and fraternity. Everyone should adjust to his environment” (as retrieved at http://educational-system.blogspot.co.id/2013/02/implications-of-pragmatism-in.html on 5 September 2015). In this case, this study also tries to show that individualism goes hand in hand with pragmatism that can be seen through the main character, Sara Smolinsky.

In addition, another reason of choosing *Bread Giver* novel because the novel is a semi-autobiographical sketch of Jews immigrant life in New York's Lower East Side in the early 20th century. Since it is a semi-autobiographical novel, the idea that the writer has in it, is very strong through the ways Anzia Yazierska writes and describes the emotion of her own feelings towards something. The ideas can be explored through the structures of the novel such as plot which is presented in her storytelling. So, this novel is a good one to be analyzed to know the idea of the writer which is successfully constructed through the main character in the novel.

The phenomena found in Anzia’s novel will show the meaning of individualism in the perspective of American Jews especially Jews Woman. This study provides the way individualist influences American Literary even the author has effect on the way story can be told. It is true that American people highly value Individualism. This concept of American Individualism, somehow, lies beyond the mindset of American people as their belief.
However, the concept of individualism may seem differently amongst American people since America consists of different races and ethnicities. Individualism can be traced back to the history of Puritan people coming to America that brought their belief to be free in the land of America. However, the other immigrants coming to America also want to get freedom. So, in this study, the discussion is to describe how the idea of individualism by the writer of the novel reflected in the novel. By describing how the writer constructed the idea of individualism, this study also provides the fruits of Anzia’s idea on individualism.

B. SCOPE OF STUDY

This study is conducted under the field of American Studies. The scope of study is to describe and analyze the idea of individualism within the novel of *Bread Givers* (1925) by Anzia Yezierska as part of American Culture.

C. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The topic of this thesis is about the idea of individualism in the novel *Bread Givers* by Anzia Yezierska. It is conducted to answer the questions:

1. How does the writer Anzia Yezierska construct the idea of individualism within novel *Bread Givers* through the main character?

2. What are the fruits of Anzia Yezierska’s ideas on individualism in the novel *Bread Givers*?
D. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

To describe how Anzia Yazierska constructs the idea of individualism through the main character of the novel *Bread Givers*.

To describes the fruits of Anzia Yazierska’s ideas in the novel *Bread Givers*.

E. BENEFITS OF THE STUDY

1. It is simply to understand America Jews better. How american people, especially American Jews, have strong individualism and they value the individualism as their belief.

2. It is to show the readers how American Literature becomes historical document; history influences the writers construct their work.

F. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1. The type of the research

The type of the research is descriptive qualitative research. Patton in the book of *Qualitative-Quantitative Research Methodology: Exploring the Interactive Continuum* by Newman and Benz stated that qualitative data may contains “descriptions of situation, events, people, interactions, and observed behaviours; direct quotations from people about their experiences,
attitudes, beliefs, and thought; and excerpts or entire passage from documents, correspondences, records, and case histories” (Newman & Benz, 1998, p. 16).

Qualitative research is not only about collecting and composing the data that are related to the research question, but also analyzing and interpreting the data so that the description can be more comprehensive.

2. Data & Supporting Data

The source of main data in this thesis is the novel of Bread Givers (1925) by Anzia Yazierska with an Introduction by Alice Kesller Harris that reproduced in 2003. The main data are in the form of dialogues, narrations, comments, sentences and phrases of the main character in the novel selected.

The source of the supporting data are websites, books, and essays. The supporting data are in the form opinions, comments, informations.

3. Technique of Collecting and Analyzing Data

The main data of my research is the text of the novel. I do close reading activity to the novel. I highlight the purposive data to support my research. In the novel, I take the main character that reflects the individualism overtone in the novel of selected. The data of in novel can be in the form comments, sentences, narrations and dialogues. Then, all the data are analyzed with some related theories.
G. THEORETICAL APPROACH

The area study of American studies has its own way to develop focus and concept. This means that the field of American Studies has been developed widely from various of disciplines within the humanities, including film studies, gender studies, ethnic studies, and literary studies. American studies as a discipline studies culture of United State of America where the cultures are so diverse. Diversity within American culture creates this studies becomes plularistic.

American Studies is closely related to the study of literature as part of American culture. Literature is a product of culture which somehow reflects culture, history, as well as philosophy. Studying literature in American Studies may include the study that involves artifacts, values, social institutions roles, behavioral habits, concepts or any other (Spiller, Robert, 1973, p. 616). However, Literature in the development of philosophy also may include the study of individual work. An individual work presents the highest value of thought of someone which becomes important aspect of the work itself. My focus of study is about finding the idea of individualism within individual work of Anzia Yazierska. Robert has described in his essay that to understand individual work that may contains of thought of the author can be analyzed through some ways:

“And finally, my own specialty: the development of a philosophy and practice of literary history and historical criticism, particularly American, which starts with the aesthetic examination of the highest
form of an individual work of art and attempts to relate it causally and circumstantially, first to its creator by thorough biographical and psychological study, and then to the basic culture and history of the people who produced it in a given time and place. Thus literary study becomes holistic when it is involved in the history of thought and manners, as well as in psychology, sociology, philosophy and the interrelationship of the arts” (Spiller, Robert, 1973, p. 617).

Robert has described that to study individual work must be started with aesthetic examination of the highest form of individual work of art. It means that the first thing to study literature is to examine the work itself. To study the work, it needs structuralism. Structuralism gives structural analysis of the novel. The important one when studying literary work is to know the meaning of the work itself. Structuralism is a theory of humankind in which all elements of human culture including literature are thought to be part of a system of signs. Structuralism in relation to my study helps both to read texts and cultures. Structuralism can see the novel as a text that is composed by signs and it produces meanings that represent the individual articulation. I use structural analysis by Robert Stanton in which all elements in literary work, such as plot, setting, character present as important aspect to reveal the psyche of the author which reflects the personality of the author, Anzia Yazierska.

Moreover, after examining the individual work, literary work, Robert E. Spiller clearly described that it needs to be related causally and circumstantially, first to its creator by through biographical and psychological study. Biography is used in this thesis because my focus of study is about finding the ideas of the author within individual work or novel. Biography is
used as a basis for interpreting the author’s work as stated by Frederick M. Combellack in his essay entitled “Biography and Literary Criticism” (Combellack, 1953, p. 171). Biography will present the author’s life as the external information to understanding literary work (ibid, p. 171). According to Reaske, Biography is a detailed description or account of someone’s life (as retrieved at http://awinlanguage.blogspot.com/2012/03/biographical-approach-to-analyze.html on 26 June 2015). This includes the facts of someone’s life such as education, work, death, etc. Through biography, it can give detail experiences of the event which later can reflect the personality of author which shows the psychology of the author. It can help to support the data to know the author’s experiences of life reflected in the novel.

Then, it also needs to be related to the history and culture like what Robert E. Spiller has described above. The basic culture and history of author who has produced literary work in a given time and place is important to be applied in this study. History in relation to my study is about the History of Jews in the United States of America; how they have immigrated and why they have immigrated to America. In addition, Jewish Culture is presented in this study to know American Jewish Culture as well as Jewish tradition that includes religious culture. This history and culture of Jews will be matter to know the author better; why author constructs such ideas in her literary works. The history of roaring twenties is also presented in this study since this period gives contribution to reveal the construction of American Individualism.
In addition, literary study becomes holistic when it is involved in the history of thought. “individualism becomes the thought of the people that reflects the attitude of mind” (Ellwood, 1970, p. 231). Thus, it can be said that Individualism has become American thought. It means that American thought is needed in this discussion to know the reason of author as part of American citizens construct the idea in which the ideas is part of American thought. In this case, individualism is what Americans pursue in their life and it becomes the thought of many American. Thus, theory of American individualism is applied in this study. Furthermore, American Pragmatism in education is needed in this study since American individualism in this case has special relationship with American Pragmatism. American Pragmatism in education gives contribution to support American individualism.

H. THESIS ORGANIZATION

This thesis consists of four chapters that are Chapter I: Introduction, Chapter II: Literature review, Chapter III: Analysis, and Chapter IV: Conclusion and Recommendation.

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION, provides of eight sub-chapters. Those sub-chapters are Research Background, Scope of Study, Research Question, Objectives of the Study, Benefits of the Study, Research Methodology, Theoretical Approaches, and Thesis Organization.
CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW, consists of Biography, Structuralism, American Individualism, History of American Jews and the Culture, American Pragmatism, History of Roaring Twenties, & Synopsis of the Novel.

CHAPTER III: ANALYSIS provides the deep analysis that related to the research questions.

CHAPTER IV: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION