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# **‘In the stillness of the morning, I realised that I had yet never been alone since I was born’: The Negotiation of Domestic Space and Boundaries in Anzia Yeziarska’s Bread Givers**

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## **Abstract**

A Jewish American writer, Anzia Yeziarska’s most popular texts primarily explore the female immigrant experience in 1920s New York. Her most famous works are the novels *Bread Givers* and *Salome of the Tenements*, which explore the difficulties experienced by young Jewish immigrants in New York during the early 20th Century. In both novels, the central characters struggle to achieve independence from the previous generations’ traditions and adapt to the American dream of prosperity through self-reliance, whilst negotiating cultural, religious and linguistic differences. In the course of her writing, Yeziarska drew heavily on her own life experiences, whilst her preoccupation with the central themes of her writing - the immigrant’s struggle for equality in America, their right to education and a fierce desire for freedom from domestic drudgery leads to a detailed view of the New York ghetto, and an extraordinary account of the immigrant experience. Yeziarska’s female characters find freedom in the anonymity of crowds, whilst feeling stifled in the often cramped domestic spaces – which therefore prompts them into transgressing the traditional gender boundaries regarding appropriate living and work spaces. In *Bread Givers*, the heroine of the novel daringly leaves home unmarried to live and work alone in order to get a university education for herself, but later finds that she is drawn back to her old neighbourhood on the Lower East Side of New York. Through this navigation of boundaries, and by utilising non-standard English in order to examine the boundaries which language differences can erect, Yeziarska interrogates the careful negotiations of space and activity demanded by both the cultures’ assumptions regarding the role of women in society. Therefore this paper proposes to examine the conflicting descriptions between domestic spaces in the novels, and discuss the disrupted trajectory of female emancipation depicted through Yeziarska’s use of language and syntax.

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