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Deborah Feldman's story in *Unorthodox*: Transformation through language variation and music

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ABSTRACT

Adaptation from page to screen is a fruitful research path, which has challenged the canonized status of the source texts, especially classics, when these are presented in different media, contexts and languages. In this paper, we explore what screen adaptations may add to the previous written material. We examine the adaptation of *Unorthodox* (Schrader 2020), a miniseries based on Deborah Feldman's autobiography *Unorthodox: The Scandalous Rejection of My Hasidic Roots* (2012), which gained notoriety in 2020. We focus on multilingualism and music, as prominent audiovisual elements in the page-to-screen adaptation, that help characterise the different communities in the series, and their role to shape characters' identities. Linguistic diversity is covered differently in the book and in the series: one of the main differences is how multilingualism becomes a tool to coin characters' identities and how music is thematized to portray, through audiovisual resources, the protagonist's rebellion. It becomes a metaphor of freedom and subversion.

Keywords: adaptation, music, multilingualism, L3, identity, linguistic diversity, translation.

1. Introduction

Audiovisual Translation Studies have included the field of page-to-screen adaptation as a research path that has contributed to challenging binary divisions between source- and target-texts. Adaptation studies have also challenged traditional views of fidelity when texts are presented in different media, contexts and languages. Rather than focusing on adaptation as loss, it is interesting to explore what screen adaptations may add to the

previously written material, by virtue of their audiovisual nature, both in the original version and its translation into Spanish. In this paper we analyse the miniseries *Unorthodox* that was broadcast on Netflix in March 2020 and renewed the interest in Deborah Feldman's autobiography *Unorthodox: The Scandalous Rejection of My Hasidic Roots* (2012), a chronicle of Feldman's major life transformation from a rigidly religious to a secular life. Deborah grew up in the Yiddish speaking community in Williamsburg neighbourhood in New York and had an arranged marriage with a deeply religious man that made her follow the rules Hasidic wives are expected to follow, e.g. attending marriage lessons before the wedding, wearing a wig, starting a family just after the wedding, following the rules of *Niddah* (during the *Niddah* time, two weeks per month, husbands cannot touch their wife). It is worth mentioning, though, that Deborah wants to escape from such a conservative life and from a very young age she sets freedom as a goal: "I resolve to leave Brooklyn one day. I cannot be one of those girls who fritters away her entire life in this small stifling square of tenements, when there is an entire world out there waiting to be explored" (Feldman 2012: 81). She is conscious she does not fit with people from the Satmar culture which she belongs to and thinks she is somehow different: "you know I'm not a regular girl: I mean I'm normal, but I'm different" (Feldman 2012: 131). Deborah and her husband left Williamsburg and moved to Airmont (Rockland County, New York) where they had a child and lived until their marriage ended five years later, after a car accident that almost killed her. It is at that moment she decides to leave her husband and start a new life leaving apart the strong Hasidic restrictions. In the series, Esty (Deborah's character) escapes from the constrictions of married life and her ultraconservative community in Williamsburg by fleeing to Berlin, where she starts her new life and has a child. Europe, as linked to freedom, is also present in the book, but simply as an opportunity to get to know the world: "[p]erhaps Eli and I might return to Europe together; I've always wanted to see the world" (Feldman 2012: 131). Although Berlin does not appear in the book, it is the city where Feldman moved in real life, seven years after she left the Ultraorthodox community in New York. Freedom, as opposed to the rigid parameters of her life in Williamsburg, is clearly represented in both the book and series, although in the audiovisual production two cities, together with music and language (as we will see in sections 3 and 4) help emphasize this contrast. Berlin and Williamsburg are presented as "a sort of binary: freedom versus restriction, hedonism versus conservatism, transience versus permanence" (Delaney 2020). The languages spoken in these two settings (German and Yiddish) also help depict these opposed worlds and cultures. German is the

language spoken in Berlin (one of the settings in the series), which is associated with freedom, and it is also the language in which lieder and choral music are sung, while Yiddish is spoken by people from the conservative Ultraorthodox community in Williamsburg (Corrius – Espasa 2022).

Although the series was globally acclaimed, the representation of the traditional Hasidic world in New York as opposed to the 'good' and cosmopolitan one in Berlin, made the production highly criticised. For Greenberg:

among its shortcomings was a trafficking in simple hero and villain tropes, in which the traditional, Hasidic world was bad, grey, and heartless, and the secular world of Berlin was good and welcoming, all drenched in bright golden hues (2021: 1-2).

In this paper we analyse how *Unorthodox: The Scandalous Rejection of My Hasidic Roots* has been adapted for the screen. We focus on how these opposing worlds are presented in Deborah's autobiography in comparison with how they are so in the audiovisual production. Language, i.e. multilingualism, and cultural elements (especially those related to religion) are used to characterise the different communities and shape characters and social identities in the book (English and Spanish versions) and on screen, while music has been added and become a prominent audiovisual element in the series.

2. Methodology

In order to carry out this study, we have used a descriptive qualitative methodology in which we have analysed Deborah Feldman's autobiography *Unorthodox: The Scandalous Rejection of My Hasidic Roots* (2012) and its adaptation to the miniseries *Unorthodox*. We have also analysed the translation into Spanish of both the book and series, although our main focus on this manuscript is the book adaptation for the screen.

Our corpus consists of the following materials.

- *Unorthodox: The Scandalous Rejection of my Hasidic Roots* (Feldman, 2012) translated into Spanish by Laura Manero Jiménez and Laura Martín de Dios as *Unorthodox: Mi verdadera historia* (Feldman 2020).
- The Netflix miniseries *Unorthodox* (Schrader 2020) and its Spanish dubbed and subtitled version.

We focus on multilingualism and music, as prominent audiovisual elements in the page to screen adaptation that help characterise the different communities in the series, and their role to shape characters' identities. As for multilingualism, we have analysed the instances of L3 present in both the book and the series, and examined whether and how these have been made explicit for its audience, as language helps characterise the different communities. We have followed the classification of the functions of multilingualism as explored in the Trafilm and MUFiTAVi projects, especially as connected to otherness, characterisation and identity. We have noted the many foreign words and expressions in the autobiography and the dialogues in foreign languages heard in the series, and we have analysed these within the following categories: religion, sex, engagement and marriage, people and culture, food, and clothing.

In the book, we consider English as the source language (L1) and Yiddish as a third language. In the series, we consider English as its main language (L1), taking into account that *Unorthodox* is a German-American production, aimed for mainstream Western audiences. Yiddish is the most prominent third language (L3), both quantitatively and qualitatively, even though there are other L3s, such as German, Russian and Hebrew.

As regards music, we pay special attention to diegetic music, as songs sung in different languages are relevant for analysis of multilingualism and adaptation. We have spotted references to music in Feldman's autobiography and in the miniseries, and then compared the presence and function of different instances in both.

In the examples from the book, we respect the typographical format of the third language words (e.g. italics, capitals, transcription), which on occasion are different in the English and the Spanish versions. In the examples from the series, the subtitle division of lines is respected. Character names have been added for clarification.

3. From page to screen

The basis of the plot is the same in both the book and the series. They both portray the Ultraorthodox environment in which Deborah grew up and show the limited opportunities Hasidic women have had. As Hasidic culture has strictly enforced religious rituals and customs and heavily circumscribed gender roles, there are constant references to God and religion, which are displayed verbally in the book both in the ST and TT, i.e. "the Torah"/"la Torá,

"holy language of Yiddish"/"la sagrada lengua Yiddish", "Shabbo"/"Shabo", "yeshiva"/"yeshiva", etc. In the series, these references are both verbal (we may hear people praying, singing religious songs, and uttering some religious words) and nonverbal (religious elements such as decoration, buildings, etc.). The rules married women must follow are constantly referred to in the book and shown on screen, particularly those related to consummating their marriage, that is sexual intercourse, which, as Feldman herself has put it in an interview, is a big part of the series and the heart of the book (Davies 2021).

Deborah and Esty's incessant search for self-definition and freedom are also portrayed in the autobiography and the series, although in the audiovisual adaptation it is represented by fleeing to Berlin. These scenes were created for the series, as its producers, Karolinski and Winger, were interested in "showing Berlin as a kind of integrated utopia" (Rushton 2021). Apart from this, there are other differences; in general, the book provides more detail about Deborah's young life and education and is set in a chronological order, while the series starts just before Esty's escape and her story goes back and forth through flashbacks between her previous life in Williamsburg and her journey of self-discovery and freedom in Berlin. Hence, the series producers were inspired by Feldman's memoir but invented part of the script since Feldman gave them creative freedom to adapt the book (Rushton 2021).

Cartmell and Whelehan (2010) divide the adaptations into three categories: i) transposition (the audiovisual version sticks closely to the literary text without much interference), ii) commentary (the screen version is altered because of the filmmaker's intentions), and iii) analogy (a completely different text, which is quite different from the original source). According to this classification, we might say that *Unorthodox* would be a "commentary" type because, as Karolinski stated in an interview (GirlTalk 2020), the producers departed from Feldman's story as they considered it was important to make things real, but they were clear that they wanted to make some changes. Among the modifications performed are the following: they developed Feldman's husband into a character, Yanky (Esty's husband); Esty left for Berlin to escape from the strict Ultraorthodox rules and culture, to live without wigs, heavy clothes and religious restrictions; there is a new character, Moishe (Esty's husband's cousin), portrayed as a kind of "bad guy"; Esty's passion for music becomes a metaphor for freedom. Karolinski thinks that adaptations have to be different from the book because "if you stuck to an adaption 100% like the book, most heroines would be silent and

watching everyone else. And there is nothing worse than a silent heroine" (GirlTalk 2020).

Unorthodox can be seen as a commentary on Feldman's biography, in that the series emphasises Feldman's search for freedom, but through different means. In Feldman's book, the protagonist starts her rebellion from her Ultraorthodox background by secretly reading books and then starting writing. As Feldman recounts, strict gender patterns prevail in Hasidic communities, and women are not allowed to read freely.

- (1) I hide my books under the bed, and she [Bubby, Deborah Feldman's grandmother] hides hers in her lingerie, and once a year when Zeidy inspects the house for Passover, poking through our things, we hover anxiously, terrified of being found out. Zeidy even rifles through my underwear drawer. Only when I tell him that this is my private female stuff does he desist, unwilling to violate a women's privacy, and move on to my grandmother's wardrobe. She is as defensive as I am when he rummages through her lingerie. We both know that our small stash of secular books would shock my grandfather more than a pile of *chametz*, the forbidden leavening, ever could. Bubby might get away with a scolding, but I would not be spared the full extent of my grandfather's wrath. When my *zeide* gets angry, his long white beard seems to lift up and spread around his face like a fiery flame. I wither instantly in the heat of his scorn (Feldman 2012: 26).

Feldman, as a child, borrows books from the library or buys them (Feldman 2012: 26). She reads secretly the English translation of the Talmud, the compilation of ancient writings considered as sacred and normative for Jews. Therefore, it is a book related to her religion, but forbidden for women in her Hasidic community of Satmar, especially in English translation.

- (2) There's something new under my mattress this week, and soon (when Bubby doesn't need my help with the *kreplach*) I will shut the door to my room and retrieve it, the wonderful leather-bound volume with its heady new-book smell. It's a section of the Talmud, with the forbidden English translation, and it's thousands of pages long, so it holds the promise of weeks of titillating reading. I can't believe I will finally be able to decode ancient Talmudic discourse designed specifically to keep out ignoramuses like me. Zeidy won't let me read the Hebrew books he keeps locked in his closet: they are only for men, he says;

girls belong in the kitchen. But I'm so curious about his learning, and what exactly is written in the books he spends so many hours bent over, quivering with scholarly ecstasy. The few bits of watered-down wisdom my teachers supply in school only make me hunger for more. I want to know the truth about Rachel, Rabbi Akiva's wife, who tended her home in poverty for twelve years while her husband studied Torah in some foreign land. How could the spoiled daughter of a rich man possibly resign herself to such misery? My teachers say she was a saint, but it has to be more complicated than that (Feldman 2012: 26).

In this quote, we see Feldman's curiosity for understanding her tradition, whilst questioning the "watered-down wisdom" she receives at school, which will ultimately lead to her rebellion. We also see the strict gender roles in her community, where women are relegated to private spheres of house-keeping. Importantly, we see Feldman compare herself to the characters she reads about. Here it is Rachel; elsewhere, it is Bathsheba, King David's wife, "a mysterious biblical tale about which I've always been curious" and the mother of King Solomon (Feldman 2012: 28). It is not only books and characters related to Judaism, however, that Feldman identifies with. She also compares herself to Roald Dahl's *Matilda* (Feldman 2012: 5, 7, 21, 23) and Dahl's characters generally: "unfortunate, precocious children despised and neglected by their shallow families and peers" (Feldman 2012: 20). In the Satmar community, Feldman cannot aspire to standard higher education, but she will take up a course on literature in a continuing education program (Feldman 2012: 222). She will also write a blog (Feldman 2012: 234-239), and this will lead to her escape, together with her son, from her community and marriage.

In the series, as an audiovisual product, the liberating role of reading and writing is taken up by music. As mentioned above, the series has two parts, set, respectively, in New York and Berlin, and alternated through the episodes by means of flashbacks. In the two parts, music has different functions. The first part is set in Brooklyn, New York, in the Satmar community, "a Hasidic sect known for its extreme religious conservatism and rigidly enforced gender roles" (Blake 2020: 9). There, the main function of music is characterising the Hasidic community and its gender roles. Women are not generally allowed to sing in public. Hebrew songs are sung in celebrations, by men, as shown in Esty's and Yanky's wedding. The second part of the series is set in Berlin, where Esty meets an international community of music

students at the conservatory. There, music becomes a metaphor of freedom and subversion. As Karim, a music teacher tells Esty in connection with Johann Sebastian Bach: "In music, often, you have to break the rules to make a masterpiece" (Ep. 2 10:33). Other international music students sympathize with Esty's need to break away from oppressive settings, here also related to gender. In the words of Ahmed: "Imagine being a gay kid in Nigeria. A gay kid with a cello" (Ep. 2 44:09).¹ In these examples, multilingualism is mainly presented through the different accents of characters, speaking English as a lingua franca in an international teaching context. This is also set against the background of gender diversity.

The change from literature, in the book, to music, in the series, can be related to the need to explore specific audiovisual codes in the film, where the verbal text interplays with non-verbal elements, both in the visual and aural codes. This can be observed in a scene of Episode 1 of *Unorthodox*, in a dialogue between Esty's grandmother, Esty and her aunt, while listening to music, a lied by Schubert which will be commented on in section 4, below.

- (3) Grandma:
 My father loved this song.
 He had a wonderful voice, Esty.
 Your great-grandpa.
 All the men in his family did.
 [...]
 Grandma:
 So many lost.
 But soon you'll have
 children of your own.
 [...]
 Esty's aunt:
 – Grandpa will be home any minute.
 Esty:
 – He's not here yet!
 Esty's aunt:
 So he'll hear women singing
 when he arrives? No.² (Ep. 1 10:14-11:50)

¹ These examples have been examined in Corrius and Espasa (2022) with a different emphasis, in connection with translation of multilingualism.

² As mentioned in the methodology section, the subtitle division of lines is respected in the examples. Character names have been added for clarification.

Here, audiences learn about the gendered public/private divide, according to which only men sing in public, whereas women sing only exceptionally, mostly on private occasions. The taste for music in women can only be nurtured and transferred to sons. This scene is partially based on Deborah Feldman's autobiography.

- (4) If Zeidy isn't home, Bubby sings. [...] This one is a Viennese waltz, she tells me, or a Hungarian rhapsody. Tunes from her childhood, she says, her memories of Budapest. When Zeidy comes home, she stops the humming. I know women are not allowed to sing, but in front of family it is permitted. Still, Zeidy encourages singing only on Shabbos. Since the Temple was destroyed, he says, we shouldn't sing or listen to music unless it's a special occasion. Sometimes Bubby takes the old tape recorder that my father gave me and plays the cassette of my cousin's wedding music over and over, at a low volume so she can hear if someone's coming. She shuts it off at the merest sound of creaking in the hallway. [...] Only one of her sons inherited her voice, Bubby says. The rest are like their father. I tell her I was chosen for a solo in a school choir, that maybe I did inherit my strong, clear voice from her family. I want her to be proud of me (Feldman 2012: 12).

Toward the end of the series, in Episode 4, Esty explains the role of music in Hasidism for audiences unfamiliar to Hasidic custom: the examining board for Esty's audition at the end of the series, and by extension, general audiences outside the sphere of Ultraorthodox communities.

- (5) Karim (music teacher): Can you tell us why you chose this song?
 Esty:
 My grandmother loved it.
 It was our secret.
 Woman in examining board:
 Why a secret?
 Esty:
 I come from a community
 In Williamsburg, Brooklyn...
 Where women are not allowed
 to sing in public.
 Woman in examining board:
 Why not?
 Esty:

A woman performing loudly among men
Is considered to be immodest.
Even seductive (Ep. 4: 36:00-36:34)

In Esty's explanation, the private/public gender divide is emphasized, with the sexual connotations that singing in public is considered seductive for Hasidic women, aspects that are present in Feldman's memoir, but here are emphasized in connection to music, as metaphor and as an audiovisual resource.

4. Linguistic diversity

Language plays an important role in *Unorthodox* as it helps depict the different cultures and identities. However, the number of languages used is not the same in the book and in the series. *Unorthodox: The Scandalous Rejection of My Hasidic Roots* (2012) is written in English and has quite a number of Yiddish and Hebrew words, most of them related to religion and Hasidic culture. In the series *Unorthodox* (Netflix 2020), apart from English (as lingua franca), we can hear four different languages which convey different cultures and settings: Yiddish (representing the rigid parameters of the ultraconservative Jewish community), Hebrew (linked to religion and used by Hasidic characters), German (representing a new setting related to freedom) and Russian (only used a few times and spoken by prostitutes and a cleaning lady in Berlin). In keeping with the research by Savoldelli and Spiteri Miggiani (2023: 20), this series follows Netflix's policies and translation specifications "to mark and preserve multilingualism".

Linguistic diversity as found in *Unorthodox* is a fundamental element of divergence as it may alert viewers to a change of cultural setting, reflect social differences and tendencies, symbolise identities beyond the linguistic fact and portray characters. For Díaz-Cintas (2015: 138) linguistic diversity is a resource that clearly highlights the characters' identity and emphasizes their otherness. Both the book and the series are very rich as far as the presence of the third language (L3) is concerned. Following Corrius and Zabalbeascoa's (2019) classification of the presence and importance of L3 in audiovisual translation, we might say that its presence is "recurrent", namely languages other than L1 can be heard in numerous parts of the series. This category may also apply to Feldman's autobiography as we may find foreign words (in Yiddish and Hebrew) throughout the book (single words or expressions

can be spotted from the very beginning until the end), as mentioned above and seen in the previous quote and in the following examples: *tishtech*, *Gut yontif*, *Havdalah*, *menuchas hanefesh*, *shidduch*, *mamaleh*. However, L3 intensity is not the same in Feldman's autobiography and its screen adaptation because in the series there are many long and complete dialogues in Yiddish and to a lesser degree in Hebrew. Hence, we think that a new category might be added to Corrius and Zababeascoa's (2019) classification. They propose three categories: "anecdotal" when there are only few L3 words in the series, "recurrent" when L3 can be heard in numerous parts of the audiovisual production, and "L3-as-theme", when there is an intense and highly relevant presence of L3 and language becomes a theme. We propose the category "intensely-recurrent", to refer to those texts in which not only is L3 recurrent (as in the book or series) but also long, sharp and intense (as in the series), that is, long and recurrent speeches are present throughout the production. This is the case of Yiddish, a language commonly spoken by people from the strictly patriarchal Hasidic community in Williamsburg. In the series, there is extensive code-switching with Yiddish, which has been subtitled to allow the audience to follow the story. In contrast, in the book different solutions have been provided: i) signalling the Yiddish term in italics, "*chinush laba*", (Feldman 2012: 90), ii) clarifying the Yiddish words and expressions which have not been translated but explained, for example "*Halacha*, or Jewish law" (Feldman 2012: 101), "he was a *sheid*, a ghost" (Feldman 2012: 95), "she is wearing a *shpitzel*, wrapped flat and tight around her skull" (Feldman 2012: 123), and iii) deducing from context as in the instance "the women veer off to either side of me to clear a path for the parade of men entering for the *badeken* ceremony" (Feldman 2012: 164). This sentence is found in chapter 7, dealing with marriage and, although the term *badeken* has not been explained, it may be grasped that it refers to the Jewish wedding ceremony. These four types of solutions have also been used in the Spanish version.

Linguistic diversity is covered differently in the book and the series. Whereas in the series codes-switching is extensively employed and has a strong social function, in the book (both in the English and Spanish versions) we may find single words or expressions that are scattered throughout the pages, which on occasion are paraphrased but other times left untranslated. Besides, a glossary of Yiddish terms is provided at the end of the Spanish translation (Feldman 2020: 375-383).

Feldman has kept some words or expressions in Yiddish and Hebrew, which she has mostly marked using italics (see *chametz* and *zeide* in the quote above). The Spanish translators have followed the same criterion and

used *jametz* and *zeide*, respectively. This typographic marker has been used throughout the book in both versions. However, on occasion the TT marks L3 elements that have not been differentiated in the original text (ST), for example the word Shabbo(s) in the ST (p. 101, 149) and *Shabo(s)* in the TT (e.g. p. 151, 218), or Simchas Torah (p. 87) versus *Simjás Torá* (p. 131); siddurim (p. 87) versus *siddurim* (p. 131). It is worth mentioning that the Yiddish and Hebrew words used in the Spanish version have been Hispanicised in format, so accents have been added or the letter “j” has replaced “ch”, as in Japtz. Besides, these words are often paraphrased in the paragraphs where they appear, for clarification for readers unfamiliar with Jewish traditions. Furthermore, the Spanish glossary tells the readers that many Yiddish terms have been transcribed according to the pronunciation and dialect of the Hasidic community in Williamsburg (Feldman 2020: 375).

As mentioned in the Methodology section above, the words and expressions used in Yiddish in the English ST and in the Spanish TT have been classified under the following categories.

- Religion (e.g. *Ehrlich/éhrlij*, *berachos/berajós*, *choteh umachteh es harabim/Joté umajté es harabim*, *goyim/goim*), Purim/Purim, Torah/Torá, siddurim/sidurim, aveirah/aveirá, tzadekes/tzadekés, *rebbe/rebe*)
- Sex (e.g. *prtizus/pritzús*, *mitzvah/mitzvá*, *niddah/nidá*, *kallah/kalá*)
- Engagement and marriage (e.g. *ervah/ervá*, *shidduch/shiduj*, *chassan/jasán*, *shviger/shvíguer*, *t’noyim/t’noim*),
- People and culture (e.g. *apikores/apikores*, *gabbaim/gabbaim*, *kugelech/kúguelej*, *shomrim/shomrim*, *eiruv/eiruv*)
- Food (e.g. *babka/babka.*, *cholov Yisroel/jolov Isroel*, *charoses/jaroses*, *marror/maror*)
- Clothing (e.g. *tishtech/tishtej*, *shtreimet/shtréimel*).

In the series, languages have different functions. Yiddish is used to characterise the Hasidic community (see Section 4 below) whilst German, as mentioned above, is related to freedom. Esty listens to Mendelssohn’s *Heben deine Augen auf* [*Lift Thine Eyes*], sung by a women’s choir and shortly after this, Esty is shown lifting her eyes, moved, probably before deciding to present a song at her audition to apply for a scholarship to study music in Berlin. The song that she will present is *An die Musik* D. 547, a lied for voice and piano, by Franz Schubert, with lyrics from a poem by Franz von Schober.² Here, music is thematised, as the song is an ode to music and its liberating power. Music is the “champion of art”, which can transform “awful hours” and “life’s vicious cycle” and convert them “into a better world”, as shown in Episode 4.

(6)

<i>An die Musik</i> (sung in German)	English subtitles
Du holde Kunst, in wieviel grauen Stunden Wo mich des Lebens wilder Kreis umstrickt	You champion of art In how many awful hours Where I was ared up In life’s vicious cycle All those wretched hours
Hast du mein Herz zu warmer Lieb entzunden	You have my heart... [...] into a better world
Hast mich in eine beßre Welt entrückt	(Ep 4. 34:30-35:34)

The previous examples show how the German language in songs is explicitly related to freedom. As for Hebrew, as mentioned before, this language is associated with religion in the first part of the series, and to characterise the Ultraorthodox community. However, this language acquires a different function at the end of the series when Esty sings *Mi Bon Siach*, a wedding song, which has been sung before at Esty’s and Yanky’s wedding. The senior entertainment writer Esther Zuckerman (2020:12), has convincingly explained how Esty`s singing of this song, right at the end of the series, shows both her connection to, and her rejection of, tradition:

The tune, which is never identified by name, is “Mi Bon Siach,” heard at weddings when the bride and groom are under the chuppah. It’s a melody that played when Esty and Yanky were getting married in the second episode, and Esty’s choice of it resonates with both rebellion and irony. It’s a song that should signify her bond to a man, but she’s turning it into something that can extricate her from that bond, using a voice that she wouldn’t have been able to use in her former world where women’s singing is prohibited. [...]. Yanky watches her from a corner of the auditorium as she performs what is both a rejection and embrace of her past (Zuckerman 2020: 12).

Through this song, Esty seems to find freedom, in a language related to her community, but in a new context: the audition that will hopefully enable her to fulfil her purpose of developing as a musician. This can be related to a tradition of Jewish literature which places “the curious young woman at the threshold between tradition and modernity, between religion and the secular” (Greenberg 2021: 2). This is similar to Feldman’s relationship with literature, in her need to understand and find alternative readings to the Talmud, to female characters in Jewish tradition, like Rachel and Bathsheba, or in secular literature, like Roald Dahl’s Matilda.

5. L3 and characters' identity

As explained in the previous section, and by Pujol and Santamaria (2022), the presence of Yiddish fulfils the function of characterisation, of visualizing the belonging to the group, an objective present in both the series and the book, although in the latter it is not so noticeable since Yiddish is scattered throughout the whole text and dialogues are scarce, for fulfilling the functions of identity characterisation. We understand functions expressed by multilingualism in the sense developed in Sokoli et al. (2019: 80), i.e. multilingualism is present to convey a given "character portrayal, comedy/humour, dramatic effect, metalinguistic, metaphorical (e.g. communication barrier), plot (twist), showing tolerance, signalling otherness, signalling the villain, stereotype, suspense, theme" rather than "elements of a story have a specific function or purpose in the construction of a narrative" (Hurtado-Malillos 2023: 5). We will observe in this section the use that each of the characters makes of the languages present in the autobiography and the script as a means to establish their identity.³ According to Vignoles et al. (2011), the following four categories of identity can be established: collective, relational, individual and material. The authors define these categories as follows:

Collective identity refers to people's identification with the groups and social categories to which they belong, the meanings that they give to these social groups and categories, and the feelings, beliefs, and attitudes that result from identifying with them [...].

Relational identity refers to one's roles vis-à-vis other people, encompassing identity contents such as child, spouse, parent, co-worker, supervisor, customer, etc (Vignoles et al. 2011: 3).

Individual or personal identity refers to aspects of self-definition at the level of the individual person. These may include goals, values, and beliefs [...], religious and spiritual beliefs [...], standards for behavior and decision-making [...], self-esteem and self-evaluation [...], desired, feared, and expected future selves, and one's overall "life story" [...].

The contents of a person's identity can include not only her mind, body, friends, spouse, ancestors, and descendents, but also her clothes, house, car, and the contents of her bank account. In other words, people view and treat as part of their identities not only social

³ A previous phase of this research has been published by Pujol and Santamaria (2022), with a different emphasis, on the effects of language diversity on the film narrative and its translation.

entities beyond their individual selves, but also material artifacts [...]), as well as significant places [...] Thus, beyond individual, relational, and collective identities, people might also be said to have material identities (Vignoles et al. 2011: 3-4).

For the sake of argument, we will refer to collective identity as membership in relevant groups or social categories (Vignoles et al. 2011: 3), and individual identity as defined by personal beliefs and characteristics (Vignoles et al. 2011: 3).

First, the wider use the series makes of L3 in comparison to the use the autobiography makes must be highlighted as one of the aspects that most differentiates the book from the series. In the autobiography all the characters use Yiddish words to refer to issues related to religion and the obligations that derive from Hasidic mandates, such as those related to marriage and food, for example, as explained in Section 4. Code-switching, therefore, becomes the means to help the reader understand the social context of the Brooklyn Jewish community described. The socio-religious control in which the protagonist is immersed is made clear through code-switching, but the differences about the characters are explained by the writer. In contrast, the series uses multilingualism to portray the characters. L3 mainly allows the viewers to infer the characters' relationship with the religious precepts of the community, i.e. their collective identity, and as a result from their deviance from it, their individual identity.

The names of the characters were changed in the book to preserve the privacy of certain persons, as explained in the autobiography, and the characters were once more renamed for the series. The group of main female characters who play a central role in the development of the story and their attitudes are distinguished by the different languages they can speak and their fluency in these languages. Thus, languages become in the series a means to portray a distinctive collective and individual characterisation. And within this context, we believe it is helpful to analyse how the names of the characters' change from the book to the audiovisual production.

Deborah Feldman refers to her grandmother as Bubby throughout the text. On two occasions (Feldman 2012: 4, 87), and because of the code-switching included in the work, the word *bubbe* appears to talk about her. On the other hand, in the series the name that appears in the subtitles is Babby. Babby and Bubby are both small variations from the Yiddish affective form of grandmother. Esty's grandmother, as stated in Pujol and Santamaria (2022: 58), represents to Esty "the fundamental cultural and family essence", and for this reason "(t)he grandmother speaks in Yiddish at all times".

Formally, we can describe her through her collective identity, since her objective to maintain the Hasidic principles, and though her individual identity, since Yiddish gives information on her background.

In her book, Feldman refers four times to a girl she went to school with (Feldman 2012: 75, 85, 89, 258), Miriam-Malka, as a girl she admires and envies, and who she holds up as an example of those who are “well-behaved girls whose fathers have clout” (Feldman 2012: 75). She also envies her for her name, as it includes an “inimitable combination with the rare advantage of not being shared by hundreds of other girls in Williamsburg” (Feldman 2012: 75). This character, who does not appear in the audiovisual production, does serve to name the two middle-aged women who insist that Esty should not move away from her community, her aunt and her mother-in-law. We can interpret that the compound name, which ends up designating two characters in the series is a strategy used by the script to assign these two women to a specific group and to ascribe to them a well-defined collective identity, and as such they share the aim of preserving the Hasidic religious interests.

As stated before, Esty’s grandmother always uses Yiddish, and that is mostly the linguistic behaviour of her daughter in the audiovisual production: Malka Schwartz, and Esty’s mother-in-law, Miriam Saphiro. However, the family lives in the borough of Brooklyn, and therefore, as stated by Pujol and Santamaria (2022), the latter two characters must sometimes use English to refer to objects outside their community. In interactions with members from outside their community, we see how with Esty’s aunt must speak English with the paramedics attending to Babby when she feels ill, or when Esty’s father goes with her to collect rent from Karim, a name that will be used for Esty’s music teacher in the series. In this scene we are made aware he is not fluent in English; for this reason, he needs Esty with him to help him during the conversation they are having. Here the audience is given information through English on the closeness of the community to other people in the neighbourhood. Other scenes in which Malka and Miriam argue or show their anger with short sentences in English seem to indicate that the pretended happiness of the community, together with its rigidity, can only be broken in English. Once again, Yiddish gives characters a collective identity and English and individual one. It should be pointed out as well that using English, as the minority language for the Hasidic group, could be understood as an instance of divergence, as stated by Gasoriek and Vincze (2016: 306).

In contrast to the women against Esty being able to have a new life outside her Hasidic community, we have Esty’s mother, Leah, and other

minor characters that appear in the series, such as Esty's mother's partner, who we will not include.

Leah is shown as an assertive character, determined to stand up for herself in front of her former community, despite having fallen from grace after leaving her husband. This behaviour is reflected in her use of Yiddish and of English. On the one hand, when in the series she first tries to approach her daughter in Yiddish, she is rejected by her in English. Nevertheless, and as their relationship improves, Esty accepts speaking to Leah in English, and English becomes a tool to show the viewer that Esty is ready to leave forever the Brooklyn community in which she grew up. None of these linguistic hints are present in the book, but in the audiovisual production they become tools to help the series viewers understand how the mother-daughter relationship, forbidden by the religious community after Leah left the community, can develop outside and therefore in English. Their individual identities are made even clearer to the viewers through the use of English.

Moishe, a character absent in the book, as explained before, and who is commissioned by the Brooklyn Hasidic community to help Esty's husband force her to return to the United States, always uses Yiddish with Leah, to which she retorts that at home he does not allow her to speak Yiddish, even though this is the language she uses at work. Moishe rejects to use any other language apart from Yiddish because he also rejects the possibility of living outside his religious community. In this case Yiddish is used as a symbol of his collective and individual identity.

English, on the other hand, is openly the lingua franca in the series. Thus, when Esty is in Berlin, this is the language she uses with her teachers, and with the other students, while German becomes residual and, on many occasions, appears mostly in the visual channel. Thus, English becomes the language of those not sharing the Hasidic precepts, while German defines the geographical locations of scenes. In a similar way, Hebrew is only present in religious practices. Once more and as explained above, the whole series debates freedom versus restriction, and the languages present in the audiovisual production help to emphasize this dichotomy.

6. Conclusions

Both *Unorthodox: The Scandalous Rejection of My Hasidic Roots* (2012) and its screen adaptation *Unorthodox* (Netflix, 2020), present its main character (Deborah and Esty) as a woman trapped in the ultraconservative community of Williamsburg, who wants to escape from the constrictions of her married

life in this Hasidic community. Freedom, as opposed to the rigid parameters of the Ultraorthodox Hasidism, is clearly represented in both works, although in different ways. While multilingualism is commonly used to characterise the different communities and shape characters' identities as well as collective identities in the book and on screen, a new setting (Berlin) and music have been added to the screen adaptation to portray freedom.

Still, it is worth mentioning that language variety is also represented differently: while Yiddish and Hebrew are the only third languages in both versions of the book (English and Spanish), the audiovisual production also has German and Russian. These two languages are heard a few times in the scenes shot in Berlin, as opposed to Yiddish (representing the rigid parameters of the ultraconservative Jewish community) and Hebrew (linked to religion and used by Hasidic characters) that can be heard throughout the series; namely there is constant code-switching, so subtitles have been provided. In Feldman's autobiography, Yiddish and Hebrew may be found throughout the book but in isolated words or expressions. Here, no straight translation has been provided: sometimes a short explanation, next to the term, has been given, and on occasion the foreign term or expression can simply be understood from the context. This also applies to the translated version *Unorthodox: Mi verdadera historia*, but a glossary of Yiddish terms is provided at the end of the book. Although both the book and the series have a recurrent presence of L3, as might be inferred from our analysis, its intensity is not the same. Thus, we propose to add a new category to Corrius and Zabalbeascoa's (2019) classification of the presence of L3: the "Intensely-recurrent" category, which would be allocated between "recurrent" and "L3-as-theme". The "intensely-recurrent" category would include those texts whose L3 presence is frequent (from beginning until the end) and long, sharp, vivid (long dialogues and/or speeches).

The characters analysed in this article are those relevant to Esty Saphiro's escape. In the first group we can include Esty's grandmother, her aunt and her mother-in-law, representative of the values of the Hasidic community. As the audience perceives that their conversations are in Yiddish, Yiddish becomes the tool with which to assign them to the hardcore membership of the Hasidic community, and to ascribe to them the collective identity of that group. The few instances we hear Miriam and Malka use scattered words in English about commodities they need to buy outside their community, help viewers to locate these two characters and their family and communities in a neighbourhood in New York City. Other scenes that happen outside the community allow us to situate the environment where the scene takes place. In the same way, Germany mainly appears in the visual channel, rather than in the script.

The plot tension is basically shown by Yiddish and English, since English appears, as opposed to Yiddish, as the language of those who move away from the Hasidic community and live by other norms. As a summary, we can classify the different languages in the series as follows: English becomes the unmarked language; Hebrew represents the language of religion; and Yiddish is represented as the language of coercion; German defines the setting, together with English in some scenes, and becomes the “integrated utopia” (Rushton 2021), according to the producers of the series.

Music and song have thematic importance in the narrative as metaphor for freedom. Music is important in Feldman's memoir, and part of the series is based on this. However, as an audiovisual adaptation, audiovisual resources are used, and music is another powerful means, together with language, to show the protagonist's transformation. In the book, the protagonist starts her rebellion first by reading secretly and then by writing. This is transformed, in the series, as the protagonist begins by listening to music and ends by singing it. Esty is empowered as a woman through finding her voice in the final song in the series. The fact that this voice sings in Hebrew shows that characters, even if they depart from specific roles, can subvert them in new places.

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Filmography

Unorthodox

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