



***Unorthodox* Navigating Identity, Tradition, and Transformation in a Changing World**

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Abstract

Unorthodox, the 2020 Netflix drama miniseries, tells the compelling story of Esther "Esty" Shapiro, a young woman from an ultra-Orthodox Jewish community in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, who seeks to escape the rigid confines of her upbringing in pursuit of artistic freedom and personal fulfillment in Berlin. While centered on Esty's personal struggle, *Unorthodox* also serves as a critical exploration of cultural identity, identity politics, and cultural transformation, reflecting broader societal conflicts. The series engages with feminist perspectives on women in cinema, presenting a nuanced portrayal of female agency within a traditionally patriarchal society. It examines the tension between preserving tradition ("Change Nothing") and embracing transformation ("Change Everything"), situating Esty's journey within larger debates in film about cultural identity, gender, and social issues. Through its representation of formal and informal gatekeepers who uphold social control and latent power structures, *Unorthodox* delves into the politics of identity and belonging. It offers a poignant critique of the intersection between tradition, modernity, and personal freedom, while also shedding light on the feminist struggle for self-expression and autonomy in cinema. By addressing issues of identity, gender, and cultural transformation, *Unorthodox* contributes to ongoing discussions in film and media about the role of cinema in shaping social issues and representing diverse perspectives.

Keywords: media and communication, cultural identity, feminist cinema, tradition vs. modernity, social issues in film and TV series