

# Stay Homeland

**ANOUSHKA BEAZLEY** analyses the narratives we are watching in lockdown

## UNORTHODOX – NETFLIX

**A** WOMAN IN tears while her hair is shaved in public, ordered to have sex and given a gun to finish herself off. Gangland crime thriller? Close. Day in the life of a Jewish wife deciding the strict Hasidic community may not offer what she needs. I feel my body tense as if it were an actual thriller. This story feels lived, feels real. I know that this is the procedural memory part of my implicit memory (Tosi, 2008), where my motor and cognitive processes store information. That they helped my explicit memory expand and that these memory systems work together to decode what has been stimulated; so much is relatable: Esty's courageous move to give herself what she needs. Based on a memoir by Deborah Feldman, Esty walks differently, acknowledges herself as different and, from certain angles even looks different, almost stunted in growth. An intentional choice by the director to juxtapose the internal growth going on behind the scenes perhaps; growth that is independent, autonomous and most painfully of all, forbidden by her community. However, Feldman's memoir (2012) and the fictionalised *Unorthodox* are actually not so different. Feldman's mother was banished for coming out as a lesbian, Feldman herself chastised for not producing a child and eventually escaping the oppressive community life, fleeing to Germany with her son. 'Group life, whether in the contexts of therapy, counselling, consulting, teaching, community work, and so on, contains reservoirs of conflict, shame, and anxiety that ultimately need to be surfaced and addressed if the group is to work effectively and represent all of its members.' (Cornell, 2016, p145). This controversial story feels important. And yet I know that's just for me. Every community gives a different sense of belonging to different people: those who stay, and those who leave. The ones who do both have an expanded frame of reference, something we seek to give our clients. And is it wrong that 'Moishe,' a maverick Hasidic, expelled from the community for drinking, gambling and smoking, is shamefully attractive? Ok, yes, whole other conversation.

## HOMELAND – CHANNEL 4

**B**ASED ON THE Israeli series *Prisoners of War*, *Homeland* was America's version with Carrie Matheson, a CIA officer and a diagnosis of bipolar disorder. Through the series we watch Matheson struggle to balance not only her medication but her personal life –

I mean she had a baby with a terrorist. The demands of her work – countless breaches of security, inappropriate intimate relationships and flagrant violations of national security protocol. And, motherhood – a social services paperwork nightmare. Personally, I have been a committed fan of Matheson, but sadly this is *Homeland's* final series. I'm sorry to say goodbye, I've enjoyed her, been inspired by her and, reflecting on why, I am left with the notion of resilience. Matheson was the queen of bad decisions, always a step away from a tribunal, but she never gave up. New York's Sinai hospital is leading the way in resilience research (Stix, 2018). A drug to increase psychological resilience has begun early clinical trials. It may not be Matheson's final season after all.

## TWELVE MONKEYS

**T**OP OF THE pandemic movies not to watch if you have struggled to buy toilet paper, tried to make toilet paper from flour and struggled to buy flour or watched Trump recommend self-administering bleach. Set in 2035, 'the future,' yeah, my point exactly, the Earth is uninhabitable, bar wild animals – cue dinosaur-sized pangolins, bats and the new species of batgolins – and Bruce Willis travelling back in time to try and find the origin of the virus. In Gilliam's ground-breaking mid-90s movie (substantially less ground-breaking these days) no one is checking the meat markets in Wuhan or the back-up fridge in the White House but people are still surviving, albeit underground, and scientists, bless 'em, are still looking for a cure. So, what's the role for the therapist? Isn't the therapist meant to have an academically trained yet empathic understanding of the client's story, not living the shit at exactly the same time? Does this lift the magic curtain and show the illusion isn't real? What answers do we therapists have to offer in a pandemic? 'Every person must choose how much truth he can stand' (Yalom, 1992, p18).

## References

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