

Shifting positions

ANOUSHKA BEAZLEY accompanies us in the real world of suspended belief

THE FALL – BBC 2

I HAVE LOST sleep watching this series. First from binge-ability. And second from the tiny trickle of fear which ran down my spine as the realisation dawned that even the loving father next door, who works as a grief counsellor and is married to a neo natal nurse, could be a serial killer tying up women and terrorising them in their own homes. The combination of procedural and perfect pacing is a touch of brilliance and unfolding simultaneously is a potent relationship between the sexiest superintendent Belfast has seen, Stella Gibson (Gillian Anderson) and the cutest boy band-looking psychopath, Paul Spectre (Jamie Dornan). Mothersole (2000) defines expressive violence as a result of 'uncontainable feelings, especially anger. . . often connected with underlying sadness and depression.' In contrast he defines instrumental violence as violence which is 'consciously calculated to achieve certain goals.' Here our protagonist shows both types of violence so entwined that initially his meticulous attention to detail leaves little to the forensic imagination of Gibson's crime scene. But as our voyeur's sadism increases, Gibson begins to undress his past. The series possesses an almost therapeutic construction; Spectre's humanity is somehow sometimes more obvious than his psychopathy, yet Kernberg (1998) insists that before treatment can begin anti-social behaviour must be controlled via honest communication with the wider society. This is where the theory and reality of the psychopath split. In a particularly psychologically charged scene, Spectre arrives in the day as a grief counsellor to the bedside of his latest victim whom he has mercilessly tortured by night. Without his mask she cannot recognise him as the severely-abused-by-a-catholic-priest traumatised adult that he is, and he tenderly posits to his victim that it is not her fault.

As therapists we treat the abused willingly but how many of us are ok to sit with the offenders, the first abused? Gibson wears stellar heels but there is a part of her which is also shut down. Is this what we must do to find the worst of ourselves, and how does the emotionally-shut-down therapist defy fear and find empathy at the same time? If, as Kernberg suggests, we cannot treat unless we control the anti-social behaviour, are we destined to treat the symptoms and never the cause?

THE SINNER (3 SEASONS) – NETFLIX

HARRY AMBROSE (Bill Pullman), a therapist trapped in the body of a police detective with a social awkwardness that seems to disconnect him from the world as much as it connects him to the suspects. Each season is a separate case, based on the books from German crime writer Petra Hammesfahr. Harry, mired in self-loathing, uses an intuition which appears detached from experience or procedure but born of two things. One is a spiritual connection with the suspect, something transcendent in nature which reaches beyond what the justice system can provide, and two is a deep awareness of a deviance which resides in him as well as others and the sensitivity which arises from the recognition of the depravity which society casts out. Season one is the best for plot, Harry is struck by a young woman's unprovoked yet savage act of violence, with an upcoming season four set to explore the plot of Harry himself. 'For people who are aware of their soul's stirrings it is essential to find a therapist who is open and understanding and who perhaps shares a similar awareness' (Trautmann, 2003, p33).

THE OUTSIDER – SKY ATLANTIC

BASED ON THE novel of the same name by Stephen King, Zac Mulligan's exquisite cinematography hauntingly captures the eeriness of this ten-part series. There is a predator on the loose yet there are unexplainable factors, unless you believe that is – and detective Ralph Anderson does not. Mellacqua (2016) defines four spiritual positions; Anderson's move from 'I don't believe – You believe' to 'I believe – You believe,' (p153) drives the procedural supernatural narrative affecting the realism. 'People do not necessarily stay in one spiritual position indefinitely. They may shift between positions, thus creating both an intrapsychic and a relational area of spiritual tension that reminds us of another way of being in the world' (Mellacqua, 2016).

References

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