

EXTRACT: FRANCESCO PEDRAGLIO

An artist once described a magical formula for producing artwork: ‘Take an object. Do something to it. Do something else to it.’ It is the third part of the equation that produces the required change, the paradigm shift into territory uncharted that turns craft and labour into the unnameable, the unplaceable, the untraceable. This is also the crucial aspect of any narrative. Not the story arc or anything one might be taught on a bad creative writing course. The third part is the secret formula, the spy behind the wainscoting, the true alchemy. I wish I knew it when I saw it. Mostly, like all of us, I say too much and listen not at all. I would only ever be a private storyteller. By invitation only. My idea of an audience is me and you. Or only me. They are not really stories after all, not in any real sense. It is much too Baroque for that. I could never resolve to formulate it in any public sphere because that would entail speaking in a way I would find uninteresting. There would be no momentum and it would descend into mere meaning. I would need to move towards an ending, a way to exit the maze, but by then it would just be a bore to me: a dull and rusty key simply turning in the lock causing the gate to open as it has always opened a thousand times before. When I speak to you as we are now, I feel as though I could be lying on my back and gazing up at the stars, plucking the occasional one down for us both to share the light from. And I feel that we share the same position as every astronomer who organised and named all the constellations and brought down those constellations to form the gods of the first stories. What they were doing

of course was tracing an imaginary set of lines around a cluster of stars, and in so doing, they would reveal an image; that image would then reveal an identity and that identity would in turn reveal a system to reorganise their world, and they would find themselves reading the night sky.

Why a sanatorium?

The idea of the sanatorium has nothing whatsoever to do with madness, it was simply a way to allow the stories and the characters, especially the elusive protagonist, to be contained, to breathe freely, to rest *literally*, to dream *actually* and this dreaming is important because all the inhabitants of my rest home are suffering from a surfeit of imagery and the problem when put quite simply is that none of the imagery is theirs, their imaginations have atrophied. Now they have to be allowed time and space to re-imagine their own imaginings, to dream, to engage in pointless reverie. This is not to remove them from the real, to establish a fictional hermitage, above or away from the world but to allow them to recoup, regroup, reequip their unconsciousness and this unconsciousness is the place we will try and help them populate afresh with imagery of their choosing.

Where are we now? My notes are becoming a bit random....