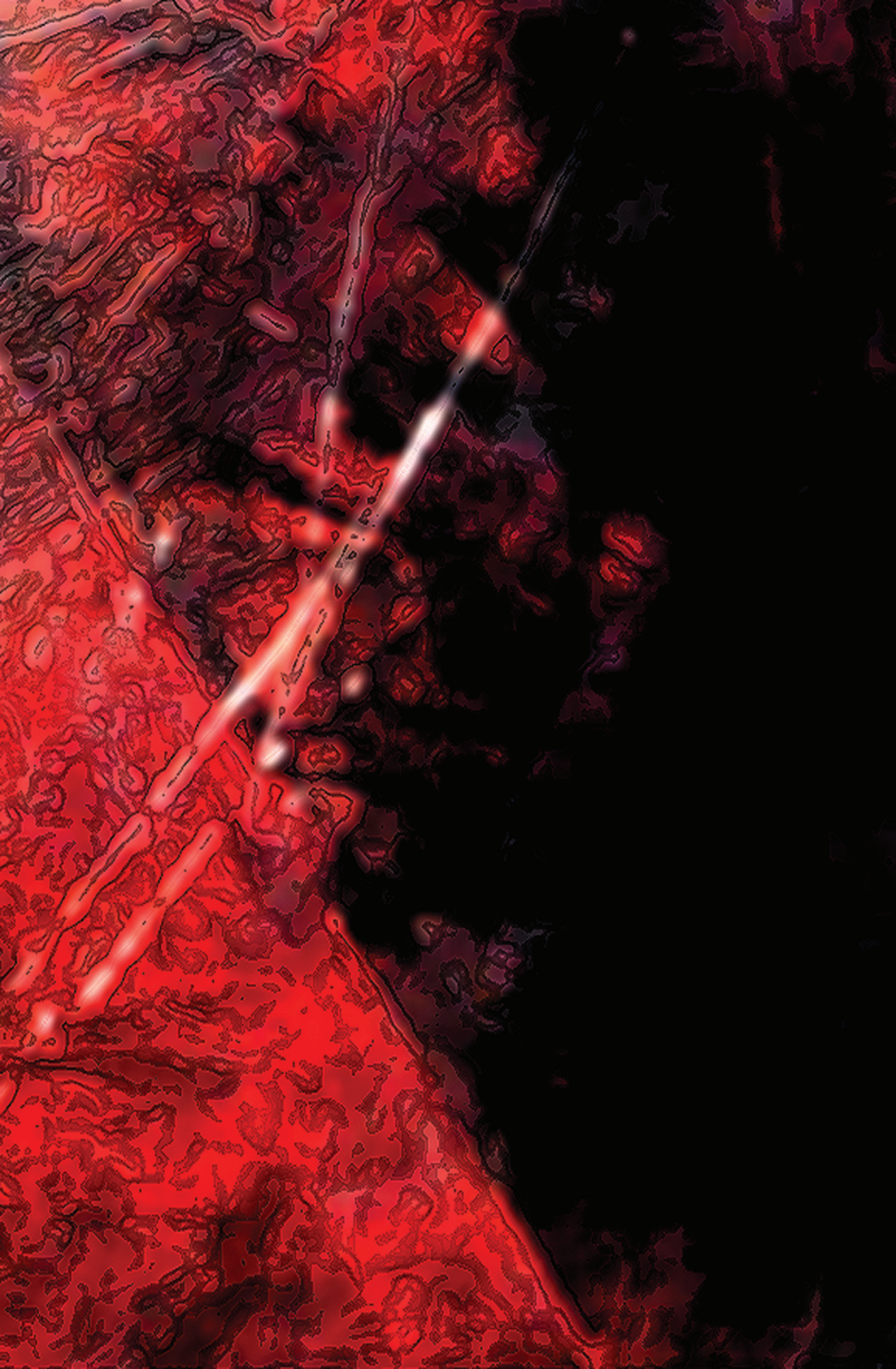




THE CARETAKER

Theoretically pure anterograde amnesia



Could it be said that we all now suffer from a form of theoretically pure anterograde amnesia?

Oliver Sacks' *The Man who Mistook his Wife for a Hat* and Christopher Nolan's *Memento* have made the features of the condition - referred to, misleadingly, as short-term memory loss - well-known. In fact, sufferers do produce new memories, but they are not retained. There is no long-term encoding. This type of amnesia is anterograde rather than retrograde because it does not affect any memories formed before the onset of condition. Theoretically : in practice, it is likely that even the old memories will undergo some degradation.

The theme of *The Caretaker's* music was once homesickness for the past. Now, it is the impossibility of the present.

Selected memories from the haunted ballroom was a kind of replicant mnemonic implant, a false memory of the tearoom pop of the twenties and thirties. For those of us haunted by the lambent ache of Al Bowlly's croon in *The Shining* and Pennies from Heaven, that kind of Total Recall trip was irresistible. The ghosts were so glamorous, their bob haircuts and pearls glistening in the candlelight, their dance moves oh so elegant.

An occulted reference might have been The invention of Morel (an influence upon *Last Night in Marienbad* and therefore also upon *The Shining*), Adolfo Bioy Casares' science fictional lovesong to Louise Brooks. Casares imagined a world - we live in it - where the spectres of the beautiful and the damned are preserved forever, their little gestures and banal conversations transformed, by repetition, into holy artifacts.

The simulation machine on Morel's island is film, of course, and who has not at some time wanted to do as Casares' hero does and pass beyond the screen, so as to finally be able to talk with the ghosts you have for so long mooned over? It is the same temptation that Jack yields to in *The Shining* when he enters into the consensual hallucination of *The Overlook*. The Gold Room, in which the Scott Fitzgerald-era elite forever cavort in a ceaseless whirl of wit, cocaine and wealth, is perfectly heavenly. But you know what the price of the ticket to heaven is, don't you Jack?

Don't you?

It is that grave-damp, mildewed odour which the perfume and the preservative never quite covered up which has always made *The Caretaker's* music uneasy, rather than easy, listening. Queasy listening, actually. It has never been possible to ignore the shadows lurking at the periphery of our audio-vision; the trip down memory lane was deliciously intoxicating but there was a bitter undertaste. A faint horror, something like the dim but insistent awareness of plague and mortality that must have nagged at the entranced dancers in Poe's 'The Masque of the Red Death'.

That's not all.

Something else was wrong.

The sepia and the soft focus were photoshopped in, we knew that. These thick carpets and china tea-sets weren't really there. And they never were, not for us. We were in a simulation of another's mind's eye. The mottled, honeyed, slurred and reverbed quality of the sound alerted us to the fact that this was not the object itself but the object as it is for someone else's memory.

On Theoretically pure anterograde amnesia, things have worsened immeasurably. It is as if the Overlook simulation has run out of steam. The lights have gone out. The hotel is rotten, a burned out wreck long since gutted, the band is pale and very nearly translucent.

The threat is no longer the deadly sweet seduction of nostalgia. The problem is not, any more, the longing to get to the past, but the inability to get out of it. You find yourself in a grey black drizzle of static, a haze of crackle. Why is it always raining here? Or is that just the sound of the television, tuned to a dead channel?

Where were we?

You suppose that you could be in familiar territory. It's difficult to know if you've heard this before or not. There's not much to go on. Few landmarks. The tracks have numbers, not names. You can listen to them in any order. The point is to get lost. That's easy in this ill-seen, late Beckett landscape. You extemporize stories - they call it confabulation - to make sense of the abstract shapes looming in the smoke and fog.

Who is editing the film, and why all the jump-cuts?

By now, very little - a few haunting refrains lingering at the back of your mind - separates you from the desert of the real.

Let's not imagine that this condition afflicts only a few unfortunates. Isn't, in fact, theoretically pure anterograde amnesia the postmodern condition par excellence? The present - broken, desolated - is constantly erasing itself, leaving few traces.

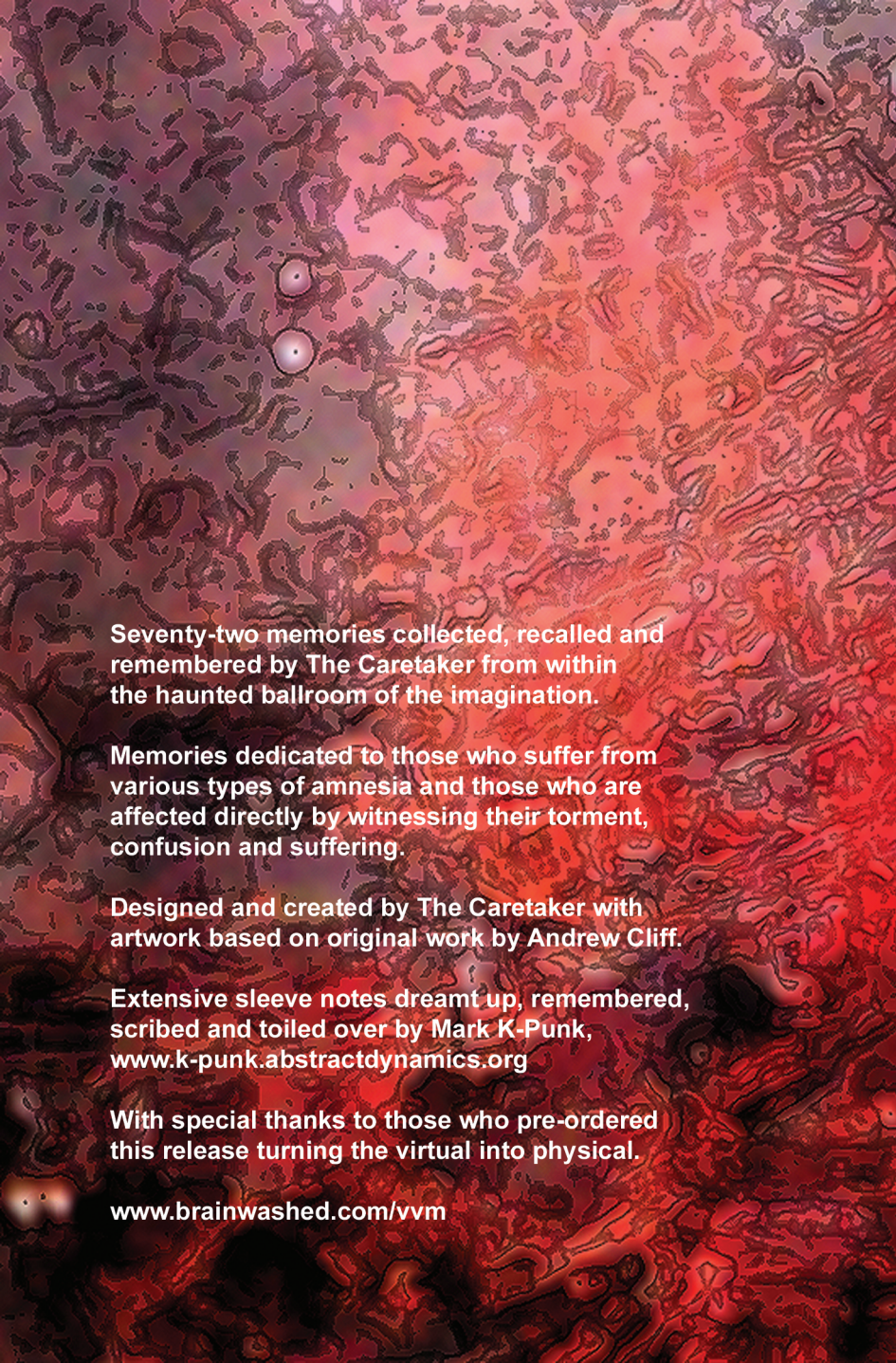


Things catch your attention for a while but you do not remember them for very long. But the old memories persist, intact... Constantly commemorated... I love 1923...

Do we really have more substance than the ghosts we endlessly applaud?

The past cannot be forgotten, the present cannot be remembered.

Take care. It's a desert out there...



Seventy-two memories collected, recalled and remembered by The Caretaker from within the haunted ballroom of the imagination.

Memories dedicated to those who suffer from various types of amnesia and those who are affected directly by witnessing their torment, confusion and suffering.

Designed and created by The Caretaker with artwork based on original work by Andrew Cliff.

Extensive sleeve notes dreamt up, remembered, scribed and toiled over by Mark K-Punk, www.k-punk.abstractdynamics.org

With special thanks to those who pre-ordered this release turning the virtual into physical.

www.brainwashed.com/vvm

