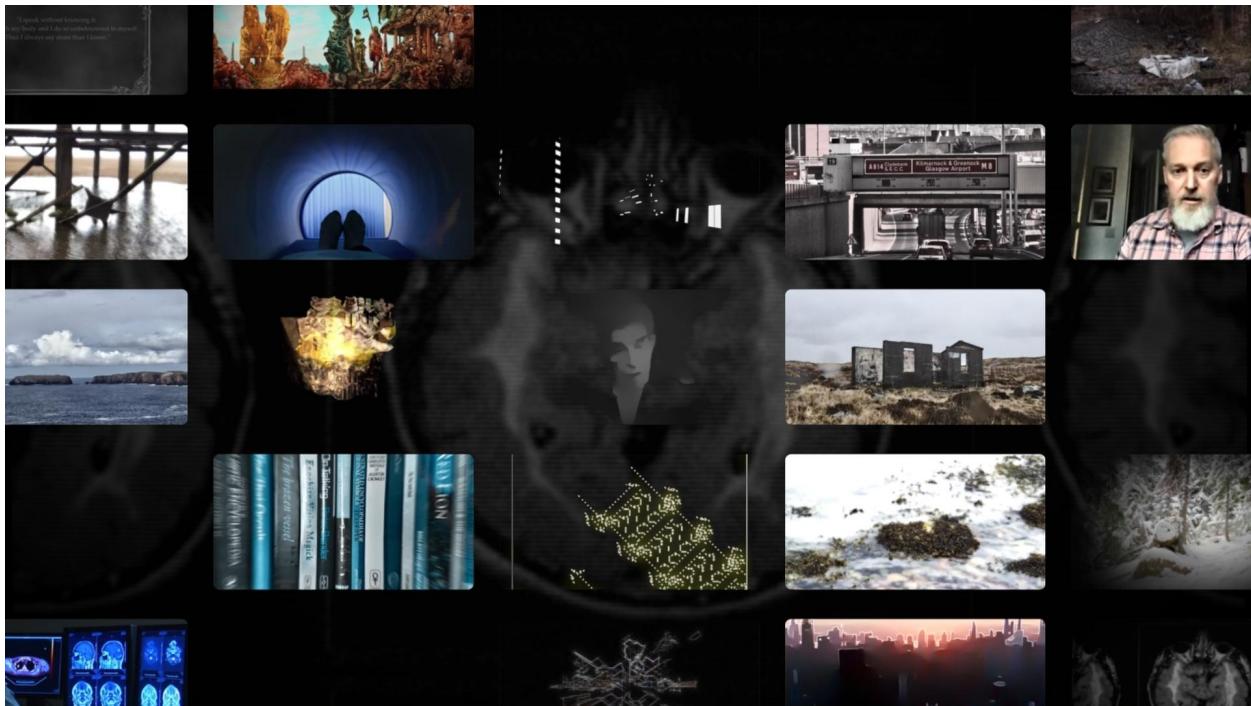




Palimpsest

The next morning, he discovered (with a moderate amount of surprise), that he was missing some of his memories.



He was not of an age where he would necessarily have expected his memories to go astray. He knew that, at some point in the future, it would seem to be a natural part of a process of aging; but this process to him seemed remote and unknowable. He wondered, idly, why his mind seemed to be betraying him a little; that somehow there was a process underway driven by intelligences beyond his own, just out of reach. He wondered even if the memories themselves had chosen to withdraw, removed from the field of battle through underuse. If he could work out which ones were missing, then perhaps he could assign some direction to their absence. But all he could tell is that there was a grey fuzz where something had been before.

As time passed, he found his thoughts more and more returning to the absence. Whilst he couldn't be certain of what-wasn't-there without a map to match *what had been* with *what was now*, he had a strong suspicion that the fuzz was increasing in size; what had seemed the shape of a small coin initially now - he imagined - was something more like the size of a drinks coaster.

He was reassured through his daily routine that nothing of note was missing; after all, his life appeared to be moving on the same predictable track as always. But of course, he realised, he would not know if things *had* been particularly different. He was remembering only the past experiences that matched what was there - perhaps the missing pieces reflected unexpected, dramatic and thrilling events that lay now out of his reach.

After a time, this started to bother him. Whilst he was reasonably content with the person he was now, he feared that perhaps there was a past him who was more whole, fulfilled, complete. And whilst he could never go back and meet that person, his sense that was as the grey fuzz grew a little more (now the same shape as a side plate that he'd seen - well, somewhere. He couldn't quite recall where) so inversely his current self would diminish in tandem. This, he surmised, was not going to end well; and so he decided that he would do something about it.

He purchased a large pack of post-it notes and some black marker pens from a stationery shop.

Sitting at his desk, he opened the cellophane, clicked the pen into life, and in large letters wrote on the first note:

[Standing stones like fingers pointing skywards]



As he wrote, he could see the grey stones like they were there in front of him. He felt the smir of rain against his cheek, and the petrichor smell just after a rainstorm. He knew that now the memory lived on the surface of the note; it was a talisman locking the experience via ink on paper. He touched it, once, gently; and then placed it on his kitchen wall.

Over the next few weeks, as he navigated the world (now more often punctuated by strange absences), he added to his wall of memories. A snatch of music overheard one evening led to

[Music for 18 Musicians]

PULSE MARIMBAS

Paceontino STUDENT PAD
NO. 1 MEDIUM 12 STAVES

going up to join the first note, with his faint touch on the wall as he placed it bringing with it a cascade of shimmering melodic percussive strikes in his head.

A strangely familiar looking wine stain on a tablecloth sent him racing for pen and note, with

[Seeing "Europe After The Rain" for the first time]



placed on the wall alongside its siblings; a smile of recollection as he did so with the memory of the painting held in his minds eye.

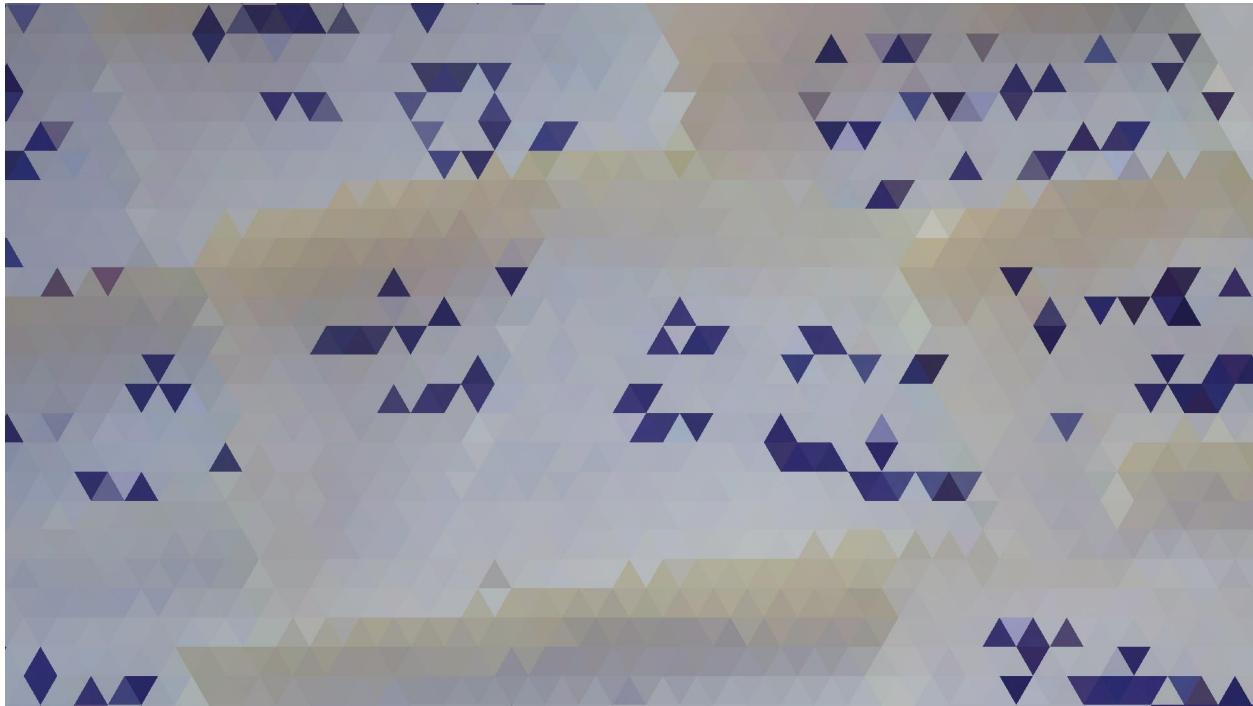
There were more arbitrary seeming notes too. Phrases or triggers that only he would be able to map back against the mental image that had prompted it - notes like

[The lurch of the first inviolable decision]

Or

[The sound of his laughter]

These images were potent and heavy with meaning. The arrangement of each letter in his blocky, slightly childlike script was like a spell or incantation; each placing on the wall combining together, like a compression algorithm where binary 2D black-on-yellow metamorphosed (if placed the right way) into a 3d sensory diorama. As sigils, they worked on both a literal and metaphorical level; shadows on the cave wall in sharpie, with the real world just out of sight until needed.



And he continued.

[My first toothache]

[The smell of pine sap]

[The tshirt she kept]

[The test coming back positive]

[First taste of wasabi]

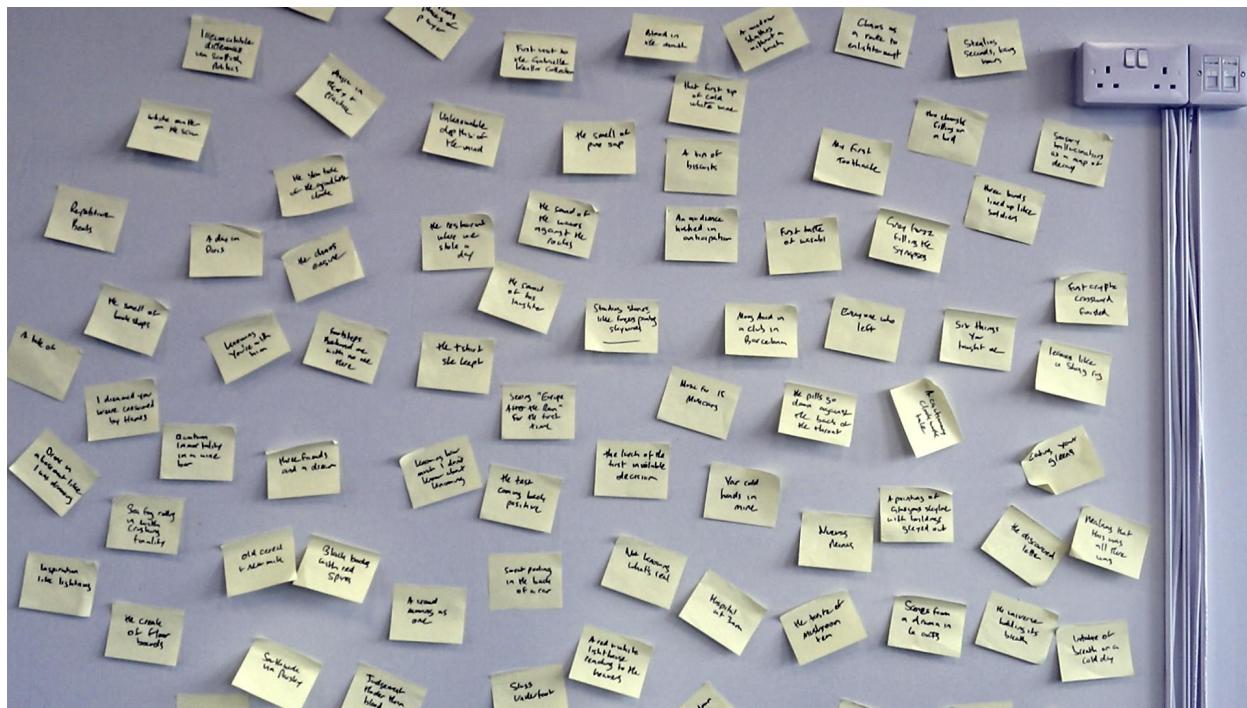
[Your cold hands in mine]

[The restaurant where we all stole a day]

[Moog Acid in a club in Barcelona]

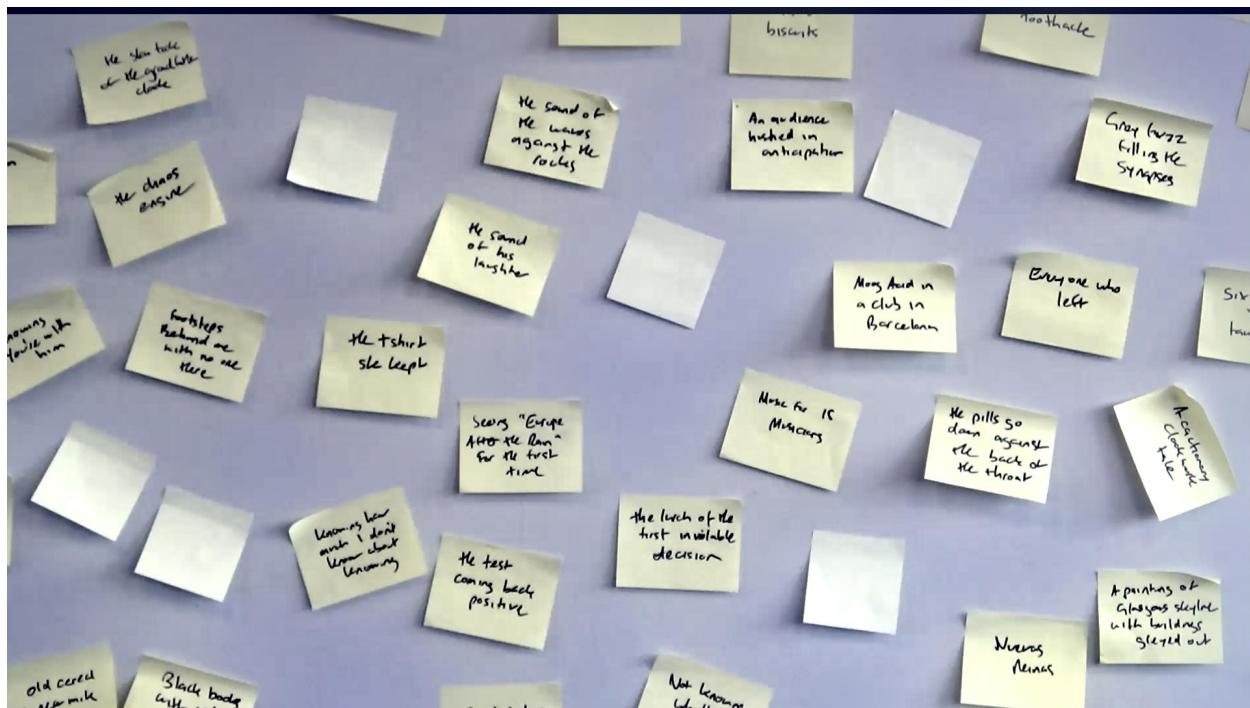
[The sound of the waves against the rocks]

He stood, and looked at them. Some of them still resonated, some of them seemed like stories he had heard someone else tell. But a lean forwards and a gentle touch on the surface, and the recollections came back, fully formed and razor-sharp.



The next morning, he awoke and went back to look at his wall. But to his alarm, something had happened in the night while he slept. Several notes on the wall, previously marked in his scrawled writing, were now blank.

He paced. Had someone else been in his kitchen while he slept? Or perhaps these were notes he had put up prior to inscription, holding a place for something meaningful? He cast his mind back, trying to remember what had been there the previous night. But to his dismay, he couldn't remember anything about the missed spots.



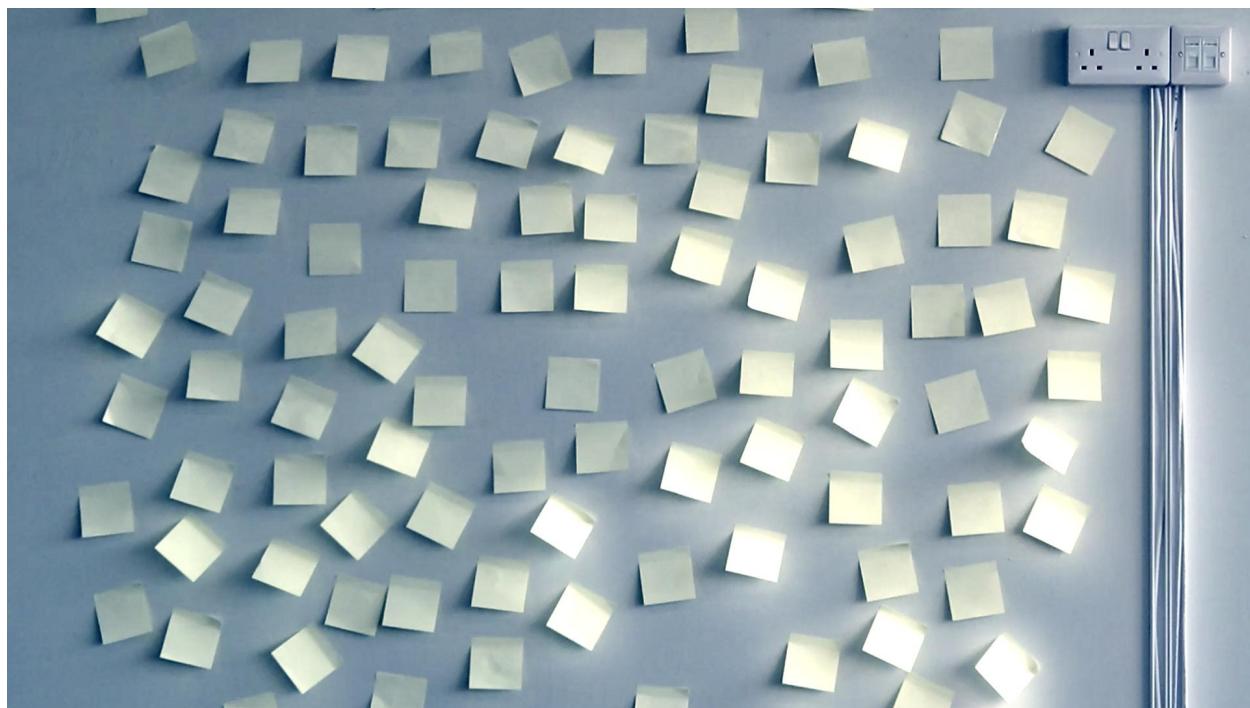
Over the next few weeks, the blank spots grew whilst he added more notes of his own - a war of attrition fought via stationery. He would add

[An audience hushed in anticipation]

But come back the next morning to find that for the one he added, two more had gone. The wall now looked like a curious map of....something, somewhere; yellow blank paths like rivers cutting through dense black scrawl. Tracks and traces of memory penetrated by encroaching blankness, and at a rate that - he had to accept - was becoming uncontrollable.

A few weeks later, he woke, in much the same way as he had over the preceding weeks. He knew there was something awry, something absent; but he couldn't think what it was. It had been something important, he felt, but he also felt a strange calm - like a journey had been completed, or a door had closed for the last time behind him.

Slightly dazed, he wandered through into his kitchen, and found himself standing facing the wall. Pure yellow glowed in front of him, the blank notes reflecting back the sunlight in his kitchen. With sad acceptance - although without knowing of what, specifically, he was sad about, his eyes scanned the sheets in front of him.



And just out of the corner of his eye, he could see one last note left, like an afterthought. Realisation dawning on him, he reached out to pluck it from its blank-faced cohort - and then flung back his head and laughed and laughed and laughed, as the note - in his own scrawled script - had written upon it....



Palimpsest

The Voice: Scott McKellar

Written & Created by Ruaridh Law