

★★★★★

Remainder

By Tom McCarthy

METRONOME £6



The unnamed narrator of this novel receives £8m compensation following an unspecified accident. Something fell out of the sky, it seems, but he can't say any more owing to the terms of the agreement reached with the shadowy forces responsible. He invests much of the money; the rest he spends trying to resolve a feeling that's developed since his rehabilitation, that he is merely acting out a part. At a party, some vague scenes enter his head: a crack in the wall which spreads out into memories of a whole building and the red roofs of buildings opposite, dotted with black cats. He sketches the memory, buys an apartment block in Brixton, has it re-decorated down to every last detail he can remember, populates it with actors, and then begins a series of precise re-enactments.

There are problems, of course. The cats on the roofs of the buildings opposite (which he has also bought) keep falling to their deaths, needing to be replaced regularly by members of his ever-expanding team. A musician gets caught cheating by playing a tape loop of his piano practice. Other re-enactments follow: a bizarre incident outside a tyre workshop results in a team of children endlessly repeating the scene in a London warehouse; a man is shot by contract killers and the narrator takes over the crime scene so he can repeatedly re-enact the victim's last moments.

How authentic might a re-enactment become? How real can a copy be? Dark and witty, *Remainder* poses some very interesting questions.