



MYSTIC BONES

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THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS
Chicago and London

RUBBINGS OF REALITY

DESERTING BONES

So much begins in the desert. A place of exile and wandering, of temptation and tribulation, the desert is haunted by absence and loss. The specter of death stalks you in the desert. It is not just the danger of losing your way in trackless terrain or the threat of thirst; it is a different peril all the more ominous because it is so elusive. In the desert, the unnamable approaches without ever arriving. You cannot know yourself until you venture into the desert *alone*, and then you learn that to find yourself is to lose yourself.

This is a lesson that the late poet Edmond Jabès taught me many years ago. One afternoon during a long conversation in his apartment on Epée de Bois, he spoke, as he rarely did, about silence. Reflecting on his life in Cairo before events forced him to move to Paris, Jabès began by reciting lines he had written in *The Book of Margins*.

God's truth is in silence

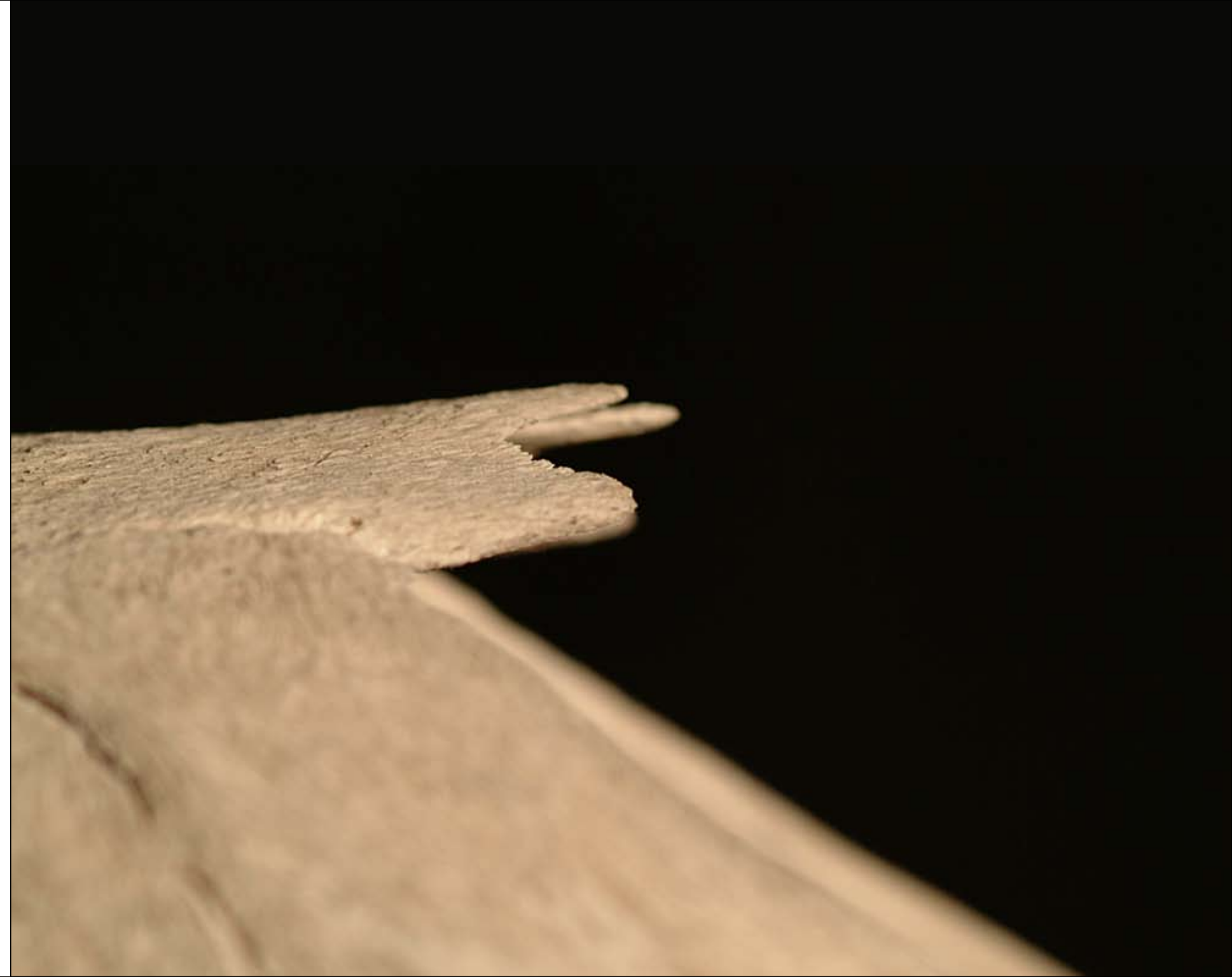
To fall silent in turn, with the
hope of dissolving into it.

But we become aware of it only
through words.

And words, alas, drive us ever far-
ther from our goal.¹

Here lies the paradox of an art that can never be called our own: silence can be heard only through the words that destroy it. In today's world people do not have

THE DESERT IS THE SPACE *of* ERRING



BETWEEN THE IMAGELESS AND THE IMAGED *is the space of desire*

