

## Chapter 16

# BLOODCRYSTALPOLLENSTAR<sup>1</sup>

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*Neil Chapman and Ola Stahl*

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### Francesco Kulla

Francesco Kulla approaches the lighthouse. Its white crystal eye marks a termination of his journey. And the other, the ruby eye, object of his devotion, was the sign that he should first depart. He has been on the road for years, perhaps decades. In any event, when he tells it, he will exaggerate. Proceeding step by step, always in the same dirt-black suit, always barefoot.<sup>2</sup> Now with a baseball cap, pilfered, its caption: 'Can I buy you a drink or do you just want the cash?' Soiled, his hair beneath it, the same. Without shoes but with head protected. The dissymmetry pleases Kulla. It will give his body a forward momentum demanding no hesitation, one foot and then the next. And he sings.

*. . .The longest train he ever did ride,  
Was a hundred coaches long.  
The only man he ever did love,  
Is on that train and gone. . .*

Kulla knows the colours. He knows the crystal. He carries it with him in his left trouser pocket. A treasured object. His fingers move across its surface. Ruby red eyes have brought him to the road. (But who's going to shoe Kulla's pretty little foot? Who's going to glove his hand?) Kulla knows the crystalliferious earth. He knows the fertile grounds. Brother's going to shoe Kulla's pretty little foot. Brother's gonna glove his hand. . .

Francesco Kulla. Kiss his ruby red lips.  
Kulla has never seen the sea.

Climbing the stairs to the lighthouse Kulla reaches the platform.<sup>3</sup> There is a vantage point from which he can see the waves breaking against the cliff below, the foam and the ocean's swell marking its force

on the rock. The lighthouse's faceted window allows him to see an interior into which there is provided no access. At the centre, a lamp and its prisms. Two panes in the window have been replaced with a glass tinted turquoise. He imagines the beam split, a division within the spread of its rays, sits for a moment, hangs his arms over the balustrade, squints at the horizon. The sun blinks on the water. Kulla rests. His feet carry the dirt of innumerable countries. He inhales. The air tastes different. And as he closes his eyes, the ruby red eyes of Christ are the eyes of sea-birds, are the eyes of the sun and of the moon, are the eyes of his father, and the eyes of the land, the soil, the dust, the molecular-eye; this crystal-liferous aspect.<sup>4</sup>

Kulla leans back and opens his eyes to the autumn sky – these squinting human eyes. The sun reflects in the crystal cylinder of the lighthouse. Kulla counts the steps of the sun; immerses himself in the sun's play on the water. His thoughts canter on the rhythms of light. A momentary lapse in consciousness, but he is alerted, and resurfaces.

Letting his gaze wander, there is another lighthouse, a beacon, situated amongst the cliffs at the water's edge. It too catches rays and sends them refracted through the rays of the other. Interplay. No shadows, only light. Light cutting across the sky, light turning the surface of the water into a plane of infinite variation. Light rendering the universe rhythmical.

He remains on the platform for a moment, hypnotised, counts the sun's descending steps, observes the water: its surface; trying to grasp the nature of the shifting interactions of light. And his attention is drawn to another part of the vista before him. Some yards out to sea, beyond the cliff, piercing the water, a ridge of rock, perfectly round, visible only when the ocean's swell recedes. The water contained within this circular frame forms a pond. A pond in the sea. And for a moment, between the waves, a still surface is revealed – infinitely thin, perfectly blank: mirror in the ocean. With all the attentiveness he can muster, before the next wave, Francesco studies this sight that seems to confound the ocean's fluid mechanics. And he watches the waves' cycle repeat, alternating his attention from one part to another all the better to grasp the whole that will not give itself to the eye's instantaneous apperception.

Allowing himself now to relax, he employs his vision's own rhythmical sensation – no analysis; no reasoning. The light emanating from the crystal cylinders of the two beacons is reflected in the pond in the sea. And beneath the play of lights across its surface, bland and still, a fractured mirror image of the landscape appears. This abundance of fractal universes. Kulla looks up at the sky. The dull circle of his thoughts:

either the images are distributed by the two crystal beacons – cast across distances onto the mirror surface of the pond – or the images are somehow contained by it, disseminated from it.



Francesco Kulla knows well the ruby red eyes that had made him flee in joy, abandoning the confines of a domestic life; that had brought him to the land's end and to this crystal eye submerged in water; microscopic layers constituting the corneas of the optical mechanism of crystal cylinders in a twisted, acrobatic anatomy.

As he descends the steps to make his way towards the beach, something still puzzles Kulla: a question, the answer to which might be his destiny. But his thirst rises and he is lost again to the crystalline ocean.

### Bernie N. Galls

The poet's voice splits.

It happens in a way that allows him to mark the moment precisely. He is reciting a line. *Sister's gonna kiss, my ruby red lips.*

Bernie N. Galls' voice split.

It diverged. An alien sensation. There were two voices: one emanating from his larynx – a voice familiar to him – the other from somewhere around his sternum, which caused his clavicle to move, but slightly. The event came with a vague sense of dislocation, but Galls noted it was not unpleasant and so read some more, altering the pace and rhythm of his speech, modifying pitch and tone, toying with prosodies and pronunciations. He transposed his lines into other languages – into foreign tongues he knew, and into those he could barely speak. He noticed again certain turns of phrase seemed to reproduce the voice splitting. Those permutations filled him with pleasure and awkwardness, a non-distinct joy with no reference but the sensation of the sound itself. The pleasure and exhilaration increased with the repetitions. He paced them with his breathing. Mutations appeared. At first, microscopic, slight differences in the pronunciation of a word, changes

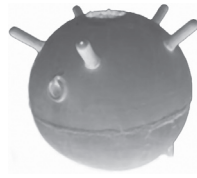
in the combination or order of phonemes. The mutations became more distinct. New words appeared from the sounds repeated, fractured pieces of syntax.<sup>5</sup>

Bernie N. Galls found the exercise had become part of his routine.<sup>6</sup> He extended his sessions, finding that as he persisted with the longer, more painful sittings, the mutations would take the form of new words. Making a note of these, he found an uncanny similarity between their phonetic content: a certain 'mo-' like sound recurred, as did a long 'ee', and a sound resembling a 'sht' or 'st'. Treating these common roots of the mutations as seeds, Galls made a list of words he could think of in which these sounds played a central role: 'mohair', 'Moscow', 'stick', 'star', 'meek', 'molten'. He focused hard, repeated the words to himself at different paces, tried to visualize them to see if they would allude directly to other texts, images, situations.<sup>7</sup>



Over months, Galls noticed the common roots of the words becoming more substantial. He found himself capable of distinguishing the word 'stone', for instance, in addition to a word resembling 'mould', 'mold', or 'mole', and a word similar to 'beech', 'bleach', or 'beach'. And though he tried to map them out, he could make little sense of the imagery, or of the paths and trajectories engendered. His was a fractured map, a collage drawn together from broken images the relationships between which were uncertain, ambiguous and shifting. Mould and bleach, mould and stone, stone and beach, mole and stone.

Extensive research followed: long sessions in the archives; incessant, silent repetition of word combinations. Galls confined himself, avoided his colleagues, spurned the conversation of friends in preference for an emerging, sub-vocal world of incantation. And gradually, one sequence began to take on weight: 'Molestone Beach'. Shocked by its clarity, Galls surfaced. He wrote his formula on a scrap of paper and took it to the indexes. Two results were returned: punk band, Madrid/Montevideo (circa. 1981): *Los Moles Tones*; a map reference – a location on the coast 145 miles North-West: Molestone Beach. Population: 1430.

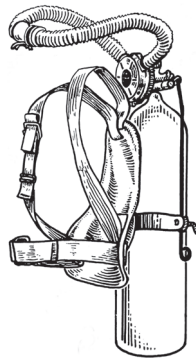


Galls watches from a distance. There are figures on the shore. Something is being done. An operation is being carried out. Or is there only one person? Is the other shape – what he had taken for a body – is that his bucket?

### Trouvaille Le Blek

Trouvaille Le Blek has been witnessed before walking with a bag of pebbles. A drawstring bag. Or if not witnessed carrying the container (it must surely equal his own weight) then loading it, or unloading it. He is a figure in the distance. Amongst his skills, Le Blek judges the divide beyond which a witness will see only shapes mutating. But he needs a witness all the same – the other's seeing rendered vague is a component in his operation.

Now stand again. Grasp its gathered opening in two fists. Make a brace with arms and shoulders, but lift from lower. Hold it. Release.



The beach was a mass of grey stones. A jetty, its railings corroded by the salt air, might once have been frequented by swimmers. Not quite knowing where to begin, Trouvaille Le Blek began to walk. He took 100 steps in a line, struggling to keep his balance across the uneven surface, then stopped to look around the landscape. He turned to walk the 100 steps back. Feeling uncertain, he returned to his room. He sat. He drank (water with a pinch of salt.) Made notes and drawings, pulled out his

charts again although he knew them already – every looping contour of the bay's submerged gradient. He played his recordings – the cries of sea-birds; stared at an image in space – followed it with his eye as it drifted.<sup>8</sup> He folded and refolded his drawstring bag, brushed the sand from its folds. But the feeling of an ill-defined uncertainty remained.

Back at the beach, he took the same 100 steps. This time he walked slowly. He tripped, lost his balance, straightened his posture, puzzled over the unaccountable appeal of this place.

The following days passed the same way. He walked in a square formation, repeated it; he walked in rectangles, triangles, circles and oblongs of different dimensions; half-circles, diagonals. He drew a letter, inscribed a numeral; stopped and stood at intervals after a certain number of steps or after intuiting a duration. He got better at walking slowly, crafting each stride, all the while trying to focus on the sensation of the stones, the sounds and smells of the place, the feeling of salt and wind in his face, the cries of birds, engines running in the far distance.<sup>9</sup>

The days passed and he began to notice small lapses in focus. He had developed by now a technique in which he would break each step into several components, and each of these would be executed slowly, with concentration: right heel against stone, roll the sole of the foot across the stones, lift the heel and then toes, raise the left foot, move it forward, left heel against stones, and on. He had developed grace to match his skill, executing his movements whilst maintaining balance and breathing. One day he took his walk barefoot; the next he discarded the rest of his clothes. He experienced the deep interlacing of the materiality of these repeated movements, and the affective relations of stones and feet. Stone sensitised skin. His muscles responded – soft, subtle vibrations. These intensifications did not cause him to lose his focus. But he slipped into a lapse – an apartness from the world. A feeling originating in his belly that spread as an intense heat giving rise to what might have been a temporary unconsciousness, or a profound loss of awareness – he was unsure – whilst not affecting his body, which continued to repeat its movements according to the patterns now established. At first uncomfortable Le Blek began to enjoy this loss of awareness. His periods of apartness were prolonged by graduated steps. He found himself able to retain some vestige of awareness – a third eye? – the capacity of an additional perception with which he could track shifts even within the texture of his apartness.<sup>10</sup>

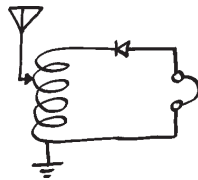
On his twelfth day, Le Blek had gone through his routines and was about to conclude the activity with one more walk on the stones. 700 steps straight ahead, 70 towards the sea, 700 back, 70 to his starting

point, a rectangular path. Leaving his clothes and shoes by the jetty, he made his way slowly along the beach. Through the soles of his feet, the stones; his steps in pace with his breathing, his focus strictly centred upon the activity and the movement. While attempting to maintain a balance, he had slipped or fallen many times. But this time, as the stone under his foot shifted, as he attempted to re-compensate with his weight, something happened. It was as if the imbalance of his posture had, itself, lost its balance. A slip of the slip. He stopped to consider. What he had been doing for the last days had been nothing but an exercise, a preparation, his body passing across and against the stones. The sensations he had experienced had been caused by a conflict between his body, its movements, and the stones; between his path and the uneven surface. Perhaps the hindrance or limit was in his own focus on what now revealed itself to be a battle between matters; perhaps the passage he had been assuming to follow from numbered shapes and figures inscribed on the earth was no passage at all. He gazed at the stones. There was a path. And there was a form of walking against it. But in the implicating disequilibrium of his balance – in the roll of his foot that stretched tendons and brought bones into proximity, there was another walking. This was not a line in resistance to the terrain, nor a blindness to its variety.

It was a twisting line.

It was a line not yet quite twisted, but neither soon to twist.

Barely perceptible slow motion's aim deferred, this was an infinitely fractal twist, a line composed by the stones and by the body there in their mass, a line of a peculiar acrobatics, through the dips, arcing the slopes of the interwoven micro-universes of the terrain. And if the discipline of the procedure was to be embraced – even if only for the sake of grace – there would be here a fluency of a different kind; a virtuosity.



Le Blek walked all through the evening and into the night. As the sun rose spreading a silver film across the bay, a blockhouse came into view. And scanning the ground before him, he took a measure. He saw the paths that others had formed, paths with their destinations clinging to them like bloated fruits on a branch. He saw the gathering and dispersing of the space in these lines, and he walked according to the

procedure that had become his method – slow, deconstructed steps drawing a new trajectory between stones, rock formations, and sparse vegetation. Slowing still further, returning to consciousness, he found himself stopped, and staring at an object. Something there at his feet – something familiar, and foreign too in that familiarity. Le Blek looked down at a body – pale, pined away – wasted – a young body prostrate on the stones. Devoid of hair, it was translucent. There were no eyes, only craters for each orifice: no organs, no muscles, but porous grey matter.

Trouvaille Le Blek hesitated. He drew closer and knelt down, reaching out and laying his hand on the forehead. The body was hard and cold, to his astonishment, like marble. In its translucent flesh could be seen an intricate structure. Though devoid of muscular tissue, organs, veins, arteries, the body appeared to contain divisions. Only just visible, these demarcations in the blocks of matter pressed tightly against one another to form a whole. The body appeared to have chambers, to be portioned into rooms and hallways distributed across levels. And as the light struck, its internal pattern was animated as if the divisions were made by mirror glass – rooms within rooms – an entirely different field of perceptions. A hidden architecture within the body's architecture. The stones of the beach as well as the landscape ahead of him and behind were reflected in the body's chambers – the entire beach in the body, contained.<sup>11</sup>

Le Blek looked now neither at the stretch of coast in front of him, nor at the blockhouse. He had arrived with a desire to get to know this place. He no longer had the same desire, but another – the evolution of the first: to get beneath, to penetrate the surface, the earthen element, to relax his muscles and fall back into the land's singular point, its portal, its access to the subterranean.



Le Blek's method, again, his voice now a distant yet intolerably distinct (cuttingly clear, crystal clear, unbearably sharp?) echo (of a code?) in the hollow of his skull: modify path, to the right, now away from the sea, traverse the rock, cushion of vegetation underfoot. Fidelity to the project. A bunker-destination would draw one in a straight line, but the land does not concur. Circle the slab. Ascend. Small changes. Small changes now a distraction. One star blinks in the hazy band above the



water. A loss of balance. He falls, his focus dissipated, 80 steps, or less: 70. He shuts his eyes and holds his breath. The boundaries of his body become vague. He gasps.

Venus is a pinprick of brightness low to the horizon. Looking harder, the dim specks of other lights appear. But if you are to focus on the evening star, giving it the attention it demands, it will perform. It will stretch its arms. And with a perfect, integrated movement, will draw them in again while extending vertical limbs. Its mute signals compel further attention, to look longer, to look harder still. Not to imagine other kinds of life, but other lives, with their enigmatic communications, emerge from the bright point's silence. Its mutating centre.

There is a moon in the sky. The sky's dark patches. This heaven an electric void. Its vast expanse. Now a flickering light. Animated in rapture. Its movement, the horizon's pulse. A consuming rhythm. Sudden exhaustion, a transformative potential. And there is blood.

A wound.

But the blood has already congealed. In place of the clot, something different is forming: a cloth. Cloth for clot. Hard, almost transparent. Parchment. The skin beneath the cloth, the body beneath the skin, the stones beneath the body. A reflection of the heavens on its gleaming surface.<sup>12</sup> The body's internal divisions exposed beneath. With rapidly flickering eyelids, and with a quick gesture of the hand, Le Blek rips the blood-cloth from his leg and holds it to the light. In its interior, a room, or a complex of rooms, system of passageways unpopulated, silent, cold – a universe. Le Blek puts the cloth in his mouth.<sup>13</sup> He will ingest it. It has no taste. It will not dissolve. On his leg, already another cloth has formed where the first was removed. He rips again, wedges it between his teeth and cheek, using three fingers to push it into the cavity. He slaps himself hard across the face, inhales deeply, resolves to continue. But to continue now, he will have to find a different way; he no longer has the functioning of his legs. The alternative: to crawl. His pain persists.<sup>14</sup> And he persists, pressing himself now to the stones as he moves, the pattern of these procedures established already – muscle-memorised in limbs that no longer operate, that pass their code to new organs of movement, coextensive with the first, and beyond comparison.

## El Topo

The trapdoor to the bunker is disguised by moss gathered from nearby and arranged so as to look natural.<sup>15</sup> Moss is in good supply. The bunker is a subterranean complex. In the past, there must have been

more evidence of its extent: a visible platform, the remnants of a rotating turret with apertures for the muzzle of a gun. Likewise, on the opposite side where the ground falls away towards the beach, the bunker's fortifications distinguish themselves from the faces of rock which they seem to mimic all the same. The natural features of the landscape have been taken into account; the building's orientation takes advantage of the slope.

A tangle of fallen branches blocks access to the place where the bunker's platform might still be found. Trees and bushes grow in places that used to be clear.

El Topo knows the passages of the bunker well. Or El Topo does not know the passages of the bunker well.<sup>16</sup> He has walked them, and repeated his walk, in his isolation testing the span of the corridor. He has done so with articulations of his limbs (some natural, some less natural). He has found places to stop, to reside for periods longer than he would be able to reason, where there is no provision for the requirements of a body. He has seen the complex from its anonymous corners. He has watched himself watching, and has made ocular procedures adequate to the task. But if El Topo is familiar with its turns and scattered volumes, his vision of the bunker's extent is confused; with his labour, his knowledge of the passages' convolutions increases, and his picture of their limits becomes less sure.

It does not cross El Topo's mind to consider that this place was built for bodies with dimensions and musculature different from his own.

His appropriation of the blockhouse marks its more recent chapter. In most places the internal walls are damp. And where they are not, to brush one's hand over the surface disturbs a dry residue: a caustic dust that is the concrete's struggle with itself. The dust gathers in crystalline forms around vents, invisible to the eye. These are the concrete's pores. El Topo has seen them. He has done so by listening to the sound of his clothes brushing against the concrete's surface. His legs, part of the soles of his feet, the palms of his hands, a portion of his belly, the left side of his chest, his chin: his encounters with the wall pass through each of these in turn, through all at infinite speed. He knows the density of wall through distributed vibrations. New skin and a new intimacy. El Topo knows his cavernous concrete dwelling, and he knows it not.

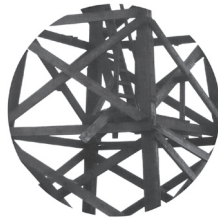
But the residue on its inner walls foretells the ruin of the blockhouse.

In conjunction with its steel reinforcement, concrete is unstable. And in its own composition too, over time it transforms. The solid mass expels its interior, becomes a hollow network. Paths across its surface shift as thresholds between the deposits of aggregated dust, the solidus

on which the discharged interior collects, and the catastrophic descents of the wall's porosity: each of these compounded by the work of micro-organisms that the hole-complex supports. El Topo has seen it all before inscribed in the stones of the beach.<sup>17</sup> The beach too has testified to the bunker's fate. You just need to know it well enough; take note of the most minute transformations of its surface. El Topo has made their pace part of his own duration; its slowness, the slowness of his movement; the tempo of its modification, his temporal texture against the measured times now abandoned.

He feels the stiff canvas of his jacket in contact with the wall. He brushes from his sleeve some remnants of dust.

He states his tenure.



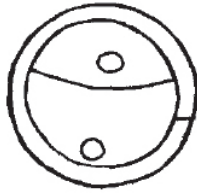
El Topo is not in residence, but he is close-by and would like to be enjoying its safety again. But there is a more pressing need. The secrecy of its location has been compromised.

He has installed himself at a distance, on the opposite side of the clearing, near the post of a demolished fence, with a view of the bunker's entrance. He has been stationed here long enough that the undergrowth is flattened around him. His movements are slight. But even the warmth and pulse of a body at rest administers to its own comfort. Or in the intangible distance between his crouching, hidden form, and the undergrowth yielding to his weight – in the body's warmth that passes, and then passes back – there is something like sympathy.

But such feelings are forgotten when El Topo is alerted by a sound from nearby. He senses a presence apart from his own. There is no intruder within sight, but he must lie still.

Over his jacket he has wrapped an animal fleece. To maintain the vigil requires him to keep alert. He will imagine his hiding place as if from the vantage point of a third party, plotting himself here in the grass so as to better judge if this position continues to provide advantage. But in the stillness, his mind will wander too. It is odd to have found a transitory security. It is of the same nature, the safety of the hiding place in the bushes and the safety in the deepest cells of the bunker. The same

strategy is employed as he hides with a view of the bunker's entrance, secure for a moment, his fur-wrapped body a fortification. But if an enemy becomes aware of his presence, this will happen by the enemy first suspecting it, seeing a fraction of El Topo's disguised form, or by seeing the most imperceptible movement as an anomaly in the field of vision from which the magnitude of the danger that El Topo constitutes for the other can then be inferred. This is the other's advantage: not that the hiding place might be exposed, but that his adversary has a sense of the danger faced while his thinking is not directed exclusively by the spectacle of the danger. Seeing what cannot yet quite be seen, the enemy is made alert beyond his normal capacities. Thinking it through again, El Topo's comfort recedes.



But El Topo has recourse to the same powers. While the necessity to keep still results in the limiting of his view, now his body nested this way realises a new seeing. The fleece in which he is wrapped gives him a vantage of the forest. It is an eye, an insect organ, seeing by touch.<sup>18</sup> His feet – his boots – he would like to draw even closer: they may be visible from the other side of the bush. But it is better not to move. And with this twitch – the impossibility to stay still, the impossibility to move – muscle transmits anxiety of leg's exposure, brain to body's extremity, body's extremity to brain. A carrier wave. Leg-antenna, before he draws it closer. The light is fading. He will sleep here tonight.

## Jonah

Jonah's cheeks have grown hollow. He was a wealthy man before this episode. He has been delivered from his trials, yet they weigh heavily on him. Ever since he left the oceans he has suffered an unbearable thirst. Walking barefoot across the city, he has developed scleroderma on the soles of his feet. And on the palms of his hands (he must have crawled, he has no memory), on his chest (lower still to the ground), his chin (beard gathers dust). The rest is burnt by exposure to the light. His hair has grown thin. He can barely see, spends his days squinting at the sun. Its fire is an eternal and overbearing enemy.

Yet those who approach might not notice. He hides his afflictions well. He will not meet another's gaze, offering his profile – a façade fallen into ruins. But the trouble not voiced is written in Jonah's expression all the same, the mote, the plank not in his eye but there about his face somehow. Sunk into his forehead? Or left exposed as roof-joists after walls have caved. If he was to lift himself so that the devastation could be measured, there would be nothing to see. Except in the blink, turning our eyes. And looking back – shocked that the plain arrangement of features should unload the force of its dissymmetry in the diminishing instant of our distraction – we might scrutinise the face's cross again to no avail.



Remnants of a concrete structure scattered on the ground, a fence post, too, sunk into a rough foundation, has survived the catastrophe. This is Jonah's place. He can take from it at least some support for his back. The child comes to visit every day and is here again, stands at a short distance. Jonah will tolerate this chattering visitor. What the child says. Because it is talk not directed at him. It is conceived in his vicinity, sometimes too quiet to hear, a talk that returns, reflected off the surface of things, arriving back as if validated by stones and dried timbers, reorganised by the things from which it is reflected. And this is a gentle relief, to see the ease with which the spoilt conditions might be used, as the faces of an abandoned quarry make an echo chamber. The landscape is doubled by the dull interior of Jonah's skull. This cavity with complexity reduced is worn hollow by the abrasion of pebbles tumbling there. The yellow dust of a peculiar fading, a desert in the desert.<sup>19</sup>

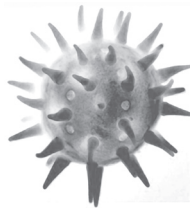
His posture having sunk too, Jonah is led to inspect the patch of earth between his feet. And pushing further in the direction of his sinking body – stretching the ligaments of his back as the curvature allows it – to look at the post's place, where it emerges from the earth, under his arse, where it disappears into its foundation. Bony protrusion, sternum still touches the post at one point – tangent to the curve. But on the ground where his finger has been drawing lines in the dust, there are insect tracks. One tiny hole in the post. Then some more. And surely multitudes of passages for every just-perceptible sign on the surface. Jonah rocks his body. An experiment. To put a little more pressure on the post,

sense its flexing, toy with the possibility that it might snap – if not today – somewhere around this segment of the base, at the place were it has become a home for worms.

In the splintered shards in the tracks of elaborate tunnels bored (following the lines of the grain) are there nests already? Clusters of worm-eggs, ovaloid, moist in this interior, protected from the day's dry heat? Protected in a mist of fine threads?<sup>20</sup>

To push at the post Jonah must lift his head. Sunk between his knees in this way he cannot find the force of what's left of the muscles of his thighs. And if he is to lift his head to find traction between the soles of his sandals and the red gravel, he can no longer keep his eye on the wormholes. He must choose one or the other. Lucky that his shoes have been repaired with the rubber of old radials. But how could it occur to him anyway that it might be possible to witness the becoming oval shaped of the wormholes in the base of the post as he flexes it by the pressure of his leaning? Or on the other side for that matter, diminished, the punctures taking on a horizontal orientation as the fibres compress.

Something is glistening in the orifice – a pinprick only. But a burst of light. He looks away. The spot is impressed on his retina. He blinks, looks elsewhere but the spot moves to follow the line of his vision, blotting the centre. Allowing his posture to slump, he looks again. Only the hole stares back, in silence, dark now. Then a pinprick of light. And another spot burned on his retina. Contagion, unholy worm-damage infects his vision each time he looks. Then again, now from several holes. He leans closer, picks up more spots of light that colonise the centre of his focus, grouping themselves like shot-holes. Something is moving between. Microscopic reflections of sunlight. Which divide will they jump next? The holes are connected – wired – a membrane of filaments. This is the fibrous residues of the paths of larvae, or that same filament in consort with fungal growth. No longer even simply the paths of insects, evolving now on lower magnitudes of scale, these are filaments so fine they might capture suns, throw them back to make him suffer again – cast them across the divide by way of a brain-eye mechanism co-opted, annexed, for the malign operations of another.



## 300 Deleuze and Contemporary Art

A tired song in Jonah's hollow of a head, echoing the rattle of the pebbles, wearing him out. A hundred miles. Long as his voyage. His left eye is caught by the wormhole; his right by the sun. Both blinded. The wormhole is the sun is his eye, his damaged retina, is his hardened skin,

is the oceans and the pearl in the belly is that voice he knows so well and the flight he has made his own is water in water is crystalline matter and the crystal cylinder is a perfectly blank surface is the current of an arid river bed is the soles of his feet too

is the incessant chattering of the child is this crystalliferous aspect is stones and rocks and burrows and tunnels and concrete

its pores, is flickering lights is blindness too and death

is a voice split, the blood cloth and the pollen-star and an insect eye, fleece against canvas against skin is the moon submerged in velvet black

is his pain is his anger and its cessation

is the winds always

is



Several days of walking bring Jonah onto the steeper ground of foothills. At the mouth of the gorge, the ground descends towards a narrow opening between two imposing rock faces. The quality of the sand underfoot; the way that the cliffs are undercut with sweeping curves; the fields of rounded and polished stones collected along the turns: each of these testifies to the quantities of water that have passed. Now the river bed is dry, a passage towards an ocean that has drained the land, left it thirsty.

It is mid afternoon and this first stretch of the gorge is already in deep shadow. Jonah proceeds to a point where the path turns and the sunlight still penetrates to the canyon floor. Few travellers make it this far. His child finds a smooth rock warmed by the sun on which to sleep. Jonah walks a little further across a bed of large stones, studying them as he goes, judging which one is stable enough to take his weight, allowing his direction to be dictated by the unbroken succession while the falling

momentum of his weight demands no hesitation – either one stone or the other. Steady, balanced, technics of movement in his feet, in his ankles: in sinus, muscles and bones.

Amongst these rocks, a result of the floods that come after rain, the broken branches of trees lie trapped. Matted grasses burnt by the winter sun have been caught and collected in the midst of a rapid wash downstream. The dried forms point to involutions in a current deep enough to submerge a man to his waist. But not the brown and muddy torrent of a river in spate: Jonah sees glass, crystal water filling this volume with as many spiralling eddies as there are subtle breaths of air on a still afternoon.

A force, present but almost indiscernible, is the travellers' impetus. Beneath Jonah's hardened soles, and around him as he walks, the water returns, present in the marks cut into the earth. And over the rocks, as this force continues to pull him along the parched riverbed, his thoughts find a new measure with his pace.<sup>21</sup>

Left eye embedded in the earth, right eye caught by the sun (the crystal star, the pollen grain), Jonah continues, each of his steps a paradoxical progress defining, one after the other as they fall, the point from which he never departs at the gyroscopic centre of this horizon's vast hoop.

## Notes

1. [Cave: dark. Flickering light. Sand. Grains lodged in mechanical components. Disks spinning. A faint crackling sound. The pods. Fragments of scaly flesh.]

FIRST VOICE - Do we have company?

SECOND VOICE - We do. The company of one.

THIRD VOICE - His name is Williams.

FIRST VOICE - His business?

SECOND VOICE - Work. To interrogate the artefacts.

THIRD VOICE - Shall we offer him something through the lens of our glass?

FIRST VOICE - Yes. First, details of the wound.

THIRD VOICE - Will he hear?

FIRST VOICE - He may not yet hear.

[Ground discoloured by liquid residue. Patches of charred vegetation in places still burning. A gleam of synthetic light. Rhythmical movement. Expanding and contracting orifices. Metal to metal. Bolted segment upon segment. A desert chill. Winds blowing in from arid surroundings.]

2. Images from Williams' dreams now appear before him although he is awake: The soles of feet, in part crystalline. Wounds contain traces of salt, grains of sand. Little stones lodged in the flesh (in non-crystalline, carnal parts of the



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soles). Movement now, with the roll of the foot, a split in the toughened exterior opens to the ground's foreign things, but chooses – sorts from available matter – salt, sand, stones, making a family resemblance in the scale and morphology of heterogeneous matters.

3. [Low rhythmical hum. Power source. High frequency sine tones. Codes in blinking lights. Pods stuck in membranous tissue. Fissures beneath filled with viscous fluid.]

SECOND VOICE - The metal coil wrapped in a desiccated textile that Kulla holds in his fist may have been taken first as beach detritus. . .

THIRD VOICE - But Kulla has never seen the sea.

SECOND VOICE - It is while climbing the stairs to the light-house. He glances to the ground and spots it there – stops and stares for a moment at the thing that stares back at him – stoops to retrieve it. As he walks on, he holds it. An eye for his fist.

THIRD VOICE - Treasures for his pockets. Grit in the wounds of his feet.

FOURTH VOICE - A confounded inlander. . .

SECOND VOICE - Edible seeds too in his trouser pockets.

FOURTH VOICE - . . .vile lump of pined away flesh. . . pre-occupied with black crystal eggs.

[Green surface. Curved. Marbled. Flesh of a kind. Like liquid fat or warm paraffin wax. Transient textures of light connect cave walls in impermanent visibilities. Milliseconds. Pulse.]

FIRST VOICE - These are the signs of turnings.

THIRD VOICE - Does Francesco know it?

SECOND VOICE - His feet crystal, part of his chin too, his hands distinctly crystalline. Francesco has kissed the ruby red eyes – has kissed them twice. The first a kiss of domestic communion; the second a kiss of flight.

[Connection cut. Hollow engulfed in impenetrable black. The code-lights extinguish. . . and resume. Communication ensues.]

THIRD VOICE - Has he a terror of the ocean?

SECOND VOICE - He fears liquidity, matter without division. The infinite expanse of water devouring the texture of the land.

FOURTH VOICE - No man, he, of maritime adventures.

4. FIFTH VOICE - Francesco's passion is an infinite sequence spaced with the ampersand, an organisation of matter, relations and durations in passages. Paths. Universes rendered conjunctive.

SECOND VOICE: The signs of turnings. Knowledge from the gut and the soles of feet.

5. Siringo stubs out his cigarette. Exhales. Williams looks away. The flesh of Siringo's face, its over-articulate flexibility, repulses him. There is no air in the

room. This heat clings to the body. He feels his own skin tighten, thin plastic film wrapped around skeletal physique. No flesh no fat. Light will pass through – a yellowish tinge picked up from its surface. His hair is a mass of reedy strands; chin a patchwork of stubble.

Siringo's pale tongue flicks across thin lips with a lizard's gesture. His skin too: a new dermatological complaint is barely disguised beneath moustache. The dry sands of the desert are advancing. How long, Williams wonders, before both are afflicted?

The ox blood coloured ash tray on the desk needs to be emptied. Siringo directs a sly gaze towards his colleague, provoking Williams to voice his distaste. He scratches his head, sweeps the flakes of dried scalp off the desk's shiny surface and leans back, gripping the buckle of his belt. Beneath Siringo's shirt, the damp spread of a flaccid gut.

Williams stands in the corner, an extended tangle of bones, arachnoid limbs. 'There's something uncanny about the boy, something about his eyes.' Williams gazes vacantly at the boxes. 'His eyes are too large, the jerk of their movements disturbing.'

Siringo's attention returns to the folders. He has said little, but the facts are about to be exposed. Exhaling a plume of smoke, he lifts the recording device towards his mouth, lets it rest on his chin. He presses the record and play buttons, clears his throat. Though Williams doesn't move, with the click of the device, his attention is alerted. The tape rolls. Siringo lifts the document from the desk, clears his throat and begins to read:

*'As new words appear the voice emanating from Galls' larynx: 1. fades out; 2. repeats the sequences. In the latter case does the superimposition of prosodies and rhythms create polyvocality (interacting loops)? How does Galls experience this polyvocality as both displacing and intriguing? The vocal split can be explained as a case of acute diplophonia induced by a differential tension of the vocal folds (caused by a cyst or nodule), an archeology of records indicates that the sensation has at an early stage mutated into an entirely distinct experience of two unsynchronised voices. The split voice thus appears to have its reference points partly outside of Galls himself. An "external agent" might be cited, an agent reverberating within him. The preoccupation with sensations of physical "dissolution" seems to support such a thesis. A psychopathology might thus be constructed from the available material; the dissolution of subjective territory opens up to a fugal reconstitution of different subjectification processes involving a play with and between a range of external objects that come to function as signs, incorporated into the construction of a fragmented, polymorphous subjective territory – a territory originating in this initial diplophonic sensation.'*

He pauses, stops the tape, rewinds, plays the recording back, then pulls his notebook towards him:

*Tape 3, section one: Addendum: Check references in archive (Galls): 'this iron curtain separating the subject from the object'; 'universe speech', 'matter speech', 'other speech', 'outside speech', 'stone speech'. ALSO: A drawing of a bird with large diamond-shaped eyes protruding from its head, each of which contains meticulously drawn internal structures – like divisions within the consistent matter of a coloured gemstone.*

Williams feels another interrogative glance from Siringo; measures his lack of response with care.

FIFTH VOICE - Listen: the universe speaks these shifting fractals, infinite phonetic possibilities: ALLOPOIETIC & FRACTAL 'I' - TO TAKE ONE'S PARTS AND COMPONENTS FROM OUTSIDE ONESELF. . . .

6. . . . From an undisclosed vantage point. Inside? Outside? Something begins to vibrate. This entity, that entity. An impersonal third. Not to replicate or represent the sensations of voice splitting, but writing from mutagenetic ground.

SIXTH VOICE - Use of ellipses - infinities with meat on both sides. Chemically induced hysteria, the rant & the scroll.

From whence this echo? Siringo's monotonous dictation duplicates, triplicates, coming now from three corners, but audible as if through a hum from within Williams' own chest cavity?

With a sigh, Siringo peers at several scraps of paper stuck to the cover of a beige cardboard folder titled 'Recovered fragments'.

*Difficulty: at the end of each session Galls cannot recollect particular paths between words and phrases. The infinite impossibilities of writing.*

THIRD VOICE - The scratching of the pen, a monstrous noise. The mechanics of the hand a draining effort, the voice fleeting outside of what can be inscribed. Fever dreams. To have no language, no loss, no lack.

There's something in the air. Williams hears an echo, feels the sound as a resonance.

Siringo: 'To have no language?'

SECOND VOICE - To have no language. Such would be a masterful advantage. An intimate ally in the sound. All attention must be directed at the repetitions. From an uncertain border. 'Limits are what we're inside of (liminal)', Galls has written.

'Ok, Galls' recordings, one through to seven', Siringo's tone is tired.

'Let's start from the beginning, transcribe them.' Reciting now:

*'This is where we're at. No distinct shifts can be discerned. The material has been subjected to several analyses, all of which conclude that there is on the tape only one voice, clearly identifiable: my own.'*

He pauses and looks up. The light in the room has shifted. A narrow triangle of shadow gives Williams a place to stand. Siringo tries a different approach, addresses Williams directly. 'The printed and typed page contain what appears to be arbitrary letter combinations, do they not?' With a mute gesture, Williams lowers his head. Siringo, clenches his teeth, continues:

'Still, the fact that Galls records his sessions, remains significant. . .'. he hears the lack of conviction in his own voice. . . 'so the question might be: What exactly is Galls' relationship to the technological reproduction?'

Siringo takes his fur felt Stetson Boss of the Plains hat and fans himself gently, returns his attention to a passage in Galls' own handwriting:

*Sit down. Close eyes. Strike keys. This interface the site of multiple rhythms: fingers against keys, resistance offered, movement of pedals, metal on metal music, the ink forced into the fibres. The paper ripped from the roller. A sheet sodden with red ink. Ink on the fingers. Hold the paper to the light, Drop it to the floor. Clean digits with spittle. Transfer ink residue from finger to tongue. With tongue, explore the mouth's internal cavities. Words on the gums. A slap of the face to begin again. This violence. When entirely comfortable, repeat twice on inhalation, twice on exhalation.*

7. 'Williams!' Siringo shouts, but no reply. Again. 'Williams!' Silence. He stands up, puts his cigarettes in his shirt pocket, walks into the hallway, another attempt: 'Williams!' Outside on the veranda Williams is squatting, his arms limp

appendages, staring into the barren expanse. 'Williams!' He prods him with the copper tip of his boot. Williams lurches forward, tumbles down the steps and lands in a cloud of yellow dust.

FIRST VOICE - A heap of bones. A body made up of fractures.

'The folder labelled CARTOGRAPHIES. Fetch it from the basement. Quickly.' But hesitating for a moment, Williams' attention is drawn by the dark space beneath the veranda. He peers into it, in his mind still an impression of the landscape persists. Sheltered here, in the lee of the wind it is more devoid of life still; grey with the inexorable dust that filters through the boards as Siringo stamps his weight back and forth.

SECOND VOICE - He is attracted to the cavity, feels the attraction in his bones.

Siringo curses his luck. Is William's mood boredom or lack of incentive? Is it something more? Something methodical?

Williams appears with the folder. Siringo scans the several sketches and the written remarks of an unnamed observer:

*Galls is developing a series of arbitrary chains of association with extensive meta-commentary (allusions and analogies; sequences of metaphors; links, paths and passages between different words; geographical references; citations from literature, philosophy, theology, tangents to scientific fields). The remarks in the margins are something short of explanatory. They situate Galls as biographical subject in relation to chains of associations. Various problems to do with poetics, the practice of writing, as well as with personal data are woven into the passages and paths between different words, interspersed with exclamation.*

8. THIRD VOICE - Gradually, our subject is building a procedure like that of Le Blek's.

FIRST VOICE - His attention will be given increasingly to the moving image of his thought, that turns itself inside-out in the space in front of him, the common objects of his world refracted through its inverting form.

9. SECOND VOICE - Here again, a refraction of his thought through the material conditions.

FIFTH VOICE - The moon in black water. The lights on the surface. A universe divided in two, one a displaced mirror of the other. A crystalliferous aspect. . .

[Glimmer. Diamondheads. Optical probes penetrate the cavity of the infested rock surface. Communication passes in networks.]

. . . to pass through crystal velvet black. Light shock, numb, lost to all sensation, breath lost in cushioned paralysis.

FIRST VOICE - Entirely aware of his being a profoundly naked surface. He reaches the air and the world above and feels his pores ripped open by the cold, the salt. It is a correspondence between the physical and psychological sense of his dissolution. . .

[Environment collapsed into its own folds. Atrophy. Organic life; annihilated from inside itself.]

. . . Williams will inherit the image, although he knows not from where it comes. . .

THIRD VOICE - From the wall of Le Blek's room?

FIRST VOICE - . . . squatting low, gazing out through the bars of a balustrade, he has felt himself to be below the surface but with grace to remain, while he is sustained as if by bottled air.

10. Siringo dictates from the text into his tape recorder, his voice hoarse:

'It is clear from the documents studied that during his "lapses", Le Blek is subject to a series of "apparitions", images appearing before him in increasingly rapid succession until he can see only flickering light - an "abstract stroboscope". See, for instance, the numerous pages of sketches and drawings in the folder entitled EXPERIMENTS.'

11. Now walking in circles, kicking up sand and dust, inexplicable images appear before Siringo: A bird with large eyes of a crystalline quality, a line drawing of a thin female figure, her hands clutching her abdomen; head disproportionately large containing crystalline blocks and complex fractal structures; a fine, milk-white shroud of powder snow; recurring drawings of black eggs; ruptures in the shells, escaping matter, this also crystalline; one side egg, one side crystal. With a wave of the arm he banishes the pictures, reads aloud - shouts to block their return:

*'This relationship with ordinary objects transformed. Stones, rocks, eggs. Semiological contents and expressions?'*

Williams does not look up. He is sitting with his legs folded awkwardly beneath him on the porch counting and categorising the objects in his collection: stones, a feather, a bone - all these found nearby. The thought on his mind: THIS IS A FERTILE GROUND. Meanwhile Siringo circles, his recitation increasingly agitated:

*'Worlds become abundant with signs, each carrying potential to alter the most intimate aspects of what is perceived as destiny.'*

12. FIFTH VOICE - Psychopathology. Obsession with crystalline forms - a passage towards haematological mutation? Blood's become crystalline from contact with crystalliferous aspect.

SECOND VOICE - And the granular matter sorted and classified by Kulla's walking and Kulla's wound appears now for Le Blek in the form of the star. Star and pollen grain.

[Exteriorities appearing in patches. Hollows plied open.]

THIRD VOICE - Cosmic star matter, apprehension. Can star's arms seize pollen grains?

FIRST VOICE - The system is plied open, its mutagenetic potential rendered with infinite variation.

13. Exasperated now, thrusting a sheet in front of Williams' face, Siringo implores:

'There's something about the notion of the blood-object. . .'. Pause. 'And the way it is retained in his oral cavity. . .'. He reads it aloud, with deliberation:

*'Nt. Psychopathology. Obsession with crystalline forms - a passage towards haematological mutation? Blood's become crystalline from contact with crystalliferous aspect.'*

Then to his astonishment, Williams speaks, completes the sequence, reciting in a voice as placid as the view:

*'Nt. pollen grains appear in star, in cloth; cosmic star matter; apprehension – star-arms seize pollen grains, a system plied open; its mutagenetic potential of infinite variation. . . .'*

14. *' . . . Mode of Locomotion (Forensic Reconstruction): Conduct an investigation of terrain. Ample evidence of his presence: DNA from blood, urine, faeces. Plot movements of smaller stones.'*

SECOND VOICE – Plot movements of smaller stones. Draw up map. Reconstruction shows his difficulties. Due to a wound. . . .

*' . . . due to a wound, forward movement requires right leg to be held at angle from body. Quadriceps spasm uncontrollably – this again rendering movement impossible, the body's surface contact with stones increases. He moves forward supporting himself with his two arms and his left leg, keeping his right leg straight, stretched back and to the right with his toes against the ground for support and balance. Then first moves his arms forward using his left leg and right foot as support, then left leg forward supported by arms and his right foot, after which he drags his right leg along with him, ending up in original position.'*

THIRD VOICE – Why did Le Blek not try to make a provisional crutch from available driftwood?

Staring at his things, Williams speaks the answer to a missing question:

*'Le Blek considers the wound yet another "sign" opening up to a series of precise passages. He takes closeness to the stones as datum for the developing method – use of found timber would constitute a "false sign". "We are", he has written, "no longer concerned with the realm of volition or reflection, but with a process of differentiation by which he has been naturalised with the stones".'*

15. SECOND VOICE – An inventory of all that can be found in the bunker corresponds now to the collection assembled on the grey, sun-bleached boards: traces of animal faeces, a dead bird, egg shells, a metal coil – a radio component resembling an eye wrapped in a fragment of cloth and stored in a cavity in the bunker wall.

[Sequence. Dead lands. Deterioration outwards from the site. Desert rendered emaciated. Merely a thin membrane of sand and parched, burnt matter enfolding the stages where new matter emerges.]

THIRD VOICE – And meanwhile, your colleague stares at the written document and the words blur into abstract marks.

FIRST VOICE – Williams, clean the items of your collection with a toothbrush; polish them with turtle wax.

WILLIAMS – I will polish them with turtle wax.

SECOND VOICE – The desert seems somehow more like a desert now. It's intrinsic quality intensified. What was already dead seems more dead.

Back inside, in the room designated as his office, Siringo surveys the books, reads the titles of the volumes aloud: *'Mammal Burrows; The Anxiety of the Scurriers; Forehead as Hammering Tool; The Wind in The Micro-tunnels; The Confounded Entrance and Other Stories; Outside in the Inside* and its companion volume; *Dealing with Small Fry, Troubling Sounds and Their Origins;*

*Fear of the Larger Beast; The Collapse; Mud on the Claws – Mud on the Snout.*

16. FOURTH VOICE - Vile lump of pined away flesh. 'Or'? 'And?' One or the other? Both? El Topo's passion, an either-or; Francesco's, infinite sequences of &s, universes rendered conjunctive. . .

[Diamondheads. Hard surfaces protrude from pod-membranes. Yellow dust mixes with sand mixes with yellow dust.]

17. Deep in the fortified basement, Siringo has bolted the inner door. Folders, boxes, envelopes and documents lie spread in front of him. Several notebooks open at once, pen in one hand, tape recorder in the other, he reads and records:

*'A watch tower has been constructed. For what form of observation? To monitor what activity?. Boards are suspended between the legs of the structure. (Seats?) Cigarette butts, beer cans, other discarded items, are left beneath the boards. Was the tower constructed before or after the abandonment of the blockhouse? To what desires does it testify, to what impending disaster? To what survey and what frontline? To what discipline and what destiny?'*

18. Siringo gathers what he can from the office and carries the laden box into the basement. He will lock himself in, even if there is no need. Williams has been missing for days. Aloud to himself: 'There's some sort of animal living in the bunker.' He chooses at random, but the account provided by the documents seems less and less to be of remote events: it is of these conditions into which he, himself, is being drawn. What is the time of day? With no natural light, he cannot tell. And the temperature is as stable as the dim brightness from his solitary bulb. He pulls his collar tight. Back to work. Pelt. Pelt? He flicks through one of the notebooks:

*'Nt. Presented first with conventional purpose of insulation. Pelt now appears to have been taken for another reason – to invoke animal sensitivity. Hair filaments as sense organs. Issue unresolved.'*

19. THIRD VOICE - Exposed, concaved, porous substrate of interior bone face?

SECOND VOICE - Or what is spotted here is chipped bone in the skull.

FOURTH VOICE - 'Or, or, or?'

SECOND VOICE - And. . . and intuited from the body's choreography, the now lost partitions of the prophet's cranial cavity. The internal space reduced to homogenised volume - solid volume simplified through motion of agents of abrasion.

THIRD VOICE - The pebbles?

WILLIAMS - The pebbles.

[Zone: bordered on all sides but expanding. Enter solid mass of bone. Unwrapped now. Virtual archeologies intertwined. Connections tweaked, shifts in pitch.]

FIRST VOICE - Bits of skull broken off, ground to dust by pebble motion. And the dust gathers in a pattern further indicating the inner absence. While their motion is too quick for viewing there is a rhythm in the pebbles' circulation.

WILLIAMS - Here is the hodology.

[Bones now dust. Layer upon layer. Inaudible volumes, refracting code into code. Discordant sounds. Contrasting oscillations interpenetrating.]

THIRD VOICE - Who are we?

WILLIAMS - Glimmerheads.

VOICES (in unison) - We are the Diamondheads.

WILLIAMS - You glimmer.

VOICES (in unison) - He glimmers.

[Glimmer through dusty film. Sheath.]

THIRD VOICE - Whence do we come? Beyond the stars?

VOICES (in unison) - From the bright point, the star in the heart of matter.

20. FIFTH VOICE - Contemplate wormhole-distraction.

THIRD VOICE - Something akin to joy?

21. Siringo lights another cigarette. Stubs it out. The resolution of the work will have to be postponed. The postponement will be indefinite. He speaks into his recorder:

'Yellow dust. Only yellow dust. And sand.'

And Williams walks on. For the time being - while the temperature control still operates between the padded, internal layers of his protective suit - he is able to continue. The soles of his boots expel in rhythmical time their pneumatic breaths. And the hoarse sound of his own breathing is amplified through the tubes of his respirator. How long will the life support last? A few days; a week? Although a prosthetic extension to the body, the rig strapped to his back marks an inevitable limit. But nothing will sustain him now as effectively as the accumulating mass of artifacts in his sample-vessel.

Another's footprints are visible in the dust. He records them, notes their changing character. As he moves along the dried river from the littoral across the plain he tracks an almost indiscernible evolution. The earlier prints showed a soft pedature. There were few distinguishing details. Now the prints contain complex structures more like the imprint of a hard and uneven body-part; crystalline, replete with differentiations, fractal demarcations and delineations. Amongst the ground's sharp-faceted, fist-sized lumps of volcanic rock, a fragment of glass catches the light. He stoops to retrieve it. A broken piece of a technological artifact like the visor of his own helmet? Across its surface there are scratches like the runes of a foreign alphabet. He hesitates, opens his mouth as if to sound the marks. And he turns, diverting from his path once more, heads to the east.