

Ingelara (1982)

Brogan Bunt

The fence sets itself up above the ground, although it also relies upon it. The firmness of the ground ensures that the fence does not fall over. The posts hold the strain but only on condition that they are placed deeply in the ground. They appear thick and solid but they must be coated in a mixture of creosote and sump oil to survive beneath the ground. The wires run parallel to the ground but with a shiny lightness that is more akin to the sky than to the earth. They whine in the wind as though they might conjure up ghosts.

The fence sets itself up as a limit. It appears above the limitless depth of the ground, light like the tail of a kite but far more definite. It renders the landscape geometrical, but without displacing or obscuring the natural topography. The abstract lines of the map gain their literal realization in its thin insistent presence. It is a limit as well to the animals that it either traps or excludes - although they may struggle to resist its authority, often with considerable success. Animals can quickly discover places of weakness - if there are any - where the limit can be overcome, or passed through, or passed beneath.

The fence sets itself up constantly. It requires regular maintenance or it quickly becomes ineffective and very soon has to be replaced completely. But mere upkeep, however necessary, is not sufficient. Each fence opens up the need for another fence. The limit constantly strains beyond itself. It demands extension, either in terms of a greater geometrical intricacy within the existing boundaries or in terms of an actual increase in the size of the area enclosed. Ultimately, the fence strives towards infinite extension. Despite its status as a limit, it has no other wish than to surpass itself, to progress directly towards its invisible vanishing point - a point that no line can ever attain.

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The mine is to possess. Is to dig deeply down into it. Is to extract the gold. The deeper the hole the more the mine. The more it is to possess.

A persistent wind blows above the mine. Weeds grow up through the rubble. An overhanging tree drops bark and branches across the face of the hole.

The mine is surrounded by a neat pile of rubble, as though the walls of a castle were to encircle the moat. The greater the walls the deeper the hole.

A pool of stagnant water lies at the bottom of the mine. Any dark impenetrable shape that gazes down into the hole discovers only a dark impenetrable shape.

The mine is utterly self-possessed. That is to say, it is utterly abandoned. The mine is what remains once the gold has been extracted.

A soft light within. Green lichen grows upon the walls like somber velvet wallpaper. Touches of red suggest the memory of flowers.

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The owner has gone away indefinitely. Gone away on business. Despite his absence, the owner is still the owner. The owner owns everything on the property. The owner left many personal possessions behind but there is nothing to be read in them except ownership.

The owner is away on business. The owner has no intention of returning. The owner consistently stays away, leaving everything in the capable hands of the caretaker. Whoever that may be. The identity of the caretaker is not the business of the owner. The owner makes it his business only to regularly send a cheque marked payable to "the Caretaker".

The owner is diligently absent. The owner makes this his business. A business of being only the owner and no more than this. The owner is like a deep hole full of gold. The owner is abysmal.

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The porcelain bowl is pale and opaque - milky white and patterned in blue. It is a simple Chinese bowl, well suited to divination. It can contain liquid far blacker than tea and far thicker than blood. And yet nothing can stain it. It delivers all its messages with equanimity.

The porcelain bowl is pale and opaque. The central pattern depicts a dragon spinning around the ball of night. Spinning amongst eddies of chaos. The dragon guards the abyss at the center of the bowl. So that it may be obscured by the moist black leaves. The leaves that appear like windows upon the night, though no window can look out upon this impossible scene.

The porcelain bowl is pale and opaque. It delivers only one message, all the more strange and puzzling for its monotony.