

The inscription at the head of the scores reads as follows:

*Dangerous to the hand and pleasing to behold, the thorns arise in whorls. Pockmarked — sometimes smooth — the thorns' emergence record sites of recurrent violation. Read in blood — a prick, nothing more — the thorns transfigure our fairytales; reread in metal, the thorns metastasize according to a regime of walls and barbed wire. The American West, children read at their desks, developed in a proliferation of these fences across which cattle can not pass, inscribing in the movements of animals the decisions of an economics that totalizes both them and us alike. If only these ribbons — and with them their thorns — had expired in the sun of our rangeland. If only the bodies confined at these folds were of another place, another type, a never-then. If only the thorns were not now.*

The piece is about figuration: the bits and pieces of the music that present themselves to consciousness as the component elements of a (nonfunctional) rhetoric, neither small enough to constitute the music's smallest parts nor big enough to complete its perceptual moments. History hides here. Because it is figuration — not harmony — inside of which the past inheres and from the footholds of which it reaches — claws outstretched — to drag us back. The tuning of the instrument is left as it was, until the tuning of the instrument is disfigured. The colors of the instrument are taken from the trove of its past, until the colors of the instrument are distended. In the end I feel that the primary condition of living in the world I understand is being caught between the strictures of a dichotomy I didn't ask for. So no resolution here. No sublimation. At best, ever-increasing envelops of time.

To return to the of images of the inscription: there was never a thorn, a spine, a prick anywhere in the spinning wheel or its parts. The distaff is rounded and the sleeping beauty legend carries in it the fears of our technology wrapped in a lie about its parts. But the barbed wire is real enough. And whatever may have been cattlemen's intentions towards their animals in the invention of the fencing, the thorns manifest again at the hands of unintended individuals and state actors. At the close of the second war, it wasn't animals but citizens the American government released from camps it built for itself in California. Whatever the details of figuration in the walls, it is certain they warrant further interrogation.