

PREFACE

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 pinprick, nothing more — the thorns transfigure our *fairytale*s; 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.