

# PREFACE

Dangerous to the hand and pleasing to behold, the thorns arise in whorls. Pockmarked, sometimes smooth, the thorns’ sites of emergence record in their growth a history of recurrent violation. Read in blood – a pinprick, nothing more – the thorns migrate from the garden and into our fairytales; reread in metal the thorns’ shapes metastisize according to a regime of walls and barbed wire. The American West, children read at their desks, developed in the profilation of these fences across which cattle could not move, inscribing in the movements of animals the decisions of an economics that would come, with time, to totalize animals and their people alike. If only these ribbons of wire, and with them their thorns, had expired in the sun and the clay-caked grasses of our rangeland. If only the bodies confined in the folds of these wires were of another place, a not-now, a never-then.