

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

*Dangerous to the hand and pleasing to behold, the thorns arise in whorls. Pockmarked, but sometimes smooth, the sites of the thorns' emergence constitute a ledger of violation. Read in the blood of pinpricks the thorns transfigure our fairytales; reread in metal, the thorns multiply 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 would come to totalize 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. If only the thorns weren't now.*

The piece is about figuration: the bits and pieces of the music that present themselves to consciousness as the component elements of (nonfunctional) rhetoric, neither small enough to constitute the music's ultimate components 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 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 its past, until the colors of the instrument are distended. The world I understand asserts the strictures of a dichotomy I didn't ask for. So no resolution here. At best, ever-increasing envelops of time.

To return to the of image of the inscription: there was never a thorn, a spine, a prickle 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 barbed wire is real enough. And whatever may have been the intention of cattlemen, the present exigencies have to do instead with the function of the state. At the close of the second war, it wasn't animals but people the American government released from camps it built for its purposes in California.

— Trevor Bača  
*Spiel der Dornen* (2016)