

“If You Bring Forth What Is Within You”

I used to be a bigot, he professed, pride
fanning out between the words, airborne.
And to his body: *It was you, weak thing!*
I hate you. His pink mouth leaking sap and the world
a forest swarm of dagger moths.

They say pain is weakness
leaving the body. Sputum. Spoiled blood. Tears.
And when it rises—pain—in a chorus to meet the open air
it is as if a god has been born. Unbound,
its spectacular darkness blooms, surges
bellowing sulfur, anxious to take possession.

NOTE:

The title is excerpted from the following saying as recorded in The Gospel of Thomas:

If you bring forth what is within you, what is within you will save you. If you do not bring forth what is within you, what you do not bring forth will destroy you.

—Jesus Christ

*Savoring, the art is not to feed but to taste
—to take pleasure in the smallest increments
the blade can deliver.*

—ELLE MARO GREY

Blood Fetish

I love her face. I always want to suck it. She likes to kiss, nibble, and tease but I just want to pull her face into my mouth. Her jaw’s soft curve shadows my bite and the plum sweet meat of her ripens through its wax bloom. Its density suggests how else I might indulge myself. Last week I sucked a bruise into the dimple of her left cheek.

Meaty and so full of blood, she is a length of libidinous muscle shrink-wrapped in skin. I trail my canines along her jutting rib cage ridge. So little fat. I scrape bone to mark my territory.

Agreement is implicit. All words are equally dangerous. It is better not to speak.

When accosted from behind, I imagine she turns fear to task, puts her mind to use filing carbon paper lists of next actions. Entering the theatre of our play she has learned to check for all available exits. Finding it to be a sealed box she clenches then unclenches her jaw. I watch her bend and contract. Tightening her core, she tunes the ear, focuses her gaze while I move silence in planks and slabs, loitering outside her field of vision.

Today we go further. Led by the viscera. And something base. An amoral drive. Nuclear appetite.

Vibrant pleasure glistens between and beneath us. Lifting, it lifts: sternum, abdomen, pelvis, thighs. Gripping my hand now opening inside her, she inhales sharply.

A short time later pain bleeds out and saturates the air, a lulling white noise. Sustenance.

I come up. Push her head down hard. Press her mouth against my sex to say *swallow*. She is quick to find the precise angle. Her consistency prompts me. The electric force of the idea shatters the porcelain sky I imagine separates us. I dig in against her, through her yielding. My artful fingers shape her with their tips. The index sharp enough to cut, matches inhalation; the room is awash with it. I lick the wound. A wing mid stroke. Ten inches from right shoulder blade down to spine.

Later, the scar I imagine her body will make real, healing itself into my grasp.

“He who fights with monsters”

How many does it take to metamorphose wickedness into righteousness? One man must not kill. If he does, it is murder. Two, ten, one hundred men, acting on their own responsibility, must not kill. If they do, it is still murder. But a state or nation may kill as many as they please, and it is not murder. It is just, necessary, commendable, and right.

—ADIN BALLOU (1803-1890)

Wer mit Ungeheuern kämpft, mag zusehn, dass er nicht dabei zum Ungeheuer wird. Und wenn du lange in einen Abgrund blickst, blickt der Abgrund auch in dich hinein.

—FRIEDRICH WILHELM NIETZSCHE (1844-1900)

JENSEITS VON GUT UND BÖSE, “SPRÜCHE UND ZWISCHENSPIELE,” 146 (1886)

“How many acts of genocide does it take to make genocide?”

How many birds to call it a flock?

How many drops to make a sip swell into a spill?

How many does it take for a quorum?

How many does it take to trend?

How many does it take to be in a race?

How many to seek and destroy?

How many lanterns, ribbons, needles, balls, and bouncing bouncing betties?

How many does it take to fix it?

How many does it take to swing?

Just how many licks does it take to get through the meat to the red and yellow marrow?

How many does it take to decide?

How much ammo, how many tanks, how many bombs, pits, and traps, how many swinging spiked logs?

How much debris?

How many fences and patrols? How many stockpiles?
How many does it take to constitute a “deluge”?

How many for a good hunt? To haul the load? To pave the drive?
How many does it take to persist?
How many stones for a good throw? How much shot? How many dry cords?
How much seed?
How many charts does it take to fill the set? How many monitors for the mix?
How much gear?
How many cast-iron pots? How many non-porous pouches? How many spades
and shovels? How much tubing?
How many seconds to raise the plow? To go blank? To go under? To
spontaneously combust?

How many masses does it take to make a city? How many pipes and drains?
How many of any to make a horde?
How many to create a virus? To pass the pandemic two by four?
To hack the lot? To hack up a lung? To hack the hackneyed phrase?
How many does it take to pluck a turkey clean?
You do the work: what materials, what tools are required?

How many does it take to put the facts straight?
How many does it take to invade?
How many to make a conspiracy?
How many to settle the score? To furnish the proper argument?
Proceeding by stealth, how many does it take to slip off the yoke?
How long and how many to get the greasy thing back in the bag?

If we start counting now, how many episodes?
How many features? How many angry disruptions? How many choke holds?
How much tape reel to reel?
How many sackcloth dummies? How many planks and nails? How much
thread and glass? How many wicks? How much gasoline?
Given the necessary conditions, how many behaviors? How many reactive
responses to minor stimuli? How many frantic efforts? How many
impulsive outbursts? How much dysphoria? How intense?
How much water? How much voltage? How many plastic liners?
How many does it take to manipulate the order and the nonautonomy of its
field of action?
How many porters? How many pickets? How many wood dowels and ditches?
How many does it take?

How many, in the face of negative but transient public opinion?
How many sheets? How many muumuus? How many scouts? How many
badges?
How many surveillance cameras? How many transcripts, interviews, and
surveys? How many laws of the land? How many well-laid minefields?
How many false statements? False starts? False prophets? False teeth?
How many articles? How many volunteers? How many exercises? How many
disclaimers?
How many people? How many times? Would you remember them all?
How many have you tried?
(A cedar box for you; one, two, three body rakes for me.)

How many does it take? When will they tell us? What is the sampling error?
How many and how much does it cost?
How many to form a committee? To make it stick?
How many limbs to earn the medal?
How much restless fury? How much saliva? How much froth?
How many does it take if they’re kicking in flimsy doors and rushing the cockpit?

How many if they hang like bats from trees?
How many twisted triangular signs?
How many smudged tactical maps?
How many unexplained casualties? How many aggregates? How many comprehensive national accounts? How many derivations? How much fiscal and monetary policy? How much uncertainty to crowd them out? How much inflation? Who and how many will it take to gate and guard the growth? How many reindeer? How many rejoinders? How many relapses? How many rejection slips? How many rounds? How high the fever? How much relational grammar? How many to get the maximum benefit? To flourish in the context of capital? In direct relation to what is missing? How many by force and with intention?

I have 53 honorable kills; how many does it take?

The reason that something is an example, a fold (how many does it take to define a problem? (a predicate)), an economy of virtual knowns, interrupts.

We've been suggesting for almost a month now—how many does it take? Also, we've run out of steam. (How many does it take? They may not even be people.)

What the fuck's in them and how many does it take to kill you?

How many undersigned and you know who's? How many taxpayers? How many conventions? How many leagues of concerned citizens? How many symbols? How many sights?

How many warnings? How many wrenches? Beware! Beware! Beware! Beware!

How many from behind and beneath? How many pulling rope, stretching hemp? How many flags? How many knights?

How many sepulchers and bloody moons? How many stakeholders?

How many bound together?

How many mounting the air?

How much matter by volume, to scale?

The question is not how many links in the chain, the question is how many can be made available and how quickly dispersed?

In a population of x, how many does it take before everyone has been infected?

How many repeated read-alouds?

How many does it take for Christ to be in the midst?

How many does it take to wrestle him, sit on him, pin him to the ground? How many does it take to hold him down?

How many until none becomes some?

How many does it take to form a STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT pattern?

Get another arm, another ear, "How many does it take til it's enough?" "How much do you need?"

How many does it take to make the road impassable when the rain brings the brew to the surface?

"Let us see the bodies," they say.

NOTE:

Translation of epigraph by Nietzsche:

He who fights with monsters should be careful lest he thereby become a monster.

And when you gaze long into an abyss, the abyss also gazes into you.

Beyond Good and Evil, "Aphorisms and Interludes," 146 (1886).