

How many times is enough?

Or to put it another way, how many times is not too many?

Backwards and forwards. Forwards and backwards.

Draft and redraft.

Extinguishing the vital spark that led to its inception.

The draining away of vitality.

Any inspiration gone.

Enfeebled.

The words having lost all muscularity.

Their ability to grab by the throat and squeeze.

The blood throb that pushed boldness to the fore.

Pulsing the imagination.

Until every sentence memorised by unintended rote.

Now sedimented on my bone barrow.

Ready for pallid transplant.

Scanned so many times, like a prison searchlight for exfiltrations.

The ones that got away.

The ones that got in the way.

It varies subject to subject of course.

How long is a piece of string? What matter, a ligature is a ligature.

Though I incline solely to my master pianist hands.

Windpipe tinkler.

Diapason stopped.

Organist.

And conductor in one.

Batonless.

The maestro evokes entrancing resonances.

Atonal.

Wringing breathtaking refrains from mundane somatic prosody.

Until quietus.

And reprise.

The delimitation probably lies less with physiology, than with Will.

For there comes a point when they surrender the trial.

Their hands release mine and go to their own throat.

It is less of a forfeit to sacrifice life, than it is to continue the agonal.

Solely thinking about the flow.
For the reader. Their modulated
expirations.

Kiss of life through words, which
themselves require resuscitation.

This ponderous, leaden
compression.

One fingered contraction.

Cut cut cut.

Delete. Repeat.

Knuckle down. Knuckle under. Fist
in mouth.

Once more, with feeling.

Memory cinders.

Starting out with a greenhorn's
longhand.

Nib biting into the paper's
tissue.

My words intaglioing their
imprint.

Spelling out my stumbling spoor.

Obtaining me a colophon.

But not my signature.

Only painters ink their names on
their canvasses.

Fleeting NYRB top ten listing.

Whilom brush with fame.

That point when it becomes a race for the
bottom. They want to clock out before I'm
ready for them to do so. Ironically they exert
the power, for then I have to ease my grip.

Grant them remission.

And I have to be ready to clock that tipping
point.

My sensitive fingers. Toccata.

Keenly responsive.

Reading petechiae's pointillism like Braille. As
will the scions of Bertillon.

Trachea changes.

Daubing vermilion filigree.

Pentatonic notation on carnal staves.

Breve.

Just breve.

So not just instrumentalist, conductor, but
composer too.

When their quavering breath stops, I massage
the heart back into life.

I am not playing god.

Not even the angel of death.

I syncretise both.

Sometimes it requires an osculation of the
azure lips. Pucker up.

End-is-near-meant.

A brush with death.

Baptismal royalty cheque,
graduation to a typewriter.

Metal mounted ungal stamped.

Punching through the paper.

With brute fury.

Betraying the impression of my
defeat.

Through carbon paper and liquid
whiteout.

Photographic negative of what
might have been.

Corrigenda half-life.

Erratic errata.

Get it right first time, cut down
the drafts.

Repetitive strain, carpal tunnel,
tennis elbow.

Need it to come out all of a piece
first time of asking.

The editor throws it back. Asking
for seconds.

A sketch. A stab. A good first go.

Not quite up to snuff though.

Red pencil, blue pencil, black
struck through. Stuck like a pig.

Overly versed on his censorious
rainbow palette.

Expurgations of my lustrations.

Top ten on the FBI's most wanted. A portrait
without a face.

Silhouetted. Shadow.

When we are here dancing a duet.

Our quickening syncopated heartbeats.

Until the diminuendo of one pulse.

A slowing of tempo's temporality.

Induces dulcet unison.

Leaving soloist me in recital.

Chromatic scales.

In liminal time the tissue gilds its contusions.

Xanthic. Gamboge. Burnt umber.

Malachite.

The livid impressions of fingers.

Etched indelible cinnabar on their stretched
carnal canvas.

A riot of color like a New England Fall.

Their rasping breath, the sound of the crisp
fallen leaves trodden underfoot.

Dying of the light.

Obtain a firm grip on the material

No visible marks.

Diacritics, dire critics.

Edit the book to death.

Orchestral instead of operatic.

Voices with distinctive keys and registers.

Mellifluously reading off the page

Dulcet by the numbers.

Kill your darlings.

If the editor plays god.

The publisher is the angel of death.

Let go.

Let it all go.

To pot. To Hell.

Have to part with it sometime.

To pronounce it at an end.

Write yourself a coda.

Not for publication.

Gather up those exfiltrations.

All the things you wanted to include.

Fin.

Dying of the light.

Limp in my hands.

Admire the lines. The craquelure.

What will my profilers impute this time?

Action art.

Rendering the inactive.

The Paradoxical hypoxia School.

A school of one.

My signature incarnadine canvasses.

Marked with all.

Save my name.

Time to let go.

Just let go.

Give in to it.

Yield.

Pronounce it at an end.

Coda?

No, there is no pulse.

Gather up all biological and trace incriminations.

That's everything.

Finale.