Natural Selection

A sin to be obtuse, asleep, to not pay attention—so keep a written observation log—life and thought.

Bend the pulse of gods and muse, make them thrum against your rusty letters.

Cut your own heart out, squeeze out your own blood, write in lines of song.

Desperate for immortal, but human, knowing? Search for Keats.

Euphrates, a twisted river, so like twisted rhymes; they’re on their own, no recall.

From insanity and ugliness arise flowers of vividness, of literary hope, like those of Rimbaud.

Gout manifests in toes; ghazals manifest on paper, out of insanity and utter boredom.

*Honor the masters of the past*. Present-day masters nod and applaud, obey.

*Instantiation,* such an awkward word, but works of art instantiate elements of nature.

Just because language comes easy and naturally to you, no reason to torture yourself by writing.

Know excuses; get to work, open your heart, splay it out for glory.

Learn the basics—study the wildest writings you may uncover.

Master the obvious or rare forms: sonnet, crowns, syllabic, many others.

Never speculate about your own legend; go read what Merwin wrote about Berryman.

Orpheus wrote hexameter and pulled Euridice up from hell; go, do the same in your own verse.

Pantoums, unless exquisite or very well-done, bore by the third stanza.

Quran’s language described as *rhymed prose;* like a good poem, easier to memorize.

Raskolnikov murdered for abstract ideas; WCW dictated, *No ideas but in things*.

Essence of great poetry? Genius, some say. Or luck. Or courage. Maybe wildness.

*Tangled web of lies*. Scott, not Shakespeare, but still an admirable objective for your long poems.

Ulysses, Odysseus, Homer, the *Odyssey*: please, write a new epic poem about masts and sirens.

V. Perhaps it stands for *verse*, but also *voice*, *verisimilitude*, *vernacular*, or *vignette*.

Writers are born, work, die. One remarkable line; perhaps the only miracle you can hope for.

Excessively overworking your first draft? Likely turns it to mush. Better: deft restraint.

Why striving to get published? Why? Publishing is a form of extreme insanity.

Xanadu, Shangri-La. After decades of difficult, thankless work, may we all find our way there.