

JASON FRANCISCO

The Pervious Lover and Mir —An Open Essay

I. DOES IT MEAN ANYTHING to *live* poetry? Has this question been asked enough times about English?

I wish to go past poetry of the lyric, and poetry compelled by love—and again past poetry called religious—and beyond sensual poetry, and poetry of longing and fulfillment, and poetry simply verbally seductive—to something I call *vocative* poetry: composed by poets who *call* their listeners, give out their poems in voices their own and take hold of the listener as a respondent—because the listener is after all, only human. This poetry is precisely its provocations, the engagements it lets. It is experiential as it is something given. If anyone were to ask about examples—prototypes—archetypes—heroes—among the English-language poets there is Whitman. Still it seems vocative poetry as an English-language genre has yet to be recognized.

I submit that much of the best vocative poetry available in English is to be found in translations—or, more aptly, in “transcreations”—of South Asian poetries (especially the so-called *bhakti* poets—Kabir, Ghanananda, Bihari, Mira Bai, Narsi Mehta, Tukaram, Dhurjati, Annamacharya ...). The Urdu *ghazal* has remained an extraordinary forum for what can be called vocative poetry. Lamentably it has received scarce attention from translators. English has had virtually no exposure to the *ghazal* tradition. To this day there exist no major translations of the principal works of (arguably) the two greatest Urdu *ghazal* composers, Mir and Ghālib, notwithstanding Khurshidul Islam and Ralph Russell’s *Three Mughal Poets* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1991 [1968]).

I wish to speak about Mir. I am forced to navigate by intuition. I do not know Urdu and I am dependent on Islam and Russell’s presentations. Does this dependence on English hopelessly banish me from Mir?

Doubtless there is no substitute for speaking and listening to the poems in their original: the poems I receive form a new generation of Mir, who is now less the direct composer and more an author or authorizing presence about the transcreated works. But Islam and Russell's Mir, the parent of my Mir, stands as an author whose authorial presence is not mere conceit: it convenes the varieties of immediacy and human contact which belong as much to persons touching persons as to authors touching readers. Mir's authorship is of mind and flesh. His poetry is distinguished as something he—the author not denying his personhood—lived, and so something to be lived. To be lived: to travel from mouth to mouth, age to age, language to language; to travel subject to your cadence, his rhythm, her accent, my anxiety, our breath and our lips, and subject to anyone's interruptions; to travel under the sign that "it," "the" poem is at once an origin of interpretative movement and far from an origin, but a leaving of the movement, and only an occasional leaving. The poem which is a lived poem is a proneness, a vulnerability to the details of the human efforts that generate and receive meaning. What the poem is "in itself," what kind of textual instantiation it forms, what intertextual significances it carries, what it means evacuated from lives and voices—these concerns (which, I venture, ground the mainstay of so-called literary criticism, dedicated to certifying and hypostasizing poems) assiduously avoid whatever about poetry is situational, and radically situational—situated in discrete bodies on discrete days, in discrete yards and offices and busbenches where poems are listened to, read and remembered. I submit that Mir's poetry, as his *own* human experience, makes *our* personal experience with his poems possible. His authorial personhood occupies a space for any person, even one living two centuries later, on the other side of the world, writing with *this* language.

I wish to draw, skeletally, certain contours of the ways in which Mir's poetry suggests a vocative, participatory poetics. If human occupation of poems comes first in the acts of speaking, reading and remembering, and continues as the personal authorial presence which remains after actual voicings die, surrounds and imbues the written versions which are otherwise carcasses—I want to give Mir credit for such a presence. I wish to open, a little, Mir's human occupation of his own work—to allow others inside to join him across differences, even differences of language. The critical recognition is that Mir's authorial identity expands over time. It is not equivalent to his personal identity (which anyway cannot be factalized, even through his autobiography, *Zikr-e Mir*), and likewise does not evict his person. As a reader I do not evict my person. As such my own

inspiration to write belongs as much to Mīr as to myself.

Are you equal to the words? This question belongs to whoever wishes to know a poet of an unlearned language—which, I take it, is everyone. So I enjoin myself to strive, and you.

2. The *ghazal*—is a collection of couplets formally (prosodically) unified.

The difficulty and power of the *ghazal* is its brevity. Each couplet commonly treats a particular topic or theme, and no theme runs through the entire aggregation. The *ghazal* as an extended, sustained unity does not really exist: the collection of couplets is not any whole, but is added to and taken away from at the poet's or the reciter's discretion. The *ghazal* does not narrate. Rather the couplet marks a point or tip of an ungiven narration that must be reconstructed, asks to be reconstructed. The power of the form is precisely its immense control over absence, its command over the imagination in the form of a finger toward something not said, but there. The words point to a kind of silent archeology; the language extends through itself backward and forward, expanding and contracting meaning in the pull of a certain gravity: that which is not said is stronger than that which is. The *ghazal* demands not only that the listener *listen* (traditionally *ghazals* are recited before an audience at a gathering called a *mushā'ira*), but that the reader meet the poem, give it her or his own context continuously, repeatedly. As a “nonfinite” form of poetry, the *ghazal* gains meaning only when coupled with the imagination. Where the basic semantic unit of the *ghazal* is the couplet, the *ghazal's* essence is its participative demand.

Ghazal couplets commonly explore the natures and difficulties of love, particularly unrequited love: love not constant, never eternal, but labile. The aggregate of couplets resonates with the multiple and dis-equilibrating states of love—sure desire that rises up strongly and confidently, as well as the delicate, membranous feelings left when love has falsely or ficklely departed, and, too, the severe and gruesome states when love coldly and harshly shuts down on a lover. The *ghazal* as an entire recitation roves in the couplets' extensions, moves in cascades, in reticulations—appeals to relays of associated, subtle understanding.

Leaving the beloved's motives and even actions to the imagination—both the poet's and the listener's—the *ghazal* probes the aspects of autobiography which are legitimately invented. As such it is not concerned strictly with auto-truthfulness of the corpse-like variety: the poet is willing, and encourages the listener, to let self-presentation roam into longing, play and speculation. The imagistic and thematic

conventions of the *ghazal* form points of departure variously into the realms of the lover's engagements: the contempts, appreciations and spontaneous movements of his sufferings; the tensions of his social status; and always the beloved's incomparable beauty, her elusiveness, fickleness, cruelty, inaccessibility.

Within these conventions—how much of the poet's actual heart?

3. To whatever extent we allow poems to be sensitivities under human skin, within the drop of blood that is the human heart (as Mir says), not confined to the language of their birth but escaping constantly as tenderness, as willingness—to that extent we take truth and falsity themselves as things experienced, and not merely received. To that extent we take the poet's authorizing presence as a form of human contact, not literary contact only, and the poem as the labor of the poet, his effort so elemental we know he has built the world.

4. *It was love's strength that brought me to her land:
Where shall I find the strength to go back home?*

The exceedingly difficult thing for lovers, and for certain poets: that love be unfinished, constantly unfinished, moving continually—and in this way greater than the heart.

There you are, loving: moving in pursuit of the world itself moving—which cannot be caught, and which indeed you do not want to catch. Love lures you constantly *away*. And the strength to go back home—away from her—is also from love.

Home lures you—but as a refuge? How could it relieve the separation by which love is a pursuit? Home: apartness from her. What return does it promise? How could it be a less pained place than her place which demands its secrecies, which is treacherous, riddled with the fears of discovery and punishment, and the misery of brief meetings, often wasted with quarrel, and perhaps her shame ...?

Naturally you are weak with love's strength. Naturally you are tempted to claim love was nothing you ever really wanted. You do not conceal the weakness, knowing love to be a movement close toward and away from the beloved—and yourself, and your own clearer and less clear possessions.

5. *I washed my hands of life and only then
Could I set foot in my beloved's lane.*

*The sword falls, Mir, and you still stare at her.
Is that no proof that you deserve to die?*

*Just sacrifice your life, and fear is banished.
Go on your way; all danger will have vanished.*

Love begins with the commitment of a life: continues as the stunned, retrospective knowledge of death: and remains as reassurance after the deep fears of love's consequences are fulfilled.

You love: as someone within yourself and after yourself. You love not merely lured, seized, directed, but love as something *you do*, after which you find your antecedent purposes. *You* who sacrifice will find that fear *is* banished; you going your way will see danger *to have* vanished. You cannot fulfill love: fulfillment of love is a self-negating proposition. So you feel: a special unconcern at love's fulfillment, an unconcern which is precisely the acceptance of separation from her. The honesty of the unconcern makes and fulfills loving. But what tenacity the honest unconcern requires! What concern! What carefulness, what attention. The ground of love is this tenacity: you keep the heart as a guide, and cultivate the heart by acceptance of separation. And as you come to know your heart: love's unity is constantly accomplished. Or better, love's unity is as accomplished as the heart's knowledge.

Who can say the lover's dual task? Self-sufficiency in love, learning to live without expectation of requited love, and still: neither reducing nor reifying love to an object, a merely spiritual love, returning to the human beloved. A difficult task! The lover, concerned and unconcerned—*must* remain independent of the beloved, must remain in some primary sense self-fulfilled. And the same lover, precisely self-fulfilled, *will* accept love's endless pursuit of the beloved, love's perpetual unfulfillment. This is the clear lover's love: never to become absolutely dependent on the beloved, who can never be reached, and never to become truly independent of the beloved, trapped in mere invention.

Love commits the lover to wakefulness and to death—an ongoing death at the hands of radically concurrent demands: utter detachment from her, and utter willingness toward, craving of and dedication to her. Love, like death, commits her to something existing in perpetuity—an absence constantly pointing back toward life, toward her herself. Mir says confidently: you, loving, knowing utter aliveness, surpassingly embody something dead. You are utterly incapable of exhausting love—or her. Your failure to exhaust love is precisely your accomplishment.

So you lift yourself to an obstinate, relentless vulnerability. You learn to love and lose simultaneously. And you, loving—can you fail to see that love’s constancy, love’s joyful discipline—leaves also a joyful self-malice?

*The sword of tyranny was falling and I could not flinch.
I did not move my head—not even to avow my love.*

6. *Mir’s dust has settled at a distance from her;
Respect like this is only learned from love.*

If nothing else constancy is the lover’s attainment. In dedication to her the lover submits, forbears—behaves in absolute keeping of her interest. If love itself is a danger, he holds it within himself, never allows it near her.

Mir sings the lover: you, loving, are the dust of your own decay—even your dust maintains your constancy. You have conditioned even your ashes. No matter that you be kicked up in the street. No matter that you be suspended in air. Your constancy lasts through matter and matter’s recombination. You return this body to the earth as something more constant than the earth itself.

7. *This is a realm where near and far are one;
With her or parted from her, you must love.*

*I cannot think that you would look at me;
Yet I wish that you would look at me.*

*The world of beauty is a wondrous world;
A man must fall in love with that world too.*

Mir sings the will to love: it tempts as a venture of possession of a thing called love, a venture of becoming one possessed. Alternately it pushes toward venturing the will itself as a construction, intended to achieve the effect of convincing the lover of success, of establishing his authority as a lover... and the authority of the beloved... and the authority of the exercise Mir calls loving.

Mir sings: yesterday, meeting her briefly—you think you might genuinely have come some distance from your urge to stay with her, from living it through in a closefitting way. Still it remained and darkly guided. You spoke ponderously, as if to solicit her closeness, her relief, as if to

certify the unconditional, irrupturable connection. But you certify nothing, you who still mistake the obvious necessity: detachment from perfection of your feelings for her, from desire to be any sort of person for her, from winning her at all—and from self-condemnation, which is ruthless in you. This much is obvious to her—but *with* her, it is not obvious to you. With her you are consumed with what you want: to find and hold her deep estimation, perhaps her deepest estimation—and to be held in it as you lose it. And she is more than you can hold: you feel loss instant to instant. Naturally she refuses to take you at all seriously. Why should she? You desire her whole person and are empty to hold her.

You ask yourself: are you wrong to sense in her a lush, reciprocal wanting? It seems to inspire the very pride with which she judges the world carefully—and keeps you away.

And Mir, asking: can you pass over the ways your will to love is an object in a literal sense, something thrown in your way, something you falsely attach to as a destiny? And if you pass your will over—can you live with the sudden severance of the questions which nourish you: “Who am I, loving?” “Who is she?” Without the love of the questions can you reaffirm the critical division—that she is *there*, not here in your esteem only—you who drift in the midst of your own reassurances?

The will to love—sometimes as a venture of dispossession it still *tempts*.

You drift with your will, your questions, the gravities of attraction between them. You, the lover, surrender in your loving the exercise of your conscience, surrender your cravings to know her, your desires to find in her heart the place nearest her, and the words for love themselves, which are all false ties. You are no longer driven by your own will to love, but in the midst of it. And at the moment you honestly notice this: you feel what is in fact a tighter yoke: *to be just like* your wishes to give yourself away to love and still to remain.

The freedom of love’s constancy lies not in what is intentional about it, but what is unintentional. What work this freedom means for those who would perfect love as a morality! What impossible work as legislation of the heart, regimentation of the soul! What work: it is impossible that self-legislating can dedicate the heart properly, can bend it passing over itself toward something more enduring. Is this not after all the point of the imperative to love: to dissolve the heart’s firm hold on becoming conscious to itself, as if knowable to itself *first*, and *then* able to act? What work! By degrees you come closer to the movement and later the signature of love, the rupture that tells the refusal of the heart to dedicate

itself to an intention to love, to a statement of intention, to a fooling. You, the lover, refusing all propositions, turn to poems. This is why poetry is song: because it refuses speech. The refusal entails great nobility and great fierceness—and great cruelty. The cruel refusal invites something more—or indeed, something altogether less—than the heart’s knowing self-possession.

The empty heart comes not with a swift, absolute judgment—rather by approximate judgments in continuing estimations. From within, truths are estimated—from without, determined. The lover’s refusal to enter an absolute judgment is not a difficulty of action: love values the movement between judgments more than the structure of alternatives. And if love is a movement before a state of being—how can constancy of the heart be an origin of love? As an intention, constancy cannot originate even a thought. Rather it is something on the skin, a veil or a mask over something living underneath, something animate which in its labor brings love out more fully.

How could you fall in love with her alone—and not the whole world?

Deep love displays a menacing visage: it appears as a power over and above to withhold as much as to give and sustain. It seems something perfect, distant, hallowed in its distance and unperturbed even by the most fervent desire to cross. *Mir* does not disagree. Who can tell the difference between what the poet threatens and promises about love? He sings: love is a duty to refuse certainty of love’s possession—also love is temperamental and impermanent. What refuge from loving, the poet asks, could *not* loving be?

*And still we dwell enraptured in the stars
After our stars have ground us in the dust.*

8. *You are in love: your head splits, and the pain is there for life.
Love’s a different drunkenness, a different aftermath.*

With love: the mind is more and more sensitive to the minute losses, the subtle logics of gain—a special kind of lunacy. The mind sedulously tweezes apart the gossamers of possible loss—and deftly clings to thin strands of rationalization. What force can renounce them? Every skillful path leads to a fragile peril.

Is ease possible in these active vulnerabilities? Rest: not an intrinsically calm possibility, but the aftermath of abandon.

9. *True Muslim am I, for to these idols
I pledge my love: "There is no God but God ..."*

*Such as we are, God fashioned us close to His heart's desire:
If we had been what we had wished what might we not have been!*

*You call us free? You slander us unjustly.
Your will is done—and we must take the blame.*

The direct and intimate relations between God and ourselves, and between one another—are conventionally these: symbolic love (*'ishq-e majāzī*) refers to worldly love, true love (*'ishq-e ḥaqīqī*) to mystical love. Our love is symbolic, divine love real.

Not an inversion, this is a subversion.

Mīr sings the lover: now she is an idol in your heart—her beauty is manifold within you. You worship her with a universal prayer that becomes a question: if her beauty is manifold, what becomes of your language? your heart? your mind? How can you possibly meet her divisibilities—and not just divisibility, but the integrity of her divisions? You feel: a sinking gulf between the words that name love, the prayers, and the experience of loving, which is infinitely more diverse and proliferate.

She splits and splits. You chase her. She drives you into small tasks—smaller and smaller. You race after her with fragmented observances. You motor frantically. She eludes you effortlessly. At what must be the end of yourself you offer her your devotion to something eternal, to God—supremely unique in the universe and all you can suffer to worship.

You cry: the uniqueness of the eternal is unbearably fast in its durations!

Mīr sings: inviolable identity is not the object of this search, and anyway is impossible. The difference between this burnt love and *this new* love is an experiential difference, impossible to regularize. Mīr sings and sings.

But the alertness of your one prayer to the parted lover—is it not a form of cruelty? Should you take it as a fiat? Suppose you take it as a human *obligation* to rebel against the multitudinous lover—an obligation precisely to God—which embodies your best gifts and makes you worthy of God ...

Take yourself this moment as a hurled being, launched from God

with a question: will you fall under the weight of your own will to love? To fly: to remake yourself in the image of your heart, which roams toward God, and affectionately toward smaller and smaller tasks, and back toward larger disquietudes freely.

Others know God to occupy the ruin of the heart—the heart ruined by fear and dread of God, of the forfeiture of fear. Here you are: craving to sever the fear of God. When the language of fear leaves you, you envision voluminous prayer. The unreason of your prayer will become your vocation. You will wear the memory of fear of God like a talisman to ward off revisited exile. When the language of fear leaves you, you envision knowing: you are not God's equal, but are, like God, uniquely capable of your own severances, which require a self-seeding pleasing to God.

Others perhaps do not undertake the difficulties of their growth willingly, but out of fear of the faith-ridden themselves, who insist on devotion to God in more and more devoted paralysis of the emotions, the imagination, memory, criticism—and prayer as a symbolic punishment for their natural alertness. Who among them will ask you to take up your own tasks? And if you take up your own tasks, even at the cost of your life—who among them will not still call it heresy? Mir, singing: we who arrive here and take up our tasks—

*Made from clay—but what we are, we are.
Our power is greater than the power God gave us.*

and accept the right to suffer in the taking—are we not farsighted in our pleas?

*Mir is a beggar, yes; but when he begs
He asks for nothing less than the two worlds.*

10. Sight of ourselves comes disparately, not seamlessly. Souls relaxed from fear love error. Souls relaxed from self-importance do not renounce self-falsity. More than that they do not crave it.

11. *Shaikh never knew the echo of love. How could he?
He took good care to feel no more than lust.*

*Shaikh cannot walk a step without his staff—
An ass that needs the rod to make him go.*

*Shaikh say his prayers? Don't be deceived by that.
Prayer is a load he lowers from his head.*

Mir sings the *shaikh*, the entrenched elder: self-seeking, hypocritical, narrow: sustains brute adherence to religious and political ritual alike. *Shaikh* honors institutional knowledge, admires the coercive achievements of priests, kings, bureaucrats—all power corporate and remote. *Shaikh* understands divine power in his own image, an extension of worldly power: God is a ruthless, implacable tyrant. “God-the-merciful, God-the-compassionate”—in his mouth these epithets ring as bitter taunts. *Shaikh* lives by and for the fear of God and anyone whose power is demonstrable—perhaps through a curse, perhaps a club, perhaps a fountain pen. What does he know of love? His heart lunges and grasps: the most openness he can manage is lust.

Shaikh embodies propertied interests and the attendant psychologies of predation. In his world the greatest crime against private property is the refusal to own any: *shaikh* is naturally threatened by the lover. In their conflict, embraced by the *shaikh*, simply watched by the lover—the lover, who eludes easy typification, draws more and more fire: becomes the martyr.

12. *Come on out, recluse! Leave your cell and see the green plants
growing
And black clouds sent from Mecca swaying high above the taverns.*

*Come to the tavern, recluse, now, for joy has left the mosque.
The rain falls, and the breeze blows soft, and all your body glows.*

*Do people lead the holy life when clouds sway over head?
In days like these, ascetic, you should see if you can sin.*

Mir sings the lover: neither pillared in, nor a refugee from, the world. Under the weight of kings and *shaikhs*, their prophylactics, their bigotries, their false ideologies, Mir sings: no lover thinks of escape. Mir quickly reminds: the unconcern of the lover is a willingness: the lover pledges his allegiance to the open heart. The lover revises his speech, his pathways—does not attach either to inclusion or to reclusion. Fear pulls the recluse, perhaps well intentioned in his denial of the world. To raise himself he strikes himself down. The lover is different: he does not displace his grief into self-removal or self-deprivation, and retains nothing

of tragedy, no trace of loss. The recluse has enshrined loss. For the lover, love never *needed* to come, not even once. There is no disappointment.

Mir sings the lover: not the ascetic, world-renouncing lover—but a greater renunciant. Mir sings the lover's refusal to leave the world, derides all expectation that there be a pure realm outside the world for love. Mir: is not a discoverer of a private truth. Rather he is an announcer, a performer in couplets of his own overcoming of his privacies. Where he comes down in *me*: I shake with his rebukes. He is not a master over the world, like the *shaikh*, nor sunken below it, like the recluse, but in the midst of it—Mir, who knows the lover intimately, who has striven to find correspondences, and has found them, and has fallen from them, and from his grief incommensurably asks: is it not *you*, loving profligately, gallivanting in the preparation of yourself for your soul, who ultimately finds favor with God?

*Again today in the great mosque Mir led the worshippers—
He who but yesterday had washed the wine stains from his prayer
mat.*

13. Mir sings the lover of his own era: Delhi in the years following the height of Mughal power. Mir witnessed personally the sacking of the city in 1739 by Nadir Shah, was driven into exile with the Maratha occupation of 1760. All his life his patronage was tied to the political vicissitudes of the court.

If periods of social decline are often the most culturally productive, if they appear in their opulence to be vigorous, Mir's constancy *today* is best taken not as a mystical constancy but a humanly engaged constancy closer to the difficulties of his own life, to the personal and social vigilance he summoned. In the reflection of Mir's words our own age appears starkly: we, striving to depersonalize our connections, fashioning our commitments after our alienations—we, sundering what might have been whole hearts, segmenting our active selves into production and consumption units. Here in this place, in this U.S.A., perhaps unimaginable to Mir: we as we are, stranded without love and fending with precision—and the egalitarian spirit of it, and the violence of the polarities, we here cherishing them rudely.

Who now is Mir's lover: detached from the realities of social alienation not toward disengagement, but rather toward ever deeper self opening and opening of others? In the mirror of Mir's couplets, his appeal as the lover he is: are any of us equal to the songs of the clear lover's

sociality?

14. *Man, formed of clay, gave lustre to this mirror:
None would have looked into it save for him.*

*Don't think us cheap: the heavens revolve for years
to bring forth man out of the veil of dust.*

*I speak the secrets of my heart to old and young alike;
My voice is free and unrestrained; and none can curb my tongue.*

*The heart is not a city that can rise again from the ruins.
Loot it, and—do you hear me?—you will live to rue the day.*

Mir's provocation: beyond adherence to any class, any group, any family is the blunt importance of a person's dedication to an exchange of self and other, which Mir calls love. Constancy to the other—to the beloved, to God, to ideals, to realities, to names—this constancy begins the social value of criticism, of better-than-literary criticism worthy of the problems of ethical freedom and imperatives beyond the thirst for civilizing indubitables and cultural bits for the mouth.

I dispositionally read with a sensitivity for wide-open personages who announce themselves abruptly as a challenge to trust—that I might meet truths not just about myself but about my human nature. Perhaps in the very next moment I lose them. This loss does not bother me. To meet a couplet honestly even one time is to have gained multitudes. I submit Mir's work as labor toward this trust. I submit that Mir considered this trust cultivable, and not randomly visited upon his audiences. His poetic efforts neither titillate nor seduce blithely, nor merely conjure dreams of fecund connections—but in fact bring them as he offers himself as the lover he is. Underlying Mir's injunctions to love, his imperative openly to take his heart as a guide and the radical openness he means by loving, is a willingness to confront his listener with a defining question: are *you* willing to move from normalized fear to an experience of generalized dread—and perhaps beyond? Are *you* willing to suffer your life as more than your merely private affliction?

How do *you* feel about a reflexive distrust of the unconditional as the beginning of a just appreciation of the beloved, of God, of science, of human freedom itself? What do *you* think would be left of the world without love of the memory of clear and confused desire? Do *you* think

there is a pure practice of loving, a method for shaping human values so trustworthy you need not work it out continually? Do *you* need what abides in love and your sociality to be eternal? If some form of love did abide eternally, could *you* know it, you who yourself cannot claim eternality, perpetuity? Is it not precisely because love is contextual that much about love abides? Is not *our* abiding experience one of change? —Is it not something we can use—beyond our adequacy at suffering it? Seeing that change does not merely happen to us but is at the same time something we also do, something we cause by our own values and our actions—can *we* be earnest and inventive and generous enough to shoulder our own freedoms?

A pure practice of loving entails painful, impossible reduction. A society's movement toward purities is a blood promise. Mīr sings: a striving in this world of change, of construction and constructedness: a constant loving amidst a refusal to take refuge in any essential object of love. This striving brings a healthy, cascading subversion of normalized fear—toward that more prone stage in which love is a release from the fear which needs it (but which it does not need). And in the openness: God, and a dark and abiding humanity—though to call it eternal would be to gloss it, to make it seem impervious when it is precisely pervious.

*The heart which seems no greater than a single drop of blood
Is like a whirlwind mingling earth and heaven with its force.*