DUAL REALITIES

IN THE SPACE

OF KEVIN HART'S POETRY

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DECLARATION

I certify that this dissertation does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

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This dissertation argues that there are dual realities in Kevin Hart’s poetic space, and this space includes the elements of classicism, romanticism, modernism (cubism, surrealism), dual tradition of theology (positive theology and negative theology), and French post-phenomenological thinking. The dual realities are testified to by some binary pairs in Hart’s poetry: the concrete, conscious, definite, familiar, natural, phenomenal, physical, and positive standing side by side with the abstract, higher, ideal, indefinite, intellectual, metaphysical, negative, philosophical, surreal, transcendental, and unconscious. The latter are achieved from the former through a process of transcending or going beyond, and the mediums between the two poles of binary pairs are death, denial, denudation, deprivation, dying, idealisation, negation, rejection, transgression, transcendence, and transformation. While maintaining that there are dual realities in Hart’s poetic space, this dissertation explores and demonstrates the poet’s affinity with and the influences of various figures from literary, philosophical, and theological traditions in two ways: historically and horizontally. Through comparison and contrast, it is seen historically that Hart is close to Pope, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, Shelley, Apollinaire, Jacob, and Breton; and that he is even closer, when spiritual faith is reflected in his poems, to the Bible’s Solomon and the mediaeval poets, especially certain anonymous lyricists, and to Herbert and Hopkins; and that Hart is also close to such Christian mystics as Augustine, Bernard, Eckhart, John of the Cross, Gilbert, Isaac, Plato, Plotinus, and Pseudo-Dionysius. Hart’s horizontal or contemporary influences come from such figures as Bataille, Blanchot, Bloom, Derrida, and Levinas. Although he is influenced by those figures the poet does not remain in the stage of being influenced: Hart transcends the influences by creating his own poetry and his own art.
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A Note on Citations

The dissertation follows the instructions provided in *Humanities Style Manual* (third edition 2004) prepared by Greg Noble & Ruth Barcan at the School of Humanities of University of Western Sydney. When quotations from *Flame Tree* are cited in this dissertation, the page numbers are provided in the text. All the other quotations cited are specified in the footnotes. The bibliography follows the “Author-Date System Bibliography”.
Part I
Introduction
Section I. Outlining the Dissertation

It is a great challenge for a person who has no religious beliefs, whose first language is not English and whose background is not Australian but Chinese, to write a dissertation on Kevin Hart’s poetry. I took the challenge regardless of the cultural differences and the language barrier.

A scene I still remember is how an eminent literary critic in China shook his head when I sought his opinion of the book of one hundred of Hart’s poems that I had translated. He simply told me that he could not understand the poems. To be honest, I could not understand most of the poems myself either, although I had some knowledge of Western literary theories and a little understanding of deconstruction at the time, and my translation was good enough for the editors in one of the best translation-publishing houses in China – Yilin Press – to agree to publish the poems. It was more embarrassing when an editor of a Chinese national magazine, High-School Students’ Reading, asked me to write an article to introduce Hart’s poems to millions of Chinese high-school students – I dared not write a word. Not because I could not write something, but because I was afraid that what I wrote might lead the students towards misunderstanding Hart’s poems and Western culture. Looking back, I have a kind of “back-fear”: I would, indeed, have committed a terrible mistake if I had really written something for the magazine!

Embracing a strong desire and passion to understand Hart’s poetry and to know more about Western culture, several years ago I came to the University of Western Sydney to study his poems under the supervision of Professor Leon Cantrell. After one or two years’ study, I began to realise that Hart’s poems have deep roots in Western culture and various literary trends, including classicism, romanticism, and modernism. What is more, there are, in his poems, elements of positive theology, negative theology, mysticism, and other esoteric religious elements. Although the poems contain, more or less, these elements, I find that some of his poems are much closer to English poems written by anonymous mediaeval lyricists, and some are proximate to the ideas promoted by post-phenomenological writers such as Emmanuel Levinas, Maurice Blanchot, and Jacques Derrida (including Georges Bataille). Therefore, I explore the affinities, influences and Hart’s creative transcendence in the six parts of this dissertation.

The first part is this Introduction, containing four sections: “Outlining the Dissertation”, “Hart’s Background and Achievements”, and “Literature Review”, followed by “Methodology”. As can be seen, the first section provides an outline of the dissertation, introducing the structure of this work; the second section gives a brief introduction to Hart’s background and his achievements in both his literary and theoretical work; the third section is a survey of the critical reviews of Hart’s poetry, and depicts the context of earlier work from which my research starts; the final section establishes the basic methodology used to write this work: a complex form of comparison and contrast, through which various influences on Hart and his transcendence of these influences in his poetry are explored in the following substantial parts.

Part II, “From Classicism to Romanticism”, is composed of two sections: elements of classicism and the romantic internalised quest in Hart’s poems. The first section is an exploration of the classical elements in Hart’s poems through a demonstration of the influences from classical thinking: as in classical poetry, drama, painting and sculpture, man is the central theme and
subject matter in some of Hart’s poems; and also an exposition of Pope’s influence on Hart through satire, phantasmagoria, and transformation. The second section of this chapter explores the romanticism in Hart’s poems, showing Hart’s closeness to M.H. Abrams’, Harold Bloom’s, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe’s, and Jean-Luc Nancy’s theories on the internalised romantic quest and romantic genre “fragment”, and his affinity with romantic poets such as Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, and Shelley.

Two sections, concerning cubism and surrealism in Hart’s poems, comprise Part III: “Modernism in Hart’s Poems”. In the section on “Cubism in Hart’s Poems”, I argue that Hart’s techniques in composing some poems are similar to Guillaume Apollinaire’s cubist aesthetics, and techniques practised by Apollinaire and Max Jacob. It is also argued, in the second section, that surrealism is closely related to cubism, as the two schools belong to a kind of negation: cubism negates an objective reality to achieve a “higher reality”, whereas surrealism negates the conscious self to reach “the infinite” or “higher reality”; and it is shown how the conscious and the unconscious collaborate and present surrealism through Breton’s ‘certain point of mind’, and how this ‘point’ is replaced by different forms of mediums connecting two dimensions as entities.

Part IV, “Hart’s Faith and Dual Theology” is also made up of two sections: “Positive Theology” and “Negative Theology”. In this part I argue that there are two kinds of God for Hart: one is spiritual and the other philosophical, or one is that of positive theology and the other is that of negative theology. The two theologies cannot be separated from each other, for they function in collaboration. In positive theology God descends and enlightens, while in negative theology one is “beckoned to ascend” and become united with God through the “darkness of unknowing”. In the section on positive theology, I demonstrate how Hart’s poems show God’s descent to this world in the form of traces in either nature or humans; the Bible’s teachings and doctrines which reflect the nature of the Unity, the Trinity, and the Virgin Mary; and his closeness to mediaeval poems in subject matter. In the second section, I claim that Pseudo-Dionysius’s “circular movement” of the divine being decides other beings’ mystical unity with the divinity through purification, love, meditation, and silence. This involves an account of Hart’s affinity to negative theologians or Christian mystics such as St Augustine, Bernard of Clairvaux, St John of the Cross, Meister Eckhart, Gilbert of Hoyland, Plato, Plotinus, Pseudo-Dionysius, and Isaac of Stella, and the poets George Herbert, G. M. Hopkins, and the Bible’s Solomon.

The fifth part, “Religious without Religion”, has three sections: “Questing for ‘Continuity of Being’ through Transgression”, “Seeking for ‘Exteriority’ through Transcendence”, and “Religion without Religion”. In this part I argue that theology has a great impact on Hart’s poetry, and this is shown in his affinity with post-phenomenological thinkers such as Emmanuel Levinas, Maurice Blanchot, and Jacques Derrida. These thinkers’ theories are, more or less, related to Georges Bataille’s theory. So is Hart’s poetry. Hart’s closeness to Bataille is supported through a demonstration that some of his poems are “a quest for a lost intimacy with the continuous” through desire, death, and transgression, which are the tenets of Bataille’s theory on eroticism. I maintain that Hart is influenced by Levinas for the reason that he follows Levinas’ way to seek for the divine ‘exteriority’ through “fecundity”, “futurity”, and “transcendence”. It is

widely known that Derrida and Blanchot have influenced Hart, and this is seen from Derrida’s “Religion without Religion” and John D. Caputo’s further illustration of the concept: “Derrida’s work as an author is religious – but without religion and without religion’s God”2, and from Derrida’s and Blanchot’s structure of le pas au delà – the step (not) beyond3.

The final part, Part VI, is the conclusion of the whole work. There is a mode or pattern in Hart’s poetry: there are some binary pairs – something concrete, definite, natural, and physical stands side by side with something abstract, higher, indefinite, intellectual, metaphysical, philosophical, and surreal in classicism, romanticism, cubism, surrealism, theology, and post-phenomenological thinking, and to reach the latter from the former is a process of denying, dying, negating, surpassing, transcending, transfiguring, and transforming. The same can be said of Hart’s poetic creations: Hart is influenced by various literary trends and schools of the Western tradition, but he does not simply remain at the stage of being influenced – he creates his own art through transcendence and by going beyond.

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3 Translated by K. Hart, (private interview).
Section II. Hart’s Background and Achievements

To understand Hart’s poems, we need to have a brief look at Hart’s publications in poetry and criticism, and his awards or honours. Hart has published the following collections of poems: *The Departure* [1978]; *The Lines of the Hand* [1981]; *Your Shadow* [1984]; *Peniel* [1991]; *New and Selected Poems* (1995); *Wicked Heat* [1999]; and *Flame Tree: Selected Poems* [2002]. For his poetic achievements, Hart has won wide acclamation and acknowledgements. Since 1974 he has won more than ten major awards. These awards include the Christopher Brennan Award for Poetry (1999); the Grace Leven Prize for Poetry (shared) (twice: 1991, 1995), the NSW Premier’s Award for Poetry (1985), the Victorian Premier’s Award for Poetry (shared) (1985), the Wesley Michel Wright Award (University of Melbourne) (1982), the John Shaw Neilson Poetry Award (1977), the Australia Council Award (1977), the Farmers International Poetry Award (1975), and the Canberra Day Poetry Award (1974).

In addition to his literary achievements, Hart has had a successful academic career. From 1984 to 2002 he taught Doctor of Philosophy, Master of Arts, Master of Theology, and Bachelor of Arts courses in the English and Philosophy departments of several universities, including the University of Melbourne, Deakin University and Monash University. He was also appointed as visiting professor at two universities in the USA: Villanova and Georgetown. From 2002, he has held the Chair in the Philosophy Department at the University of Notre Dame in the USA and University of Virginia.


A brief investigation of Hart’s background, including his family’s migration into Australia, his education, and influences from other theorists and poets, also provides important information for understanding his literary success. The Hart family’s migration from Britain to Brisbane was “a wonderful adventure” for Hart. In 1954, the poet was born into a working-class family in a small
village in Essex. A few years later the family moved to the east end of London: his father had a job in the local gas works, and his mother worked as a dressmaker from home. As a boy Hart was shy, timid, and afraid of teachers, so he made himself as invisible as he could at school. He was regarded as “a slow boy”, as he “stayed near the bottom of the class” and “failed the eleven-plus.” His poor school records made his parents worry, but they could never work out exactly what he could do for a living. His mother even wanted him to be a butcher or a dressmaker, and he himself once planned to be a pastry cook (although that was a later thing). Fortunately, the family’s migration to Australia when he was eleven years old began to change Hart’s life.

The move transformed the teenager Hart from “a slow boy” to an excellent student and made him fall in love with poetry. In his high school in Oxley, a western suburb of Brisbane, he “vaulted to the top of the class”; and he found his “first love” – Shelley, the English romantic poet, and his poems. Brisbane’s hot, sultry weather had an effect on his poetic imagination and provided him with chances to escape the heat by taking refuge in the air-conditioned Queensland State Library. There was “a fantastic amount of poetry there” and he would sit down and “absorb all sorts of poetry”. In an interview the poet’s humorous comment on the relation between Brisbane’s hot weather and poetic success is not without reason: “Perhaps the sultry heat of a Queensland summer made me a poet.” Indeed, moving to Australia was a dramatic experience, as the poet said:

I was dropped in Brisbane at a very impressionable age. It was like being left in a place off the map, in a world where everything seemed to have been exaggerated in colour, temperature and size. In England I was thought to be very weak at school but in Australia I became more confident. … and I suddenly became a good student.

Recovering his confidence and discovering his love of poetry were the most important things for him, as they would be beneficial to his whole life, especially his literary creations and academic career. According to the poet’s father, Kevin Hart was such an excellent student that three different universities offered him scholarships when he finished high school in 1973. He decided to take up the scholarship at the Australian National University in Canberra.

Hart’s education built the foundation for his future writings and career. From 1973 to 1976, the poet studied English, philosophy, and philosophical theology at ANU, and graduated with Honours, first class. After his graduation, he “took up a fellowship at Stanford University” to study “German philosophy and theology.” During the years 1984 and 1986 he was a doctoral candidate at the University of Melbourne, writing the dissertation which distilled his understanding of deconstruction, theology, and philosophy. In an interview with Stephen Watson, he said “as a student, I gravitated to philosophical theology and, after I graduated, became deeply

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5 L. Spinks, “‘Sketching The Horizon’: An Interview with Kevin Hart’, Journal of Commonwealth Literature, 35:2, p. 11.
7 I visited the poet’s father’s house in Brisbane on 12th February 2003.
fascinated by some of the Christian mystics: the Pseudo-Dionysius, John of the Cross, Teresa of Avila, Meister Eckhart, Julian of Norwich, Nicholas of Cusa … That was another education.\textsuperscript{9}

Hart’s achievement as a successful poet is based on the legacy he drew from those forefathers, including eminent theorists and poets. From the poet’s interviews, it can be seen that the influences came from such theorists as Kant, Heidegger, Hegel, Jacques Derrida, and Harold Bloom. But two theorists in particular are the most important for Hart’s development in poetry – Derrida and Bloom. When the poet was studying at Stanford University in California he came across Derrida’s book \textit{Glas} for the first time.\textsuperscript{10} He observes: Derrida “made me read – truly read – the German philosophy and theology I thought I knew.”\textsuperscript{11} In an interview, Hart further asserted that “[b]y way of his publications Derrida taught me a great deal about reading and writing.”\textsuperscript{12}

\begin{quote}
Reading \textit{De la grammatologie}, \textit{Marges de la philosophie} and all the others helped me to understand what was going on in mystical theologies and mystical testimonies, and in particular in the dealings that philosophy has had with mysticism.\textsuperscript{13}
\end{quote}

When Hart was talking about “prayer” in an interview with John Kinsella, he said, “At its deepest level a true prayer says nothing at all, simply ‘yes’ and – as Jacques Derrida has reminded us – ‘yes’ to that ‘yes’.”\textsuperscript{14} Derrida was also a reader of Hart’s poetry. According to Hart, “Derrida has always been a generous reader of whatever I have sent him.”\textsuperscript{15} To Derrida, Hart is full of gratitude. In the “Acknowledgements” to \textit{The Dark Gaze: Maurice Blanchot and the Sacred}, Hart states that Derrida “was the first person to set me thinking about Blanchot, and it is with profound thanks for that and for everything else that I dedicate this study to him.”\textsuperscript{16} As for the influence of Harold Bloom, the poet said: “Bloom’s fundamental teaching … strikes me as true.”\textsuperscript{17} Besides Derrida, Hart revealed, in an interview, “The only other person who has done that [teaching ‘me a great deal about reading and writing’] is Harold Bloom”, and he felt himself “strangely and deeply moved” by Bloom’s writings: “I felt very close to them [Bloom and Derrida], as though they spoke directly to me.”\textsuperscript{18}

Concerning the influences from parent-poets, the names of poets like Drummond de Andrade, Baudelaire, Bonnefoy, Cortázar, Eliard, Herbert, Hopkins, Jiménez, Juarroz, Lorca, Machado, Milton, Montale, Popa, Pope, Rilke, Shelley, Stevens, Verlaine, Vallejo, and Yeats were mentioned in Hart’s several interviews. The poet read whatever he could find. In his own words,

\begin{footnotes}
9 S. Watson, ‘‘The Radiance of Things . . . that can’t be Named’: Talking to Kevin Hart’. [The material was provided by Kevin Hart]
13 Ibid.
15 D. McCooey, “‘Intersecting Worlds’: An Interview with Kevin Hart”, \textit{Meridian}, 15:1, p. 32.
17 D. McCooey, “‘Intersecting Worlds’: An Interview with Kevin Hart’, \textit{Meridian}, 15:1, p. 28.
\end{footnotes}
“I read everything I could when it came my way or even out of my way.” 19 In my interview with him, Hart told me that he had read poems by anonymous mediaeval lyricists, and he also confirmed that he had read poems by Guillaume Apollinaire and Max Jacob. Studying poems by other poets supplied “starting points for original work.” 20 This process involves imitating others’ poems, adding his insights to the work of others, and transcending them through supplementation. The poet regards the poems that he reads as “gifts” from his “parents”, for “It is as though those first poets who gave you life through their poems extend to you an infinite line of credit, and endless gift.” 21 Facing such a profound reader and “a strong poet”, I can only choose the influences of some of these poets to discuss when I study Hart’s poems, due to the limited space of this dissertation. As this dissertation is a study of Hart’s poetry, I shall merely concentrate on his poems and related books of theories.

Hart’s first book of poems, *The Departure* (1978), contains thirty-one poems. His readiness for the poetic journey is seen from its first poem, as it says:

… men in polo-necks  
lash ropes round poles, pull  
knots undone … 22

And then a “departing ship” starts its journey with a full sail, so the poet, like a sailor, with “a final shout”:

    unwinds towards me,  
    dissolves into the sea. 23

And the “final shout” is a call that takes the heart of the young poet along with it. In other words, the “departing ship” symbolises that Hart had embarked on his poetic journey. We notice the poet’s preference for the time beginning from ‘sunset’ to “sunrise” that is implied in a binary pair. This pattern, “not-this-but-that” 24 or not-this-but-the-other, will frequently appear or be implied in Hart’s poetry. There is, at the same time, an awareness of dual realities: what can be seen – what the sailors are doing; and what is foreshadowed or going to happen in the future. So the “both-this-and-that” 25 pattern is equally important. When the two patterns are transcended, we have the “neither-this-nor-that” 26 pattern which indicates ‘something other than “this” and “that”’. That is, what emerges is a kind of higher reality or transcended reality. What the sailors are going to do may symbolise the poet’s future poems in which he transcends others’ influences and various traditions. Having noted this complexity, we can ask the following questions: Does the “departing ship” make a space between this shore and the other shore with a curvature vaulted within? Does the poet start his “anabasis” to the Christian God? Is it the divine or the

19 Ibid., p. 8.  
23 Ibid., p. 3.  
25 Ibid.  
26 Ibid.
“continuity of being” with which Bataille is fascinated? Or is it the “Exteriority” that Levinas looks forward to? Or is it the il y a, “the neuter”, and “the Outside” that both Derrida and Blanchot promoted? These will be my concerns in the major parts of this dissertation.

Hart’s second collection is The Lines of the Hand. From this volume’s forty-five poems, thirty-three poems were selected for inclusion in his latest book Flame Tree (three of them partially). This shows that the young poet’s literary creation had reached a new stage presaging a more prosperous future. The themes in this book include praising God, Jesus Christ, and the Virgin; expressing his desires, and eagerness for “the new life”, and becoming one with God through love, silence, and darkness; showing the poet’s cares and worries for the past and future; and embodying his sense of justice. This book provides evidence that the poet’s interest is in both positive theology and negative theology, and that he is fascinated with dual realities consisting of the physical reality and the higher reality that cubism, surrealism, and post-phenomenological thinkers attempted to disclose.

The poems written between 1980 and 1983 were collected in Hart’s third book, Your Shadow (1984). The poet himself is so satisfied with the poems in this book that thirty-six of the forty-six were selected for republication in Flame Tree. They continue to show Hart’s main interest in religion, in the concept of “the other” or “wholly other (tout autre)” as developed by Levinas, Blanchot, and Derrida, and the idea of higher realities. The elements of romanticism, cubism, and surrealism emerge more clearly in some poems in this book.

The poems collected in the fourth book Peniel (1991) were composed between 1984 and 1990. Three years of this decade were spent writing his PhD dissertation The Trespass of the Sign: Deconstruction, Theology and Philosophy. Negative theology and deconstruction had a considerable influence on Hart’s composition of the poems. Many of the poems in the book show that the coming of “the other” is structurally similar to that of the highest being in theology – the divine presence.

Hart’s fifth book New and Selected Poems (1995) contained one hundred and nine poems: ninety previously published ones and nineteen new ones written between 1991 and 1993. The new poems show the poet’s continuing interest in negative temperament, such as late family members, friends, and a former lover. Through the poet’s vision and imagination of these persons, dead or alive, the reader seems to have seen the coming of them as “the other”, which has no structural difference from the coming of the divinity. The new work further shows that Hart is not only familiar with Derrida’s and Blanchot’s theories, but also applies them in his poetic compositions.

There are two striking features in the poet’s sixth book of poetry Wicked Heat (1999). Among the forty-three poems of this book there is a long erotic poem ‘Nineteen Songs’ which shows that the poet has been influenced by Levinas. In addition, some new poems deal with the coming of the divinity. Hart’s most recent volume of poetry Flame Tree was published in 2002, and comprises one hundred and thirty-six poems. The few new poems indicate his interest in “the other” and express his romantically inflected eroticism.

This dissertation demonstrates and explores various dual realities in the space of Hart’s poetry. The dual realities are analysed in Hart’s Doctor of Philosophy dissertation, The Trespass of the Sign, which was completed in 1986, and published by Cambridge University Press (1989) and...
Fordham University Press (USA) in 2000. The first edition of the book can be said to be a summary of Hart’s early understanding of Derrida’s two stages of deconstruction (I shall argue that there are two stages of deconstruction: the first stage is the endless deferring and delaying while the second stage involves a construction that resembles negative theology, not thematically but structurally, and plays a key role in Hart’s literary creations.). In this book Hart illustrates that there are two kinds of reality – the “metaphysical presence” and the consequences of the Fall from the “presence” – by using Adam’s Fall as an analogy to show that the mythic Fall leads to a linguistic fall which further produces other falls. Due to man’s “failure to observe the proper limits assigned to man by God”27, the original reality or metaphysical presence is replaced by the results of the fall of the sign. As Hart observes, “On earth … the consequences of the Fall are still felt: man is no longer the master of signs but is frequently mastered by them.”28 In this world the divine presence and absence become a mixture or “a chiaroscuro of presence and absence”29, as the original or divine presence withdraws by revealing itself in signs. “‘Sign is always a sign of the Fall’”30, and language, without exception, represents a fall from “the proper to the figural”. As a result of the fall, “the sign” of language “fails to represent the concept purely and simply”31 and the presence or sign’s meaning becomes indefinite and ambiguous. Hart thinks that the structure of the sign’s fall consists of two modes of repetition – “phenomenal” and “transcendental.”32 From the two modes of repetition we see that the dual reality of presence and absence has found its powerful theoretical support. The proposition of dual reality is also testified to in the two stages of deconstruction, as demonstrated in the book, especially in the second edition. Hart emphasises that deconstruction is also a kind of promise which is similar to that of apophatic theology. The promise comes – not within the expectation of horizon but “within the promise”33 itself. Although Hart does not develop Derrida’s second stage in a detailed way, as John D. Caputo does in his The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida, we find that the promise “within the promise” in his poems is similar to Blanchot’s le pas au delà, outlined in Hart’s book The Dark Gaze: Maurice Blanchot and the Sacred (2004).

This powerful work is Hart’s most recent theoretical book; it further develops the dual realities of the presence and absence or the phenomenal and the transcendental, but in different terms or binary pairs, such as “the possible and the impossible”, “the dialectical and neutral”, and “death and dying”34. There is a special “point” related to the dual realities. André Breton is interested in this “point”, so is Blanchot. Hart highlights Blanchot’s preference for the surrealist’s transcendental “point” through which il y a or “there is” something to come as Derrida’s différences promises. But the surrealist point, in Blanchot’s works, has changed: it is ‘Eurydice, “the profound dark point towards which art, desire, death, and the night all seem to lead.”’35 Hart

28 Ibid.
29 Ibid., p. 4.
32 Ibid., p. 24.
34 Hart, The Dark Gaze, p. 49.
35 M. Blanchot, Space of Literature, quoted by Hart, The Dark Gaze, p. 70.
The book A. D. Hope (1992) must be mentioned here, although it was written later than The Trespass of the Sign and earlier than The Dark Gaze, as Hart illustrates his definitions of terms such as “Orphic myth”, “visionary poet”, and “authentic poetry”. Hart argues that Hope is a visionary poet or an Orphic poet, with no sense that he is a neo-classical or romantic poet. He observes that, for Hope, “authentic poetry is visionary in that it precedes theology and science”\(^{39}\), for the reasons that “the adjective ‘visionary’ does not denote a special category of poetry but rather a habit of perception, one that avows the power of the poetic act to transform nature and the self”:\(^{40}\) “nature needs to be redeemed” and “the redeemer is Orpheus”\(^{41}\). Hart believes that Hope is a mythmaker, and that myth plays a key role in his work, by stressing that “myth satisfies deep human needs”, and “we need new myths to help us discern new truths”\(^{42}\). Here, he refers to the Orphic myth of art that has the power of “transforming being”\(^{43}\) or “nature into song”\(^{44}\) and “overcoming death”\(^{45}\). Therefore, “Desire, art and death” are “the main themes of Hope’s poetry.”\(^{46}\) Indeed, “visionary poetry is Orphic; it is a formal and informed celebration of the natural order”\(^{47}\). The terms can also be applied to Hart and his poetry, as mentioned in the last part of this dissertation.

Hart is a prolific writer, and there are quite a few other articles and books that are worth discussing. However, due to the limited space of this work I shall move on now to the literature review.

\(^{36}\) Ibid., p. 70.
\(^{37}\) Ibid., p. 57.
\(^{38}\) K. Hart, The Dark Gaze, pp. 59-60.
\(^{40}\) Ibid., p. 64.
\(^{41}\) Ibid., p. 72.
\(^{42}\) Ibid., p. 75.
\(^{43}\) Ibid.
\(^{44}\) Ibid., p. 21.
\(^{45}\) Ibid., p. 75.
\(^{46}\) Ibid., p. 21.
\(^{47}\) Ibid., p. 63.
Section III. Literature Review – 1978–2003

Although Hart’s work has been widely and generally well reviewed ever since the publication of his first book, there is still no major account of his achievements. As this literature review reveals, there have been a couple of articles and interviews, a few brief discussions of him and his poetry in reference books or literary histories, but no detailed study – not even a chapter in a monograph. Indeed, according to the Austlit database, there has been no published material of any kind dealing with Hart’s work since David McCooey’s review of *Flame Tree* in the first issue of *Meanjin* in 2003.

In this literature review, I divide the history of reviews on Hart’s poetry into three periods. The first period begins from the publication of his first book of poetry, *The Departure* (1978), to the time before his fourth book *Peniel* was published in 1991; the second period is from 1991 until the beginning of 1995; and the third period is the period between McCooey’s review “‘Secret Truth’: The Poetry of Kevin Hart”, published in 1995, and early 2003, when McCooey’s latest review, “Opaque Lucidity”, appeared.

The first period of the review history begins with Chris Wallace-Crabbe. As a pioneer of criticism of Hart’s poetry, he recognised the young poet’s talent, on the publication of his first book, predicting that Hart “might go further in the long run” 49. Christopher Pollnitz, too, was among the earliest critics, and he saw Hart’s talent, stating that the book made us ‘say a confident “yes” to Hart’s arrival on the Australian scene as a new poet.’ 50 Rae Desmond Jones, another early critic of Hart’s poems, saw him as “an intellectual”, and admired him for doing “what he sets out to do well” 51. It is worth emphasising that it was Jones who first said “yes” to Hart’s poems relating to “sex” – “the best poems” were “more or less concerned with sex” 52.

Following the early critics were those who attempted to find the sources of the influences on Hart and tried to place him in a certain literary movement or school. When Hart’s *The Lines of the Hand* came out, Thomas Shapcott stated that Hart was one of “the leading poets” in “The Canberra School”, and he saw the European influences on the poet from the “most European of modern verse forms” to his “religious” poems, for Hart’s “most interesting” poems were believed to have been learned “from modern European poets like Plinsky and Milosz” 53. Shapcott’s view was echoed in many other critics’ reviews, especially his comments on the “religious” poems and the “European influence” on Hart.

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48 Please note: The reviews of this survey are those found according to the list provided by the web page of Austlit. Neither all the reviews nor all the standpoints in each of the individual reviews are mentioned and enumerated, due to the limited space. I have tried to discuss the most important ones.

52 Ibid., pp. 60-61.
Partially echoing Shapcott’s view, Dennis Haskell held that Hart was “associated with the Canberra region”, and his books had “vivid” and “irrational images”, showing “the heritage of European influences”\(^{54}\). However, Haskell drew a conclusion too quickly, finding the book was “a great disappointment”, for “the objects and situations” in the poems “lack(ed) the solid authenticity”\(^{55}\) and “many of Hart’s poems” were “concentrated exclusively on that inner world”\(^{56}\). This fails to acknowledge that dual realities in many poems by Hart are grounded on the intersection of the outer world and the “inner world”. Haskell’s view that “many of Hart’s poems” were “concentrated exclusively on … inner world” found no echo from the other critics, as almost all the later critics agreed that Hart’s inner world was related to the physical world.

Gary Catalano, in contrast to Haskell’s view, saw some “recurring” images in Hart’s poems: “the wind, dust, sunlight, shadows, hands and clocks” which stood “as embodiments of the essential mystery of life”, and that the poet’s “concern for this ultimate landscape” did not “occur at the expense of an equal concern for the social and everyday worlds”\(^{57}\). In other words, the “mystery of life” was shown through the symbols of the physical world.

In agreement with Catalano’s view, Julian Croft’s appraisal identified several important features of the poems. In the first place, “Like Donne and Herbert many of the poems are about defining the nature of things”, and they “appeal to sensation and to the record of sensation as the principle of knowledge”. Secondly, “Like the sixteenth-century Metaphysicals, there is the jump from the physical to beyond” in Hart’s poetry which “concentrates on the physical letting the metaphysical take care of itself”\(^{58}\). Another notable point was that Hart’s poetic “vision” was “not Romantic (neo, sub, post etc.), but truly metaphysical”, with “two universes” – “as the dead are with the living, and the cross is their intersection”\(^{59}\).

Another feature of the early reviews of Hart’s poetry is that critics tended to compare Hart’s poems with the work of other poets, including Robert Gray. When Hart’s third book of poetry, Your Shadow, was published, comparing Gray’s The Skylight and Hart’s Your Shadow, Catalano assumed that most of Gray’s attitudes toward or “certitudes about” the world were inherited from “Buddhist and socialist ideas” and he was a “materialist”, while Hart was “something [of] a Christian mystic”. For Catalano, each of Gray's poems in The Skylight was employed to convey some kind of “message” – “a proper respect for the material world” – whereas Hart’s poetry was “a vehicle for his fundamental beliefs about the nature of the world”. Interestingly, Catalano thought that the fundamental difference between the two poets was not “a significant contrast”, for they were “attracted to their respective beliefs” and they held out “the possibility of self-transcendence”\(^{60}\).

\(^{55}\) Ibid.
\(^{56}\) Ibid., p. 358.
\(^{59}\) Ibid., p. 45.
A similar method was adopted by Max Richards when he reviewed the poems of Hart and Gray. For Gray, "There is Other Shore, / it is here’, and the many good poems did have fresh ways of showing us that Here’, whereas for Hart there were two sorts of religious poetry: one was ‘working from above (the poet has accepted a supernatural world and tries to “incarnate his beliefs in language”)’ and another ‘working from below (the poet begins by observing things, nature, and “discovers that nature points to something ‘other’ than its material self”)’. Richards also assumed that Hart was “not wholly a this-world poet but working with elements of traditional European Catholic poetry”61. Although Richards mentioned two sorts of religious poems in the book, it would have been much clearer if he had referred to them as positive theology and negative theology while acknowledging that the dual theological tradition was reflected in Hart’s poems in an inseparable way.

In comparing Hart’s poems with Gray’s, Geoff Page argued that there were some similarities between the two poets “in both inspiration and technique – most notably in their metaphysical approach to the physical, [and] their interest in the spiritual resonance of inanimate objects”. Page stated that Gray’s verse manifested “a distinctly local or Australian quality” while Hart’s was “much more Platonic” and Hart preferred to “see his objects as archetypes or emblems” and “surrealism”, which showed the poet’s “international” or “central European feeling”62. It is notable that Page stressed two points concerning Hart’s poetry: one is Hart’s familiarity with European poems, and the other his “sincere and sophisticated religious poem(s)”.

Page’s views, especially on the poet’s “international feeling” and “religious feeling”, were repeated and extended in his other review.63 The critic thought that Hart was influenced by European traditions but also by Chinese classics, but he believed that the influence came “more … from the central European than from the Chinese”64. On the other hand, Hart’s verse displayed “a considerable range of religious feeling”, and he had “an almost relaxed confidence, even a playfulness, as though neither he nor God” was “taking himself too seriously”65. Page was the first critic to mention that Hart’s poetry was related to “surrealism”, and to utilise the word “international” to describe Hart’s poetry. My argument is that Hart is influenced by surrealism, but this influence, when compared to the influence of other trends, is not significant. Most importantly Hart is not simply influenced by surrealism, but he transcends that influence in his work.

Georgina Bitcon, in her review, seemed to have summarised the views of the critics discussed above, for all the major views on Hart’s poetry were mentioned in her review: she stressed Hart’s “religious” feeling or experience, and asserted that “Hart’s religious experience” produced “a poetry that continually confronts metaphysical issues using a set of symbols drawn from the physical world”.66 “Some kind of universal truth” is enhanced by the use of the recurrent symbols, elemental, simple: stones, shadows, suns, wind, and water’, which suggested that

61 M. Richards, ‘Encounter with the Other’, Australian Book Review, no. 69, April 1985, p. 35.
64 Ibid., p. 71.
65 Ibid., p. 72.
Hart’s “concern is with the metaphysical”\textsuperscript{67}. She also highlighted the European influence: the “foreign” “images drawn from a world that is deliberately un-Australian, consciously European”\textsuperscript{68}.

The view that Hart’s poetry had a “religious” feeling and “European influence” was further discussed in other critics’ reviews. Frank Kellaway saw Hart as “a metaphysical Catholic poet of great power and resonance”, for he “has developed a range of subtly musical free-verse paragraphs which are always structured by the syntax dictated by rigorous thought. His images are vivid and concrete but they flow and change as the thought changes”\textsuperscript{69}. Kellaway argued that Hart’s quotation from St John – “If an object is opaque and dark, it makes a dark shadow; if it is transparent and delicate, its shadow is transparent and delicate” – was the theme of Your Shadow, giving the book “a satisfying unity”. Kevin Pearson, in an article, held that Hart was “primarily a religious poet”, but assumed that “Hart best transcends the traps of religious poetry when he invents a brilliant metaphor (as he does frequently) to catch his central concern – the fear of the future”\textsuperscript{70}.

Catalano’s earlier view that the “mystery of life” in Hart’s poetry was shown through the symbols of the physical world, and Croft’s standpoint that there was “a jump from the physical to beyond” or “the metaphysical”, were further echoed in other critics’ reviews. Philip Mead, in his review,\textsuperscript{71} claimed that “there are the double signs of sunlight and shadow” throughout the book, and one character of the signs was that “they are inexorably bound together”: “shadows are always the light’s, the sun’s, in apostrophe then, yours”. However, there are some differences between them; the most obvious one is that sunlight undergoes “many changes” while “the dark” or “shadow” remains “undiffused, sharply delineated, easy to point to”. To the “sunlight” and “shadow”, Mead added another group of signs: clocks, roads, the unborn, hammers, musicians, faces, crucifixes. Mead saw that these signs not only pointed to “each other, reinforcing each other in their field of meaning” but also pointed to “this world”. This was because for Hart “God’ was “in this world” and signs were not inhuman but what “we feel, alive, a living part of what they signify”. This dissertation has a similar stress on the dual reality of sunlight and shadow, but it is from the stance of cubism.

When reviewing Hart’s first three books of poetry, Catalano ranged his discussion from images and forms, through subject matter to poetic phenomena. At the beginning of his review, Catalano, like Mead, listed a group of “recurring images” in Hart’s three books, namely, “stones, hand, shadows, sunlight, water, wind, mirrors, horizons, moons and clocks”\textsuperscript{72}, but saw them “matched with a corresponding variety of (poetic) forms”, “from a sonnet sequence and a villanelle” to “a variety of looser stanzaic forms” which were “handled with an equal authority and ease”\textsuperscript{73}.

\textsuperscript{67} Ibid., p. 354.
\textsuperscript{68} Ibid., p. 355.
\textsuperscript{71} P. Mead, ‘Reading the Sign’, The Adelaide Review, April 1986, p. 25.
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid.
The doubleness or duality and “the fear of the future” mentioned by the critics were extended in Catalano’s “schemas” for Hart's poetry. “All experience”, including “the dramatic contrast between night and day”, “the distant and the proximate”, could be reduced to the “schemas”. Other elements that are of importance in Hart’s poetry were also mentioned in the review, such as the “reversal in the apparent size of things”, “the emotion of dread” and “metaphysical dread”.

Catalano thought that Hart’s second book made “a dramatic break with” the first book which was “concerned with” “the surfaces of life” and “certain unique experiences”, as the second one did not have much to do with “the literal world”. Despite this, the second volume did not seem to be “less substantial” than the first book, for “the spirit” manifested “itself in the material world”. This was one of the important features of Hart’s second book.

Another unique feature indicated by Catalano was that in this book Hart’s “images” had “now begun to interact or correspond with each other”. Images of “moon” and “clock”, for example, were linked by “similarities” in the poem ‘The Clock of Brisbane’. In another poem – ‘The Street’, the “moon” and “clock” were “deputies for one another”. I would argue that the transformations of the shapes of the objects reflect the methods of cubism, as is the case in Apollinaire’s and Jacob’s poems.

Catalano suggested that the third volume, Your Shadow, was the continuation of some features in the second volume, which provided “the impetus for many of the poems” in the third volume, in the form of the “numeration of the various aspects or transformations of the central image”. The later book also returned to “the poetic territory” which the poet “vacated” in the second volume. Hart’s poems once again dealt with the world of “common experience”, “sensations of weight” which were registered in the poems in which “we are repeatedly being reminded that we are living in an obdurately material and physical world” and “the weight of things is a truth about the world which demands to be acknowledged”. So the relation between the physical and the metaphysical in Hart’s poetry was “dialectical”.

From the reviews of Hart’s first three books of poetry, we see that the critics mainly concentrated on Hart’s “religious” and “international” feelings, “European influence”, “metaphysical dread”, or “fear for the future”, and the dual world: the transcendent relationship between the “physical” and the “metaphysical” in Hart’s poetry. The publication of Peniel in 1991 indicated the beginning of the second period of the history of reviews on Hart’s poetry, in which the critics expanded on the topics of Hart’s “religious” poems and the European influence. This period is highlighted by two hallmarks: one was that the eminent American literary critic Harold Bloom commented on the book, and the other was that Lyn McCredden asserted that Hart’s poetry represented one pole of contemporary Australian poetry.

The first hallmark in the second period was that the publication of Peniel won the favour of Bloom, who rarely comments on an Australian poet’s work. On the cover, he made the following comment: “Kevin Hart’s Peniel is the finest achievement to date of the most outstanding Australian poet of his generation, in fact one of the best poets writing in the world in English today.” Bloom presented the following reasons for his comment: the book had “its metaphysical complexities”; “profound revival of negative theology at its most astringent and compelling”;

74 Ibid., pp. 24-5.
and “subtle internalizations of so many of the richest strands in the Western poetic tradition”, indicating that the influences on Hart came not merely from the European tradition but also from other traditions of the Western world. Bloom found, in “Hart’s ongoing achievement”, “the major continuity in Australian poetry from A.D. Hope to Les Murray”\(^{75}\). The second hallmark was that to the idea – European or international traditions having influences on Hart’s poetry – another proposition was added: Hart’s poetry represented one pole of contemporary Australian poetry. To support her proposition, McCredden demonstrated in her review\(^{76}\) some characteristic features of *Peniel* through a comparison with Lee Cataldi’s work. She assumed Hart’s poems were “male”, “academic”, and “spiritual”, as they are “subtly and sensuously edged with allegory”, and contain “cool, measured tercets, literary and philosophical allusiveness”, and “learned solitariness”. Hence, Hart’s work represented “one pole” “in contemporary Australian poetry” while the other was represented by Lee Cataldi whose poems were “female”, “political” and “general”.

The two hallmarks in the second period indicated that Hart’s poetry became much more recognised not only by Australian critics but also by critics overseas. In the meantime we notice that Bloom’s view of Hart’s poetry was either reiterated and supported, or disagreed with and opposed, by some other critics, while McCredden’s view was supported unanimously.

Geoff Page was in agreement with McCredden’s view in his other review,\(^ {77}\) and this is evident in the title of the review ‘Poetic Voice Speaking To Us As No Other Quite Can’, suggesting that no other Australian poets did as Hart did. Firstly, Page emphasised that “Hart is one of the most talented and sophisticated Australian poets still under forty” and “one of our most successful religious poets”. He then examined the poetic style and form of the book: “the pentameter is adhered to throughout, albeit with considerable variety”, and “Hart seems to be preoccupied with the number three”, which had “some mystical significance” and religious sense. He also maintained that the “religious sense” existed in both “powerful poems” and “less serious poems”, ‘Facing the Pacific at Night’ was identified as religious, as it was “a good example of the negative theology”. We note that Page was not only the first critic to mention “surrealism” in Hart’s poetry but also among the first critics to touch upon the topic of the influence of negative theology on him in his creations.

The claim that Hart’s poetry represents one pole of contemporary Australian poetry is also found in John Foulcher’s review,\(^ {78}\) but he did not completely agree with Bloom’s assertion that Hart was “one of the best poets writing in the world in English today” as the critic pointed out two sides of the poems. The critic believed that the fourth volume, *Peniel*, was “disappointing”, for although “it often displays a richness and depth that is lacking in much recent Australian poetry”, *Peniel*, while it “engages the intellect”, also “reduces the world to an interplay of ideas”. There were still other reasons contributing to the “disappointment”, such as “the emotional thrust”; “little” “change” of “the tone”; the necessity of being “largely cerebral” to understand the poems; the “clumsiness with feeling”; a restricting poetic form; and more. All these features made the critic assume that “there is nothing that can identify Hart as an Australian writer”, and the critic

\(^{75}\) See the blurb on the back cover of the book *Peniel*, Hawthorn, Vic.: Golvan Arts, 1991.


\(^{77}\) G. Page, ‘Poetic Voice Speaking to Us as No Other Quite Can’, *The Canberra Times*, 10 August 1991, (C8).

was not “convinced by [Hart] naming the unnamable”\textsuperscript{79}. Foulcher, however, did not simply dwell on his “disappointment” in Hart’s poems, for he also acknowledged that “some poems find the form a perfect fit: there is a handful of poems in Peniel … maybe justify the extravagance of Harold Bloom’s back-cover comments”. But the critic still pointed out: “Whatever shortcomings Peniel may have, these poems clearly indicate Hart’s uniqueness and ability.”\textsuperscript{80}

If we say Foulcher’s review of Hart’s Peniel was a mixture of both praise and criticism, then Andrew Taylor’s review\textsuperscript{81} of Hart’s book adopted the same mode – the book was as much praised as criticised. In reviewing the book, Taylor repeated Harold Bloom’s “weighty pronouncement” that “the champion of the ‘strong poet’ has now discerned ‘the major continuity in Australian poetry from A. D. Hope through Les Murray to the ongoing achievement of Kevin Hart’”. Although Taylor suggested that it was not appropriate for a “sensible person looking at Australian poetry to attempt to establish a ‘major continuity’ of only three Australian poets, all male”, he nevertheless agreed that Peniel represented one pole of contemporary Australian poetry: Hart had “a distinctive voice which has continued to develop in achievement and originality”; “Peniel shows a confidence in thought which goes beyond them (referring to Hart’s first three books of poetry [my note]) and which is unusual in Australian poetry”; \textsuperscript{82} and it “explores and exemplifies how thought can also sometimes be poetry”\textsuperscript{83}. Taylor also maintained that the book was “no less physical than most recent Australian poetry: it renders city, landscapes and weather as tangibly as one would want.”\textsuperscript{84}

McCredden’s and Foulcher’s claim that Hart’s poetry was “academic” and “cerebral” was echoed in Christopher Pearson’s review,\textsuperscript{85} as he maintained that Hart’s poems belonged to “academic poetry” which was “entirely cerebral” for the reason that “Hart is intelligent and well read” and his poems were “haunted by the ghost of Derrida”. The critic quoted from Les Murray who had said about Hart’s poems and his (Murray’s) own: “Les Murray would call” Hart’s poems “forebrain thinking” whereas Murray’s work represented “wholebrain thinking”. The critic went further by stating that “I came away with no idea what … the poet believes”, as the poems were “a curious mixture of the lucid”, “the murky”, and “the odd puzzle”. Clearly the critic did not agree with Bloom’s view that Hart is one of the best poets writing in the English-speaking world today.

Two other critics did not agree with Bloom’s view, either. Croggon thought Hart’s poems “frustrating” for the reason that Hart was a poet who “not only notates the spaces of loss and absence in his language, but who – crucially – repudiates the illusion and finds instead a unity which allows all contradiction, all fragmentation”\textsuperscript{86}. Philip Salom, in his review,\textsuperscript{87} opposed Harold Bloom’s “absurd puff-opinion of him (who does?) as one of the greatest poets in English”. In response to Croggon and Salom, I maintain that Hart’s poems are not “impelled by

\textsuperscript{79} Ibid, p. 66.
\textsuperscript{80} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{82} Ibid., p. 106.
\textsuperscript{83} Ibid., p. 107.
\textsuperscript{84} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{87} P. Salom, [Untitled], \textit{Australian Book Review}, no. 168, February—March 1995, pp. 51-52.
loss”, but are driven, instead, by a longing for the “Unity of Being” through the romantic internalised quest, and desiring the presence of “the other” as promoted by French post-phenomenological thinkers.

Not everyone disagreed with Bloom’s view, as seen from reviews by Thomas Shapcott and Penelope Nelson, Martin Duwell, and others. Shapcott called *Peniel* “a collection of fine meditations”, in which “everything” appeared “posed and pointed”, and “the theme of owning and being owned pervades this book and gives it a richness, rare in Australian poetry, that invites one to read and re-read”\(^{88}\). Nelson’s review\(^ {89} \) particularly maintained that “Hart’s numerology reflects the ‘revival of negative theology’” that was “astringent and compelling”, and his poems were “darker”, “dealing with death, war”, and attempting to “make sense of existence”.

Duwell also came forward to defend Hart’s poetry: those who criticised his poems “would be wrong”, for “the poems that remain in the memory and move us have a lightness of touch and a mysterious rightness” instead of being “downdish, prematurely middle-aged and humourless” or merely “a poetry of solemn philosophical speculation as of a kind of spiritual tactility”. Hart was believed to “convey the sense of being touched by an angel”, which “may be the angel of the things of this world”. In contrast to Shapcott’s view that *Peniel* is “a collection” of “meditations”, Duwell pointed out that ‘Hart’s best poetry seems to … derive … from longing. Few write better about the “world of things with nothing at all to say”\(^ {90} \)’ “Magnificent” examples were ‘Gypsophila’ and ‘Gacela’, which were ‘a continuous expression of desire for such things as “the mango’s wealth of juice” and “sunlight in your hair”’. From Duwell’s commentary, we see that Hart indeed represents one pole of contemporary Australian poetry. Following the vein of Duwell’s review, I will argue that the poet expresses a kind of desire or longing for “the other” and the divine “exteriority” or Kingdom which is in this world rather than in the other.

Part of Duwell’s view is echoed in Robert Cox’s review\(^ {91} \) in which he saw the publication of the fifth collection as placing Hart “among Australia’s most important poets”. The critic asserted that Hart’s “reading of, and influence by, modern European poets sets him apart from his peers, especially in tone and rhythm”. In spite of “the controversial change of direction in *Peniel*”, Cox believed that Hart’s “reputation” not only “remains unsullied” but also “will be further enhanced by the book”. Cox stated that Hart’s sixth volume of poetry indeed showed he was “one of the best poets writing in English today”.

Doris Leadbetter’s view of Hart’s poems was as positive as the other four critics. When she commented on Hart’s book, Leadbetter stated that Hart’s “new book nicely balances the old with the new”. She further explained her view by saying that “it is astonishing to realize that the earliest poems in the book were written when Hart was twenty-one” and his later poems were “mature”, and had “a measure of spirituality that gives them layers of meaning. The poems are accessible but complex.” So, the signs’ and meanings’ doubleness and duality mentioned by the earlier critics were echoed here again.

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From the second period of the history of the reviews, we see that while some critics were either for or against Bloom’s view that Hart was one of the best poets writing in the English-speaking world today, all the critics supported McCredden’s view that Hart’s work represented one pole of contemporary Australian poetry. In the third period the idea that Hart’s work represents one pole of contemporary Australian poetry was further discussed through a wide range of topics. But, as we will see, what is particularly interesting is that the idea that two major French theorists – Maurice Blanchot and Jacques Derrida – had influenced Hart was first discussed with some specific examples during this period.

As a major critic of Hart’s works, David McCooey, in a critical essay, identified some features of the poems. Since the essay is a long one, I mention only a few points that concern this work most. In the first place, besides the dialectical relation between the physical and metaphysical, McCooey said that Hart’s interest in negative theology could be seen in the book. Secondly, he pointed out that the poet continued to draw upon his autobiographical materials, but “with a new directness and deepened confidence” and “a kind of idiomatic lightness” that has already appeared in the book *Peniel*. Thirdly, Hart’s poetry was believed to have “a medieval intensity about … memento mori”, which is the mediaeval imagination or an intense awareness of death, and the critic believed that the topic of memento mori is combined with humour in some of his poems. McCooey also saw the influence of Derrida’s writing on Hart in the following ways. Firstly, in furthering “Hart’s program to use metaphor to realign perspective” – “the way to see anew is to read anew”, through which “things can be read” in the “plural manner”, particularly “beyond their immediate contexts”. Secondly, in inspiring Hart’s interest in “the function of signature” or “names, their duality” and in “carnal and spiritual readings” or “the connection between names and sacred” or “between flesh and spirit” or “secular and sacred”. And thirdly, in “the unnamable” and negative theology, which could be seen from Hart’s continuing to ‘write religious poetry without invoking the name of God, since he believes any name he ascribes to God will not be His “proper” name.” Following McCooey’s view, I would argue that negative theology or mystic theology is part of traditional theology, it functions within positive theology, and both affirm God’s existence as the highest being, the causality, and His preeminence over all other beings. This dual tradition of theology is even embodied in some mediaeval poems, and Hart inherits the tradition. As for Derrida’s influence, I will argue that Hart’s poetry contains the post-phenomenological school’s influence and the idea of “religion without religion”.

Martin Harrison’s discussion concentrated on the nature of “names” or naming in Hart’s fifth book, as several issues were related to name or naming: the paradox of naming; the psychological construction of poetry which was related to naming; and the issue of “invisible presence” or “the religious imagination”, including the nature of reading “death poems”. For the first issue, Harrison believed most of the poems in the book were written in the way of the line “The nameless one, the surname of all things”, in which there was a “paradox”: this “nameless one” had in fact already been given many different names in the poem. The name or naming in the poem was “not just the holiness of the Word, but the secularness of all humdrum and poetic

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93 Ibid., p. 117.
words”. Following Harrison’s view, I will use the theory of negative theology to argue that the “nameless one” is the original name from which all other names are derived.

Harrison saw Hart as a poet of “psyche”, for his naming was involved with “psychological construction” and the poet’s “imaginal zone”. Hart was believed to situate his poems in a sort of “border-zone where names lose their singularity, and where transient energy states and shifts in perception occur”, and the poet’s “imaginal zone” “is always more fluid, more tricky than ordinary poets”, for Hart’s imaginal state was one which was “constantly at the edge of language or utterance”. It occurred “only in the here-and-now as this instant, this sense, this experience”. “It opens up the manifold of connections and emotional histories which lie in and around that moment.” I will argue that it is “messianic time” or Blanchot’s “primal Scene” that functions to pry open “ordinary time” to let “the other” come.

Harrison also argued that poems like ‘The Horizon’ and ‘Facing the Pacific at Night’ were “about boundaries, about knowledge on the other side of perception”. I will maintain that there are relationships between “death” and “dying”, about the coming of “the other” or the Messiah. They express the poet’s desire for the other’s coming through structure of “the step not beyond”, which is Blanchot’s and Derrida’s proposition on “death” and “dying”, “the possible” and “the impossible”. Harrison was right when he stated that “it seems more correct to say that Hart is not so much a religious poet as a poet of the religious imagination”.

I will explore Hart’s “religious imagination” from the perspectives of Bataille’s “transgression”, Levinas’s “transcendence”, and Blanchot’s or Derrida’s “religion without religion”.

McCooey, in another review, further explained the duality and doubleness in Hart’s poems through an exposition of the relationship between the sacred and poetry. According to the critic, “for Hart, the sacred and the poetic are profoundly connected ways of seeing and making the world”, and “deep silences and mysteries inhabit” Hart’s poetry. In this regard, the critic cited some examples. In the first place, the “shadow” in “Your Shadow” represented “death” or maybe another world. On this point, I would say that the “shadow” is one dimension of dual reality and does not merely indicate “death” but other things as well. As for the second example, I am in agreement with the critic’s statement that a mixed message was conveyed in ‘Her Name’ in which there were “sex and chastity”, “the secular and the sacred love”. In the second place, McCooey thought that the poem “‘The Pleasure of Falling out of Trees’ made this clear and gave us further understanding of the way defining light and poetry can coincide.” The critic’s view might be correct, but I want to say that the “two seconds” in which the child gains “the pleasure” have the features of the “messianic time” promising “the other” to come. In addition, I shall make it clear how the dual realities in Hart’s poetry intersect with each other in various literary movements.

McCreden’s view that Hart’s poems represented one pole of Australian contemporary poetry found another echo in Brian Henry’s review – the publication of the book [Wicked Heat (my note)] made Hart “one the most powerful yet atypical Australian poets now writing”.

My focus is on Hart’s similarities to some

95 Ibid., p. 80.
96 D. McCooey, ‘Shadows Cast by the Light of the World’, The Age, 5 August 1995, Saturday Extra, p. 8
French poets and the lyricists other than Americans. Henry assumed that “Hart is not a religious poet”98, for “his poems are spiritual and mystical, fulfilling Emerson’s charge” that “the poet must be a rhapsodist”. I would argue that Hart is not only a religious poet but also that he uses religious structure to express his desire for the advent of the other and the divine.

In another review, David McCooey also regarded Hart as an “atypical Australian poet”99 but he identified a different reason for his atypicality. McCooey pointed out that his poems showed “a strong erotic impulse”, and “the erotic love poems of ‘Nineteen Songs’ are among his weakest”. My view is different, as the dissertation argues that there are quite a few erotic poems in Hart’s collection, and that Hart is close to Levinas in his long erotic poem ‘Nineteen Songs’. It is through erotic love that one can reach the “exteriority” where the highest being may exist, and this is what Levinas insists in his major work *Totality and Infinity*, the English edition of which was published in 1991.

The brief entry on Hart in *The Oxford Companion to Australian Literature* has the statement: Hart’s “preoccupation” in his poetry is “ageing and death”100. Geoff Page, in his review,101 echoed it by observing that one of the “tensions” in Hart’s poems “is between the poet’s religious faith and his fear of death”. I would say that Hart’s poems deal with several kinds of “death”, and the poet is not afraid of physical death, rather he regards it as a “human” or natural thing.

Pamela Brown, in reviewing Hart’s *Wicked Heat*, claimed that the poems seemed to have been written “by a very serious old man”, and that sometimes it was “hard to grasp the point of this transparent yet obtuse set”. For this, the critic quoted Hart’s catchcry “Good poems lead us from certainty to uncertainty”, and it is said that the book “succeeds in” Hart’s “terms”102. In this dissertation, I will argue in agreement with Brown by showing that “good” poems represent exiles or “Fall” from the original one or the Word, as testified to in Kabbalah, negative theology, and deconstruction.

In reviewing *Wicked Heat*, Christian Sheppard put forward a fresh view that Hart was “as much a cosmopolitan as an Australian” and the book “proves his poetic sensibility is similarly oriented toward the global and the local”103. The critic saw this from the poet’s use of various Australian plants, and from his “Australian childhood, and old-fashioned, flesh-hungry love” in his poems. But other critics continued to emphasise the view that Hart’s verse had an “international feeling”, or is “cosmopolitan”, or represented one pole of contemporary Australian poetry, thus regarding Hart as an “atypical Australian poet”. Martin Langford argued that Hart’s poems were “in tune with the mood of the French”: “Poem after poem is an attempt to create or recreate some experience of the other, apprehending both the physical and the spiritual in a convergent, almost indistinguishable way”; the poet “has jettisoned much of the descriptive detail of English, its copiousness of diction, for the sake of being able to isolate this awareness”; and Hart “wishes to initiate, in the mind of the reader, an experience of the unnamable parallel to that which he

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98 Ibid.
99 D. McCooey, ‘Poetry as First and Last Resort’, *Eureka Street*, vol. 10, no. 9, November 2000, pp. 36-38.
constructs – or elicits – as he writes”\textsuperscript{104}. The critic saw these concerns coincide with “what the French seem to be doing: as the contexts become provisional, as the focus is on the ‘I’ not as an entity but as a site of experience, the paradoxical effect is that presence is foregrounded.”\textsuperscript{105} Although Langford puts forward Hart’s closeness to a French “mood” he did not provide much detail to support his argument.

Jacques Khalip took a similar view that Hart’s poetry revealed a French influence. But the critic observed that “the poems in 
\textit{Wicked Heat} find spiritual and erotic possibility in contemporary and past frustrations”\textsuperscript{106}. I would not agree with the critic on this point, because although the poet has “contemporary and past frustrations” they are not the main focus in his poetry when compared with the poet’s faith and academic interest. In other words, the poet’s interest in Levinas, Blanchot, Derrida, and others plays a far more important role in his creations than his personal “frustrations”, let alone the importance of Hart’s Catholic faith.

The critic claimed that ‘Nineteen Songs’ explored the “frank eroticism of the lyric” and were “driven by a pleading romanticism”\textsuperscript{107}. I will explore the influences on Hart’s poetry from Levinas to show that “love” cannot be described as “constant negotiations performed in order to render (‘the trust implicit in relationships’) tangible” and what remains in these songs is not simply “an endless promise, a long willingness anticipating a kind of climactic love that is more abundant and superseding than the initial desire that prompted the poetry in the first place”\textsuperscript{108} but a promise of coming of “the other” of the “I”\textsuperscript{109}.

Paul Kane, an eminent American critic, argued that Hart was a “philosopher-poet”, and that the poet’s way of expressing philosophical ideas was transformed into “a mode of reflection” or “reflections on experience” which showed his “position at the crossroads where philosophy, literature, and theology intersect”. This could be seen, according to Kane, from many aspects of 
\textit{Wicked Heat}, such as the poet’s “uncanny ability to invite silence into his poetry”; “witty and knowing; passionate and erotic; poignant and elegiac” experience, and “religious experience”. So, poetry for Hart “turns out to be a matter of … experience” – “the possible and the impossible are encountered”\textsuperscript{110}. Hence, Blanchot’s and Derrida’s influences on the poet were highlighted by the critic.

Jacques Khalip, in his review\textsuperscript{111} of Hart’s Flame Tree, extended the views elaborated in the above review. In the first place, he repeated the point that Blanchot influenced Hart’s poetry, as the critic emphasised that “Hart is as much a deeply aesthetic poet as he is a religious one”, and “the dynamic Hart approaches can be said to inhabit the space mapped out between poem and reader, a space of unknowable quandary and startling unease”, a space which was described by Blanchot as “distinctly anonymous and solitary”. For Hart, “profoundly influenced by Blanchot,

\textsuperscript{104} M. Langford, [Untitled], \textit{Heat}, no. 14, 2000, p. 221.
\textsuperscript{105} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{107} Ibid., p. 59.
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid., p. 60.
\textsuperscript{109} See Section 2 of Part V in this dissertation.
describes the space as the site of an intense, lyrical abandon, phenomenologically perplexing yet spiritually chastening and animating”. It is admirable that Khalip identified the phenomenon of “lyrical abandon” with “a negative theology” which sought to “challenge the self’s own investments: love, faith, sex and memory equally open and disturb one’s resolutions”. The critic argued that Hart described love, faith, sex, and memory as “endlessly provoking cherished beliefs that ultimately unsettle the self through a strange newness”. I see these influences on the poet as coming from not merely Blanchot but also from other French theorists, and, more importantly, from his Catholic faith, which has had a great impact on his understanding of love and sex.

Khalip believed that Hart’s shadows in his book Your Shadow could be illustrated through “Jungian” psychology, and that the poet’s “Jungian intimations give way to a finer and darker expression of the self’s encounter with its most searching mysteries”. This may be so, but I would rather explore the similarities between Hart’s “shadow” poems and cubist poems, and demonstrate the influences from Apollinaire and Jacob. I admire Khalip’s criticism of Hart’s poetry, but it appears too narrow to say that Hart’s poetry is indebted only to the influences of Blanchot and a few others. I will excavate a deeper reason – the poet’s Catholic faith – to show that the negative capacity in Hart’s poem has a rich and complex genealogy.

McCooey’s latest review112 addressed Hart’s Flame Tree and Adamson’s Mulberry Leaves. In spite of some differences between the two poets, McCooey identified their similarities. Three points are worth mentioning here. One is that both poets manifested “an intense sensitivity to the Orphic power of poetry”, and consequently the two poets’ poetry “is written out of death”. The second is that both showed originality as a form of revision, which suggested that “much of Hart’s inventiveness is a writing back to precursors”. I would follow this to maintain that Hart is not only an Orphic poet but is also heavily influenced by Bloom’s theory of “a strong poet”. Finally, the critic believed that some poems in Flame Tree were a continuation of Wicked Heat, which seemed more autobiographical. I would maintain that they are not only autobiographical but also that the poems show the influence of the romantic poet Wordsworth.

Taking a historical or chronological view, we see that although the critics and reviewers gave Hart’s poetry either positive or negative critiques, one thing is certain from these reviews: Hart is an atypical Australian poet, and Hart’s poetry represents one pole of Australian contemporary poetry, as his poetry has international and religious feelings. In this dissertation, I will stand on the shoulders of the earlier critics, especially on those of Bloom, Catalano, Croft, Duwell, Harrison, Kane, McCooey, McCredden, Page, and Shapcott, to continue the topics raised by them, but will deal with Hart’s poetic space as something deeper, more specific, and more comprehensive. In particular, I will focus on issues relating to Hart’s religious faith and theological thinking, and the religious impact on his poetical creations, to show how the dual realities operate in the space of Hart’s poetry.

Section IV. Methodology

The theory of intertextuality is vital to this dissertation; it is the major theoretical basis, underpinning the methodology. Intertextuality involves the poet, his texts, the reader, and the writer of this dissertation. Hence, a discussion of the theory is essential to make clear the ways and methods of presenting the ideas of this work. The theory is at once old and new. It is old because it can be traced back to Plato, Aristotle, and Horace. It is new because we can see its role explained by such contemporary thinkers as Bloom, Derrida, and Julia Kristeva.

The theory of intertextuality, perhaps, began with Plato, whose idea of “imitation” in *The Republic* is explained by an analogy of an artist painting a bed in an imitation of the one created by the carpenter through imitating the Form of bed – “one existing in nature, which is made by God”\(^{113}\). Aristotle’s theory of imitation is expressed in his *Poetics*, and ‘On the Art of Poetry’ in which he talks about three respects of *mimesis* – “the media, the objects and the mode of *mimesis*”\(^{114}\), and how “the narrative *mimesis* has itself a sort of abundance in comparison with the others”\(^{115}\). Aristotle believes that one of the causes of “the origins and development of poetry” is “imitation”, as “the instinct for imitation is inherent” “in human nature”\(^{116}\). Horace regards “the process of imitation” as one of “the rule(s) of (poetic) craft”\(^{117}\). Longinus, in ‘On Sublimity’, observes that one “road to sublimity” is “imitation and emulation of great writers of the past”\(^{118}\). I do not intend to supply a comprehensive survey of the earlier Western theories of imitation or *mimesis*, but rather from the above examples to demonstrate that the theory of intertextuality goes back to the beginnings of textual theory.

Contemporary thinkers such as Bloom, Derrida, and Kristeva began to present their ideas on the subject in the 1960s. These thinkers tell us that great writing does not start from scratch but always involves two kinds of realities – the internal reality and the external reality. The internal reality is related to the latecomer or “the young citizen of poetry, or ephebe”\(^{119}\), while the external reality is concerned with “the precursor”. If “the latecomer” is “a strong poet”, he will be facing an “anxiety”, “be empowered”, and be victorious “in wrestling with the mighty dead”\(^{120}\), and this “wrestling” is in the form of misinterpretation and misprision. The external is a parent poem of “the mighty dead” or “the greatest of the dead” that can be regarded as the original or even God. Indeed, a later-coming strong poet’s poetry represents the “anxiety of influence”, “misunderstanding, misinterpretation, misalliance”\(^{121}\) of the parent poem(s). Poems are so related to each other that Bloom likens the relationship to “Family Romance” and “the

\(^{115}\) Ibid., p. 83.
\(^{118}\) Ibid., p. 158.
\(^{120}\) Ibid., p. 116.
enchantment of incest”. Therefore, any strong poem of a latecomer will be a variety or “Exile” of the original poem of “the mighty dead” or God.

Bloom believes “Kabbalistic theories of emanation” or “Exile” to be “theories of language”. He quotes Scholem’s claim that “the God who manifests Himself is the God who expresses Himself”. The “attributes of God that need to be described by the various names of God when he is at work in creation” provide the Kabbalah’s central structural notion – the Sefirot is like poems in which there are “the complex figurations” that indicate God and the “tropes or turns of language that substitute for God.” According to Kabbalah, God is at once “total presence and total absence”, and they “co-exist by continuous interplay.” This “interplay” is shown through the ephebe’s misreading of a parent poem and (the ephebe’s) revisionary writing through imitation of the precursor’s. Here, “the unknown God is every precursor and the demiurge of misprision is every ephebe. Yet every new poet tries to see his precursor as the demiurge, and seeks to look beyond him to the unknown God, while knowing secretly that to be a strong poet is to be a demiurge.”

Hart has made a corresponding statement on the doctrine of exile or emanation:

> There’s a sense in which poetry answers to the absence of the Word, the unique master word that underwrites all other words. Not even the word ‘God’ can do that, for as soon as you pronounce the divine name it divides like split mercury. As soon as it enters the world, the Word is lost. Writing poems is a search for that Word … any recovery is partial: you come up with words, not the Word. That is why a poet ends up writing more than one poem.

Understanding in this way, we can say that a poem is a misreading or misinterpretation of a previous poem or a parent poem that is hidden and implied in a later poem. It is noted that a strong poet does not simply imitate a parent poem, but transcends the poem that is imitated. In Bloom’s words, “poets can be strong, not because they overcome the burdens of mimesis, but because they transcend mimesis. They confront, not the universe, but the precursors, and even if they cannot overcome the precursors, they can wrestle them to a truce.” Hart is in accordance with such thinking: experience of poetry is a transcendental experience.

Derrida’s texts on deconstruction are typical of the phenomenon of intertextuality, for we see from his works that deconstruction has some traces related to Nietzsche’s thinking, Heidegger’s “destruction”, Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis, Kabbalistic theories, positive and negative theologies, and other areas of the Western philosophical tradition. Derrida states that “A text is ‘a

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122 Ibid.
124 Ibid.
125 Ibid.
126 Ibid., p. 53.
127 Ibid., p. 64.
130 K. Hart, ‘The Experience of Poetry’. [The material was provided by Kevin Hart.]
differential network, a fabric of traces referring endlessly to something other than itself, to other differential traces.”

Hart is in agreement with Derrida’s standpoint when he states: “It is true that any piece of writing will have traces of other texts, whether we are talking of stylistics, semantics or syntactics.” He stresses the point that “We cannot rightly talk of a ‘trace of a presence’ but only a ‘trace of a trace’. All texts, accordingly, are composed of traces of moments of presence which can never be said to have presented themselves.”

John D. Caputo has a vivid description of the fleeting traces as gifts: “Gifts, like falling stars, flicker for an instant against this greater night. And then you die.”

Julia Kristeva’s “intertextuality” also maintains that a text cannot remain as something hermetic and self-sufficient with the function of a closed or saturated system: “Any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another. The notion of intertextuality replaces that of intersubjectivity, and poetic language is read as at least double.”

The statement on intertextual relations can also be understood from two sides. From the writer’s side, we see that “the writer is a reader of texts (in the broadest sense) before s/he is a creator of texts, and therefore the work of art is inevitably shot through with references, quotations and influences of every kind.” Then, from the reader’s side, it is known that “a text is available only through some process of reading; what is produced at the moment of reading is due to the cross-fertilisation of the packaged textual material … by all the texts which the reader brings to it.”

Here, two things need to be emphasised. Because of cultural differences and limitations in background knowledge, a reader may not fully or properly understand something delicate and sophisticated in a text. In the meantime, “the reader’s experience of some practice or theory unknown to the author may lead to fresh interpretation.” As a non-native English speaker with a Chinese background, I may interpret Hart’s poems from a Chinese point of view or in a Chinese way, with the result that my interpretation may be different from a Western reader’s.

Hart agrees with Bloom, Derrida, and Kristeva on intertextuality. In A. D. Hope, he observes: “no text comes without a history, and even without brooding upon the past there are conventions, codes and rules to observe in the present. When we say that a poem is ‘rich’ or ‘strong’, one of the points being urged is that it confesses or solicits many contexts.”

In an interview, Hart makes the following comment on the important function of “mimesis” in the creation of an “original work”:

… the writing of poems is always caught up in the paradox of mimesis. Original poems come by imitating other poems – or what you take to be the other poem – up to a point and no further. … much-loved poems leave traces of ambivalent emotion

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133 Ibid.
134 Caputo, The Prayers and Tears, p. 186.
137 Ibid., pp.1-2.
138 Ibid., p. 2.
in the memory, traces that mix with other similar traces, and these supply starting points for original work.¹⁴⁰

Hart demonstrated his agreement with these thinkers; when he was asked if he agreed with Emile Cioran’s statement that “literature lives on a ‘cancer of the word’”¹⁴¹, he answered:

I see things quite differently. People are creative because we are made in the image of God. We are not all disposed to write poems or paint portraits, but we are all able to live creatively with one another. …To be in the image of God is to be in the image of the Trinitarian life: our being is always being-with. … Unlike God, we cannot create immediately: we need the mediations of the past, of examples and exemplars.¹⁴²

From this, we can see that Hart is not against Lucretius’ statement quoted by Bloom: “When the atoms are travelling straight down through empty space by their own weight, at quite indeterminate times and places they swerve ever so little from their course, just so much that you can call it a change of direction.”¹⁴³ It is due to this “slight swerve of the atoms at no determinate time or place”¹⁴⁴ that the misreading, transformation, and transcendence of a parent poem in the form of “wrestling” produce the contemporary original or strong poems like Hart’s poems, from which the “Exile” or traces of original poem(s) are found. In other words, Hart, as ‘a strong poet’, is influenced by original poem(s) or original thinking in two ways: vertical and horizontal.

Hart’s poetry is historically influenced by a very wide range of philosophies from classicism, through romanticism, modernism, to postmodernism. He is also horizontally influenced by contemporary thinkers as such Bataille, Bloom, Blanchot, Derrida, and Levinas. So this dissertation is engaged in demonstrating the dual realities of various trends in the space of Hart’s poetry, and in exploring the influences from parent-poets and similarities between his poems and other poets’ poems, painting or drawings, and other European thinking which is either traditional or contemporary. Therefore, this work adopts, as its primary method, comparison and contrast.

As critic, Hart has written many articles and a number of books. Thence, another method, if it can be called a method, utilised in this work draws upon the poet’s own theory or the theories in his articles and books to demonstrate how he is influenced by thinkers like Augustine, Bataille, Bernard, Blanchot, Bloom, Breton, Derrida, Eckhart, St John, Levinas, Pseudo-Dionysius, and others. The theories demonstrated in this work are not merely limited to those in Hart’s articles and books but also involve other thinkers’ theories found from other sources.

¹⁴² Ibid., p. 8.
¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 44.
Part II
From Classicism to Romanticism
Section 1. Classicism in Hart’s Poems

I. Introduction

There are traces of classicism and neoclassicism in Hart’s poems. As great trends in English and the world’s literary histories, classicism and neoclassicism still have their glamour and relevance, persisting in poetry, drama and novel, and their impacts on these literary genres are tremendous. Classical elements still haunt his poetry, emerging here and there in disguised and undisguised forms or ways. Hart, as a “strong poet” or original poet, inherits Western or European literary traditions and fills the space of his poetry with classical elements. This section aims to open a window onto that space in order to glimpse the classical elements in it and to demonstrate that some of his poems have an affiliation and sympathy with certain classical and neoclassical works, and that Hart’s poetry is enriched by this, its texture made more various and powerful.

First of all, let’s see how the term “classicism” or “neoclassicism” is defined and expounded. Broadly speaking,

… one could call nearly all Western European literature classical, for classical means first and foremost ordered and controlled, and all literature is an attempt at putting experience, large and small, in some sort of order, at rationalizing feelings, at systematizing random thought, at embellishing nature.\(^\text{145}\)

Specifically speaking, classicism indicates “a way of writing or painting marked by serene beauty, taste, restraint, order and clarity.”\(^\text{146}\) The term “neoclassicism” “is used to distinguish modern from Greek and Latin classicism,”\(^\text{147}\) a style revived in the literary movement from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, during which neoclassicists as Denham, Pope, Dryden, Johnson and others were pre-eminent.

When the term “nature” is explicated, both classics and neoclassics have a great deal to say in common about “nature” and “truth.” “Nature,” for neoclassicism, does not indicate objective or physical nature, but refers to reason, truth, morality, ideal, decorum, and beauty, which are, more or less, the effects of the transcendence of physical nature. In classical terms, the emphasis on intellectual “Nature” partially results from a “mimesis” of physical nature. Plato, according to Gerald F. Else, believes that “Truth is one, and Poetry must appear before that inflexible judge on the same terms as any other human activity”\(^\text{148}\); Aristotle “wants him (the poet) to reach for some universal truth”\(^\text{149}\) through poetry, which is “more philosophic and serious than history because it reveals general truths.”\(^\text{150}\) As cited by Rensselaer W. Lee, “poetry is like painting in its


\(^{146}\) Ibid.

\(^{147}\) Ibid.


power to idealize nature,” “the poet is not like the realistic painter who paints things as they are, but like the painter who contemplating the most fair and universal idea of his creator fashions them as they ought to be,” and the best poets seem “not to have learned from nature, but to have vied with her, or rather to have created laws for her to obey.” It is intellectual reality, rather than physical reality, that concerns the classicists most.

The classical philosophy of “nature” was inherited and developed by later neoclassicists. Samuel Johnson says that an artist’s task is to be “the interpreter of Nature and the legislator of mankind”. Pope defines “nature” as “beauty” and “joint force”:

'Tis not a lip, or eye, we beauty call,
But the joint force and full result of all.

In brief, “nature” does not indicate external or physical nature but human, intellectual and internal nature, including morality, rationality, the ideal, decorum, beauty, elegance, and the like, just as a classical painting imitates physical nature through surpassing and transcending it.

If this is so, then, how is the word “Nature” related to morality, rationality, the ideal, and decorum? This statement by Walter Jackson Bate may supply an answer to the question:

Arising from the classical assumption that man’s reason and his moral nature are one is the belief that character can be justly formed and guided only by a genuine insight into the universal, and by the rational grasp of the decorum, measure, and standard which characterize the ideal.

We see, from this statement, how the terms “decorum, measure, and standard” reinforce each other when a good “character” is formed, and the relationship is also explicated by Secretan: “Nature, truth and beauty are indissolubly linked: reason and experience prove it ... and the optimistic chain comes full circle.” A seventeenth-century view regarding the relation between “Nature” and “Reason” is that “reason and nature are one” and “the two words” can be used “interchangeably.” Being reasonable and rational is a basic condition for one to achieve morality, decorum, the ideal, and standards. Only in this way can “Nature” be “least corrupt”, and a person become “most civilized”.

As mentioned above, a key method for embodying “nature” is “imitation,” the doctrine of which “was the corner-stone of the Renaissance.” The imitation of objective nature is a process of idealisation or transcendence, through which “Nature’s one law of concordia discors, the active

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151 Ibid.
152 Ibid.
153 Ibid.
harmonizing of differences”161 is exhibited in neoclassical works, such as Pope’s ‘Windsor Forest’. The imitation is not merely limited to objective reality, but also includes classical literature, art, and architecture, including the imitation of human figures and allusions in Greek and Roman mythology. No matter whether it is the imitation of objective reality or the imitation of ancient figures in Greek and Roman mythology, these imitations are the representations of the ideal in works of art and craftsmanship, promoting “Nature” represented by such virtues as truth, beauty, decorum and morality.

In the light of these observations, I turn to listen to Hart and see how he understands classicism and neoclassicism and their related terms “nature” and “Orphic myth.” The poet assumes that classicism has its strong point: “the classical image shields us from something disturbing. For we are at home with the image as traditionally understood: it gives us a meaning and a truth.”162 In his book A. D. Hope (1992), Hart illustrates his definitions of some classical terms by stating that “authentic poetry is visionary,”163 “nature needs to be redeemed” and “the redeemer is Orpheus.”164 For Hart, “visionary poetry is Orphic; it is a formal and informed celebration of the natural order.”165 It is obvious that the term “nature”, for Hart, does not refer to physical nature, but intellectual or philosophical reality or transcendent Nature. Hart’s affiliation with classicism or neoclassicism is further seen in an interview, where he stated that he had received an English classical education when he was an undergraduate: “Alec Hope who, along with Bob Brissenden, Ian Donaldson and John Hardy taught me eighteenth-century British literature.”166 Undoubtedly, Hart’s explanation and statements show that classical Nature, to him, has its attraction and glamour. With this in mind, I want to demonstrate the classical elements in some of Hart’s poems and see how classical “Nature” is exhibited in them.

II. “Intercourse with intellectual nature”

“Humanism” is “almost another word for classicism itself.”167 A definition of the term goes like this: “A cultural and intellectual movement of the Renaissance that emphasized secular concerns as a result of the rediscovery and study of the literature, art, and civilization of ancient Greece and Rome.”168 It is true that, in Greek and Roman art, the objective reality or landscape is scarce, as classical artists sought to portray the moral beauty idealised in human beings. Even if there are some descriptions of landscape, these are present for the sake of embodying human beings’ intellectual reality or internal nature. Such a study of the “ideal” and conduct concerning man can, to borrow Johnson’s words, be called “intercourse with intellectual nature”.169 Man, as a central theme and subject, was dominant in classical poetry, drama, paintings, and sculptures, and so is it in Hart’s poems.

164 Ibid., p. 72.
165 Ibid., p. 63.
Hart, by imitating Greek art, represents familiar characters as possessing the intellectual Nature and “ideal” potentialities of the human figures we find in classical sculptures, and these are brilliantly exemplified in the poems ‘The Dressmaker’ [123], ‘The Carpenter’ [124], and ‘The Hammer’ [58]. Although these poems may also contain elements drawn from romanticism, modernism, and other traditions, the human figures described can be considered as belonging to the category of classical art. In ‘The Dressmaker’, we find

… pins in mother’s mouth, her neck  
Bent to the Singer’s needle, hands feeding  
Bright cloth to the machine. [123]

A similar figure of the same Nature is also seen in ‘The Carpenter’:

A nail between your teeth,  
Your left hand resting on the vice’s grip,  
A dented hammer raised to strike. [124]

The two figures have something in common – their fervid passion and intense devotion to what they are doing, both of which neoclassicism esteems in Greek art’s depiction and embodiment of the human figure. If the speakers’ feelings for the “mother” and “grandfather” are not taken into consideration, the two figures themselves belong to “a type”, as defined by Secretan:

There are … two kinds of portrait a painter or writer can execute …: the one portrays a particular and unique individual, the other describes a type. Artists in general … prefer the first kind, moralists the second … he wants to pass on to his students, useful and generalized information concerning man. 170

Obviously, Hart can be grouped into the category of the “moralists”, the classical artists or writers exhibiting the virtues of intellectual “Nature” through “a type.” Like classical art that aims at embodying human actions by basing them on moral knowledge and the ideal, the images of the “mother” and “grandfather” are typical examples of representing “an ideal end and a finished totality”, “energies of the spirit” and “a concluded and integrated synthesis of all ideal human aspects.” 171

The classical qualities represented through the two figures, such as decorum, order, and accuracy or precision, are also vividly exhibited in detail in another poem, ‘The Hammer’ [58]. Through the poet’s strong, keen sense of the “type” and his sagacious perception of “a type,” the figure described in the poem appears so classical and well-proportioned that we are reminded of the beauty of a classical or neoclassical statue or sculpture, such as David by Michelangelo, which is “a typical Renaissance work.” 172

A comparison between David and the figure “with the hammer” makes conspicuous the similarities between classical sculpture and the figure. The figure of David stands “with weight on one leg and balanced by an S-shaped twist of the whole body”, and he is ready for “hurling …

the stone that will kill Goliath.” The strong muscles on his breast and arms are distinctly visible, while his eyes aim at his target. The same can be said of the “one” holding a hammer: an image of a carpenter, who, with a hammer in his hand, is gathering or accumulating his power or energy in preparation to strike his target with his hammer. As David’s readiness for hurling the stone is shown through various aspects of his figure, the carpenter’s readiness for striking is presented mainly through visual, tactile and kinaesthetic imagery: “grasping,” “feels its worn wood,” “polished with sweat” and “closes deeply around.” Through the imagery, we seem to see more –

… as though hands were made for hammers

And men to be controlled by hammers … [58]

– the man and the hammer perfectly fit each other: both the man and the hammer become one, a well-balanced, organic unity. Then the hammer

… makes him stand

Feet slightly apart, breathing evenly, concentrating
On nothing but a three-inch nail [58].

David “has a … sense of energy”[174]; so does the man with the hammer in the poem:

… he slowly raises

One arm backwards not lifting an eye and trusting his aim
…

Pushing the mind’s energies tightly into muscle
…

For a moment containing the man’s mind, pure energy [58].

Similar to David’s movement, “only briefly stilled” before his action, the carpenter pauses for a fleeting moment before he releases energy at the “nail.” In this significant moment, the man is concentrating himself to the extent that there is, for him, no difference between past and future. The sublime of the action is likened to the way that “a soprano reaches for her top note” “without a word,” [58] and to the way that an archer erases “himself from his tense matrix of forces” just before he shoots the arrow. At this particular instant, the man has transcended himself – his physical self – he is exempt from all secular ideas, as his “ego” disappears. Consequently, the “pure energy is released,” and the nail is struck with “precise violence.” The poet, as Michelangelo does, sees penetratingly into the simple action of a carpenter from his raising the hammer to his hitting the target, the “nail”, describing the fleeting movements of the human figure, or the momentary release of energy, power, and truth, and disclosing the order, beauty,
precision, accuracy, and harmony that classicism treats as its essential tenets. Both the carpenter and David testify to Aristotle’s proposition that “the mimesis of a whole action” or the “wholeness” of an action should have unity, “order.”

The carpenter’s way of hitting a nail is classical, and this is also the way the “dressmaker” makes dresses. When the “mother” is feeding the machine she is one with the machine; when the “grandfather” is making furniture he is one with his tools. Fervid devotion or passion is the key for engaging in doing things, and this enthusiasm leads a doer to enter a special state as described by the poet when he was talking of his own working or writing experience:

In writing a poem the writer’s ego is put out of play, insofar as it can be done. The empirical ‘I’ is quietened in the act of attention required to write a poem in the first place. What emerges as the ‘I’ in a lyric is someone else, neither I nor not-I. In the emptying out of the self something is glimpsed that can’t be emptied out.

The splitting between “empirical I” and “the ‘I’ in a lyric” in the process of writing seems no different from classicism’s duality: the “outward man” and “the true self”. Plato advocates the principle of the binary pair in The Republic: “… in reality justice was … concerned … not with outward man, but with the inward, which is the true self and concernment of man.”

Classicism sings man’s high praises, “as he ought to be, ‘raised above all that is local and accidental, purged of all that is abnormal and eccentric, so as to be in the highest sense representative’, ” so that “he” can become “the Ideal Man who, as Aristotle has it, by his ‘heroic and divine virtue’ raises himself above the level of common beings.” It is just “the Ideal Man” that Hart eulogises in these poems, as classicists do. Hart’s personal experience of writing poetry, together with the working images of “mother” and “grandfather” in the poems, shows that the Hart family’s traditional “spirit” or “ethos” is classical “Nature”: industrious and hardworking. It is “a type” or “Nature” of “spirit” or “ethos” that belongs not merely to the Hart family but also to a nation or all the labouring people in the world. It is essential for human beings’ advancement and development; its significance extends beyond a situation peculiar only to a specific locality or time, and thereby it “transcend(s) the local and temporary.”

Hart, as a classicist, embodies the ideal and beauty to show his interest in inner, intellectual “Nature” rather than external, objective reality. Classical elements in Hart’s poems are also seen in his closeness to Pope, whose poems are good examples of the glamour of intellectual Nature.

### III. Pope’s influence on Hart

Examining classical elements in the space of Hart’s poetry, we also see his resonating with Pope, a key figure in the neoclassical movement, at several levels relating to “Nature.” Pope’s poetry

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179 Ibid.
180 Ibid., p. 11.
represents the essence of neoclassicism, and he is regarded as “a great creator of types, of behavior that belongs to no one in particular. He does not look at the landscape, not even that of London.” Pope’s classicism or humanism is seen through his interest in the use of Greek mythology, including satire. In an interview, Hart said that “I don’t write as a neoclassical poet, but I do respond to the phantasmagoria, the energy, the almost near-hysteria, sometimes, of Pope.” In my correspondence with him, Hart expressed a similar idea: he is interested in “Pope’s phantasmagoria.” What matter to Hart, indeed, are Pope’s satire, phantasmagoria, and transformation.

A. Satire
To understand “satire”, let us consider the following statement:

Satire, though seemingly pessimistic, takes human behavior quite seriously and operates on the optimistic impulse of attempting to change it for the better. Satire relies on the primary tension between the ideal desired behavior and the real behavior.

Satire results from “primary tension” which is caused by clashes between the idealisation of “Nature” and actual behaviour, as satire attempts to “dictate behavior, to chastise those who do not behave or think the way the satirist feels is appropriate.”

In The Dunciad, one of the greatest works of satire or mock-epic, Pope utilises satire to demonstrate the stupidity of the “dunces” and exhibit their “hollow and mean imitations of the ancient heroic poets.” In the third book of The Dunciad, “Saturnian days” were hailed by “bad poets” as “The Golden Age.” Pope satirises those “dunces” who use the same term to hail the restoration of “the glorious age” in which they can prosper. Likewise, Hart wittily employs that term as the title of the poem “The Glorious Age” [125], exposing the stupidity of “our teacher”, which is no different from the “dunces” in The Dunciad.

The “teacher,” “Mr Smith,” declares to his pupils that this age “will never end,” which is “still the age of inkwells and metal nibs in Brisbane, the age of sweaty hands on blotting paper, the great and mighty age of ‘Copy Book,’ ‘The Glorious Age’ of parsing …” which will never be obsolescent “in his lifetime or ours.” Besides, “the age” is modified with such adjectives as “great”, “mighty” and “glorious”, further showing the teacher’s stupidity in overvaluing the significance of “the age”. But the real condition of the schoolroom is a different story: the condition is so poor that it is still built “on stilts” and “you can sometimes feel a breeze stroke your legs, wafting up through cracks in the floorboards”; the pupils are still using “inkwells and metal nibs,” which have actually been replaced by computers nowadays.

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183 My interview, September 2002.
185 Ibid.
187 Ibid., p. 50.
The dullness of the teacher is shown not merely by what he says, but also by what he does. Every Wednesday afternoon he teaches grammar to his pupils in a ludicrous way: choosing “long sentences” from books written by such neoclassical writers as “Addison and Gibbon, Hume and Chesterfield” in the eighteenth century, writing them on the blackboard to analyse them grammatically. The difficult sentence containing new words and a complicated syntactical structure is, indeed, so long, so boring that even the teacher himself finds it gruelling to copy it on the blackboard: he is “breathing heavily,” while writing.

The weather, in addition to the difficult sentence, is uncomfortably hot: “No breeze today, only cicadas” that keep on making sickening and vexing noises. It is not strange that the speaker, as one of the pupils, “cannot understand” the long sentence, and the hot weather makes the pupils “sweaty,” sleepy, and unable to concentrate. The lethargy resulting from the tedious teaching brings to the mind of the reader the dunces’ drowsiness described in The Dunciad:

Three college sophs, and three pert Templars came,
The same their talents, and their tastes the same;
Each prompt to query, answer, and debate,
And smit with love of poesy and prate,
The pond’rous books two gentle readers bring;
The heroes sit, the vulgar form a ring,
The clam’rous crowd is hushed with mugs of mum,
Till all, turned equal, send a general hum.
Then mount the clerks, and in one lazy tone
Through the long, heavy, painful page drawl on;
Soft creeping, words on words, the sense compose;
At ev’ry line they stretch, they yawn, they doze.
...
And all was hushed, as folly’s self lay dead.188

The dullness of the “teacher” is no less than that of the “dunces” in The Dunciad. What is ironical is that Mr Smith himself cannot abide by the basic regulation for teachers – taking “another swig behind the blackboard”, which is absolutely forbidden. What is more, he comments on his pupils’ grammar by saying, “‘Damn kids don’t know nothing.’” From the description of Mr Smith’s successive actions, we see the teacher himself is an oxymoron, as his actions are filled with contradictions and incongruities, and he is, indeed, as stupid as the “dunces.”

Like Pope who chastises “Dulness,” Hart draws a harsh caricature of the “teacher” and exposes his dullness to the full. Compared to the intellectual “Nature” advocated by classics, the “Saturnian age” or “The Glorious Age” can be thought of as a dull, lumpish age. From Hart’s prose poem, we see a kind of dual reality: one is the objective reality – the teacher’s dullness – and the other the classical standard or idealised “Nature” of beauty, decorum and elegance. When objective reality clashes with the “ideal”, beauty, and intellectual Nature, there satire comes into being.

B. Phantasmagoria
To disclose the dullness of the “dunces” and make it more revealing, Pope, in *The Dunciad*, employs phantasmagoria, a succession of visions, through which we see that the phantasmagoric progress of Dulness’s empire is powerful and limitless, and that it is so fast and strong that nothing can stop it from spreading and expanding. Hart seems to adopt the same method and applies it in the poem ‘The Map’ [107], although he deals with a different topic: “death” or “death’ power”. In ‘The Map,’ through a succession of visions, the poet allows us to see that the development and growth of death’s power embodied via a “map” is astonishing. Once it comes into existence, it is very similar to the rampant expansion of Dulness’s empire, as seen in the following lines:

“Ascend this hill, whose cloudy point commands
Her boundless empire over seas and lands.
See, round the Poles where keener spangles shine,
Where spices smoke beneath the burning line,
(Earth’s wide extremes) her sable flag displayed,
And all the nation covered in her shade.”

In a vision, the father and son in *The Dunciad* witness the dark cloud or shadow of Dulness rising in a corner of the earth, spreading over the entire globe, covering the world with the panoramic envelopment of darkness. The rapid “progress” and expansion of darkness finds echoes in Hart’s poem, in which the “map” is not a common one, for

Young draughtsmen use a scale of one to one
With instruments that speed across a page [107]

and consequently the “map” expands and spreadslimitlessly when it is unfolded on a “lounge-room floor”:

It spreads into the kitchen, covers beds,

Then flaps out on the mail-box and the lawn … [107]

The map keeps on spreading insofar as the people finally realise that “The map … won’t close”, but will progress and spread continuously and endlessly to cover the whole world: the “scale” is “one to one.” [107]

In *The Dunciad*, Dulness’s stupidity embracing or covering the world symbolises the destructive capacity of Pope’s dark Goddess, while Hart’s map is the power of “death”, telling the truth of “death” which is so powerful that no one can escape and no one can avoid. Regardless of the fact that the subject matter is different in the two poems, we see that Hart’s successive visions of development of death’s power are similar to Pope’s phantasmagoria of the dull empire’s rapid spread.

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C. Transformation

In Pope’s ‘Windsor Forest’, the metamorphosis of the nymph Lodona is very impressive. Through the transformation of the nymph, Pope discloses a law of Nature: *concordia discors*, meaning “‘concord in discord’”\(^{190}\) or harmony resulting from discordance. That is, through the negation or rejection of the objective reality of discordance, harmony or intellectual reality or “Nature” can be achieved. In Pope’s poem, the negation and rejection involve a successive transformation. If Lodona’s changes are regarded as an archetype, then we find some sort of echo and resemblance in Hart’s two poems ‘The Streets of Brisbane’ and ‘Desire’.

Lodona in ‘Windsor Forest’ undergoes a successive metamorphosis. At first, she is transformed from a brave and dauntless huntress into a defenceless and feeble prey: “Pan saw and loved, and, burning with desire, / Pursued her flight, her flight increased his fire,” and the nymph appears “fainting, sinking, pale”, “faint” and “breathless”. Then she is “melting as in tears she lay, / In a soft silver stream dissolved away.”\(^{191}\) And further, when Lodona is changed into a river with “slow” and “ling’ring streams”, a peaceful and serene scene is depicted, in which she mirrors the entire range of nature: its mountains, forests, and flocks. It is said that she

… bathes the forest where she ranged before.
In her chaste current oft the goddess laves,
And with celestial tears augments the waves.\(^{192}\)

Lodona’s successive transformations finally lead to the harmonious and peaceful scene that is sought after by the neoclassicist: “la belle nature – Nature collected and shown in all her charms.”\(^{193}\)

The metamorphoses of Lodona came down to Pope from Ovid’s treatment of the Greek myth. In the myth, Pan pursues the goddess Syrinx; in order to protect her chastity and avoid Pan’s rape, Syrinx transforms herself into a reed. Pan, being aware that he cannot fulfil his ill intention, changes the reed into a musical instrument with the shape of a flute.\(^{194}\) The hunting scene in ‘Windsor Forest’ is transformed into sexual violence and then into a peaceful and serene river, while Lodona is changed from a huntress into the hunted, and then into the River Loddon, like a mirror, reflecting the beauty of nature. This pattern of transformations or metamorphoses is not unfamiliar to Hart, as there are similar images or changes, although only partial, in Hart’s two poems mentioned above.

The same pattern of transformation seems to be employed in ‘The Streets of Brisbane’ [14]. In spite of the fact that there are no violent scenes, as in ‘Windsor Forest’, in Hart’s poem, the transformations of the streets and the destination of the protagonist’s trip are similar to those in Pope’s work. Brisbane’s streets spread out, in various forms: from ones with “the rusting air”, into those with “men in suits, sweating shadows”, and then into those with

… straightlaced English women

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\(^{192}\) Ibid.


Who swam through the heat in fussy Victorian dresses [14].

Like Pan’s abrupt and violent action when he rapes the nymph Lodona, the “evening … will settle in all around you” suddenly. At this time, unlike Pope’s nymph who “dissolved away”, Hart’s street is not transformed into a river; instead it “will lead you down to the river”. Pope’s classical image dimly appears: the river is like a beauty, or Lodona,

Reclining on her couch, just waiting for the cool of midnight,  
The moon the only white on her body  
As she lies there softly breathing, entirely naked. [14]

Similar to the peaceful river Loddon, whose “ling’ring streams” are “slow”, Hart’s river is “lazy”, “fine” with “a long brown thigh”, “bathing” the city of Brisbane by “rang(ing) it”. “In her chaste current” of “celestial tears”, she is waiting for “you” to “lave” in it, and waiting for “you” or “the musing shepherd” to look into it as a mirror. From the analogy, we seem to have seen or even experienced the beauty of Brisbane, the glamour of intellectual Nature of classicism.

It may be right to say that the streets of Brisbane are the symbolic streets that have led the poet to success in his academic and literary careers. It was in Brisbane that the poet began his “beautiful adventure”: his interest in poetry was aroused, and he started reading different anthologies of poems and various philosophical books, which laid a solid foundation for his later successful careers. It may also be correct to say that the Brisbane River is the transformed shape of the goddess Syrinx or the nymph Lodona, which is so sexually alluring and so beautiful that she arouses the poet’s desire for truth, beauty, decorum, or classical, intellectual Nature.

Nature’s law, *concordia discors*, reflected in the desire of the mythological figure in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* or Pan in ‘Windsor Forest’, is also found in Hart’s poem ‘Desire’ [24] in a transformed way. Although the details of the desire in Hart’s poem are different from Pan’s desire to rape the goddess Syrinx or the nymph Lodona, the process of desiring something is clear and distinct. At first, the “desire” is analogised to a “slow” opening “night flower”, and the sensational way of the desire is displayed as:

The moon’s long fingers stroking your bare arms,  
The courtyard with its jasmine breath  
And all the warmth of blood [24].

Then the “desire” is metamorphosed into other dramatic scenes:

When bamboo knots in the night fields,  
When girls uncurl from Roman frescoes,  
Liquid as shadows, smelling of flowers and wine [24].

Again, the “desire” is transformed into something more:

A memory of what we must become,  
The city in its lace of lights, the bay alive with sails [24].
This is an ideal and prosperous scene, the meaningful consequence of the “desire”, which is similar to the consequence of the nymph Lodona’s transformation into the river:

Oft in her glass the musing shepherd spies
The headlong mountains and downward skies,
The watery landskip of the pendant woods,
And absent trees that tremble in the floods;
In the clear azure gleam the flocks are seen,
And floating forests paint the waves with green...

The transformed nymph mirrors the entire range of physical nature, its mountains, forests, and flocks. She becomes nature itself, as Paul Baines points out: “What you see in the stream that Lodona has become is nature” which is further “inverted into a chaste, emblematic picture.”

The peaceful, thriving scene in Hart’s poem has almost no difference from that in Pope’s. As shown in the last stanza, the “desire” proper is a metonymy, which represents “the simple energy”. If the “desire” or “libido” is properly used rather than abused as Pan does, the “energy” or “desire” can make one more successful and thriving, and make our natural world – the earth – a better place. This may be the Nature that both neo/classicist and Hart seek to obtain and celebrate.

IV. Conclusion

Hart’s poems discussed here bear an affinity to the classical tenets, especially the imitation of both ancient figures and nature in the mythological works of ancient Greece and Rome. But the imitation is not blind or random mimesis, for it is a process of surpassing and transcending physical nature, and aspiring for the ideal, the intellectual, and inner Nature, which is beyond “the local and temporary”.

The figures of the dressmaker, the carpenter, and the man with a hammer are ultimate and completed models of the serene beauty, coherent order, well-balanced proportion of the whole, and well-embellished nature. They represent “a type”, the ethos, spirit, morality, rationality, accuracy, and precision that classicists seek. The sublime state that these characters enter is a kind of transcendence in which reason is in full control, while common feelings and emotions are rejected or forgotten. The transcendence and rejection are also seen in Hart’s closeness to Pope, as Hart has not much interest in external nature, rather, he is more interested in human intellectual and harmonious Nature, and this is seen through his poetic methods, such as satire, phantasmagoria, and transformation as also used by Ovid and Pope in their works.

If some of Hart's poems can be said to contain a kind of dual reality in the classical sense, these poems represent only a small proportion of his work. The dual realities embodied in his other poems turn out to be very complicated. Some of them have no connection with ancient Greek and Roman mythology. Some metamorphoses happen not in concordia discors, but can be perceived in feelings, or can be shown through functions. Some appear to have strong dialectical,
philosophical, and religious senses. Some cannot be seen via one’s naked eyes but through one’s visionary eyes. In other words, although some of his poems show traces of classical and neoclassical elements, the dual realities in his poems are much closer to those advocated in other schools. Hart, as an original poet, conveys his philosophical ideas in his versification in his own way.

In short, the pattern that man becomes “least corrupted” and “most civilized” through transcendence is the essential formula of other trends, either in other literary movements, religion, or post-phenomenological thinking, and has a tremendous impact on Hart’s poems. That is, besides the dual realities in the classical sense in Hart’s poems, there are other kinds of dual realities embodied in different trends throughout Hart’s work, such as romanticism, modernism, the post-phenomenological school, and his religious faith. These will become the major concerns of this dissertation. The immediate concern is Hart’s romantic internalised quest, which is the topic of the following section.
Section II. Hart’s Romantic Internalised Quest

1. Introduction
In the previous section, I examined the classical element in Hart’s poems, and pointed out that Hart, like a classicist, has not much interest in objective or physical nature, but rather in intellectual Nature and humanism, and that the human figures he describes in his poems belong to “a type”. These figures represent the “ideal”, which is a kind of “ethos” that any diligent person or a great nation should have, and they stand for a kind of “beauty”, which is accuracy, balance, elegance, and symmetry, produced through the artist’s attention to traditional sculptures and Greek myths. I also traced Pope’s influence on Hart in several respects, including “satire”, “phantasmagoria”, and “transformation”. The elements of classicism, however, represent only a small proportion in Hart’s poetry when compared with those of romanticism. In this section, I wish to demonstrate Hart’s romantic internalised quest in his poetry through three aspects: restoration of the state of innocence, romantic structure or romantic fragment to present the dual realities of romanticism.

Before an introduction to romantic theory, let us see how the poet posits himself in the literary movement. In terms of his literary position and his relationship with romantic poets and their poems, Hart posits himself as a late romantic or a post-romantic, and this is seen from several interviews. Hart stated that “If Bloom, Lacouie-Labarthe and Nancy are right, then of course I’m a late Romantic …”197 In a conversation, Hart said to Robert Adamson: “You’re a late romantic, and so for you the quest has become internalised, not out in the landscape, but within; it has become a quest for the imagination, the muse … we are all late romantics, like it or not.”198 In another interview, Hart expressed a similar idea: “we are post-romantic.”199 From the poet’s statements in these interviews, the reader sees at least two points: one is that Hart concedes he has some sort of relationship with romantics; and the other is that we have some hint that Bloom’s, Lacouie-Labarthe’s and Nancy’s theories are of great assistance in understanding the romantic elements in his poems. Therefore, I will use these critics’ and others’ theories to illustrate and demonstrate how Hart is related to some romantics and their poems, and how he internalises his romantic quest in his poems.

The romantic internalised quest seeks a return to “Unity of Being”200, and the process of seeking or questing involves two parts of the self in consciousness: one is the “antagonists” to the quest, which “are everything in the self that blocks imaginative work”;201 the other part is the poetic self that fulfils a poem through an “apocalypse of imagination.”202 In the course of the quest, it is the death of one part that makes the other part alive and available, and results in an imaginative work coming into being. Hence, the consciousness of a romantic poet is “recognized … as a kind

202 Ibid.
of death-in-life, as the product of a division in the self\(^{203}\), and through the “death” reality in the romantic sense becomes dual and doubled.

Consider Bloom’s statement:

> The Romantic movement is from nature to the imagination’s freedom …, and the imagination’s freedom is frequently purgatorial, redemptive in direction but destructive of the social self. The high cost of Romantic internalization, that is, of finding paradises within a renovated man, shows itself in the arena of self-consciousness. The quest is to widen consciousness as well as to intensify it, but the quest is shadowed by a spirit that tends to narrow consciousness to an acute preoccupation with self. This shadow of imagination is solipsism, what Shelley calls the Spirit of Solitude …\(^{204}\)

This “Solitude” has been dubbed with other names, such as “a baffled residue of the self”, “the sleep of death-in-life”, “death instinct in every natural man”. It is from such a “morass of inwardness” that a romantic seeks to reach the other part of reality or the other part of himself – his “anti-self consciousness”\(^{205}\) or “poetic self”.

It has been noted that nature plays a key role in this division – from the “Solitude” to the “anti-self-consciousness” – for, as M. W. Abrams says of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, and Shelley, while they

… set out from or return to an aspect or change of aspect in the landscape, the outer scene is not presented for its own sake but only as a stimulus for the poet to engage in the most characteristic human activity, that of thinking.\(^{206}\)

Abrams summarises the movement between consciousness and nature: A “greater Romantic lyric” is “the descriptive-meditative poem”\(^{207}\) or “the descriptive-meditative-descriptive poem”\(^{208}\) with the “repeated out-in-out process”.\(^{209}\) Abrams has a detailed explanation of the paradigm:

> The speaker begins with a description of the landscape; an aspect or change of aspect in the landscape evokes a varied but integral process of memory, thought, anticipation, and feeling which remains closely intervolved with the outer scene. In the course of this meditation the lyric speaker achieves an insight, faces up to a


\(^{205}\) Ibid.


\(^{208}\) Ibid., p. 206.

tragic loss, comes to a moral decision, or resolves an emotional problem. Often the poem rounds upon itself to end where it began, at the outer scene, but with an altered mood and deepened understanding which is the result of the intervening meditation.\(^{210}\)

The “repeated out-in-out process” leads to an important phenomenon in a romantic poem, which comprises “the fragment”. As Lacouie-Labarthe and Nancy state:

To an even greater extent than the “genre” of theoretical romanticism, the fragment is considered its incarnation, the most distinctive mark of its originality, or the sign of its radical modernity. …Indeed, the fragment is the romantic genre par excellence.\(^{211}\)

Another important consequence is that, through the movement or the “process”, a romantic seeks an “anti-self”\(^{212}\), or “deeply buried experience”, which is recovered from one’s state of solitude. The ‘Romantic “I” emerges nostaligcally when certainty and simplicity of self are lost,\(^{213}\) even though the meditative or retrospective movement may be imaginative and visionary, which is different from the classical movement in which reason dominates. As a result, one’s sensibility is increased and intensified, and one’s consciousness is expanded and widened.

Bloom, along with others, employs Freudian psychoanalysis to explain the movement of the quest. He thinks that in the internalised quest a romantic goes further than Freud, for Freud was not interested in “further dividing the ego itself”\(^{214}\). The romantic impulse

… rises from the id, and can be best be thought of as the force of libido, doomed to undergo a merely cyclic movement from appetite to repression, and then back again; any quest within nature is thus at last irrelevant to the mediating ego, though the quest goes back and forth through it. It is within the ego that the quest must turn, to engage the antagonist proper, and to clarify the imaginative component in the ego by its strife of contraries with its dark brother.\(^{215}\)

Bloom, along with others, believes that although romantic poems are customarily and habitually called “nature poetry”, they, in fact, are an “anti-nature poetry,”\(^{216}\) for the final purpose of romantic poets is not to have identity and unity with nature but rather to become integral with something within themselves. The “Unity of Being” happens within rather than without, and nature is merely served as a kind of medium for a romantic poet to gain access to the other part of self or “an anti-self-consciousness”\(^{217}\).


\(^{213}\) Ibid., p. 52.


\(^{215}\) Ibid., p. 16.

\(^{216}\) Ibid., p. 9.

\(^{217}\) Ibid., p. 6.
From Abrams’s, Bloom’s, and others’ analyses, we see that the romantic internalised quest makes the relationship between nature and consciousness strikingly salient: a romantic seeks his own imaginative powers instead of those of nature; he searches for a kind of integrity within his inner self rather than from outer nature, and this integrity involves “his former selfless self”\(^\text{218}\). The relationship between romantics and nature makes them separate from each other and “annihilate” each other through a dialectic of love – love of nature leads to the love of oneself and human beings, and makes the unity or integrity of being available to the poet – the hero of the internalised quest. Therefore the dual reality of romanticism also involves two kinds of description: one is about physical reality or nature including the state of “solitude”, and the other is about imaginative reality ranging from imaginative thinking to the restoration of Hart’s “former” “self” or his innocence. The dual reality is presented through the romantic genre, fragment, as seen in the following subsections.

2. Restoration of the state of innocence

Hart’s internalised romantic quest seems no different from that of Wordsworth, a key poet of “the High Romantic period”\(^\text{219}\). Like Wordsworth, who “locates his poem after the Fall” and always becomes “nostalgic for Paradise”\(^\text{220}\). Hart also seeks “Paradise” “within a renovated man … in the arena of self-consciousness.”\(^\text{221}\) So when we read Hart’s poem ‘Those White, Ancient Birds’ [152], we see that the speaker or the poet seems to share a kind of depression and longing with Wordsworth in *The Prelude*, though the degrees of depression and longing are different, as Hart’s longing is more persistent than Wordsworth’s, and the difference is seen from the following contrast.

In Hart’s poem, the speaker, having described the freedom that the birds enjoy, realises that

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{… I have no idea where to go,} \\
\text{And wait all morning by a window, the big sky blankly there,} \\
\text{Not knowing what I am waiting for} \\
\text{Yet aching for it just the same [152]}. \\
\end{align*}
\]

The poet’s self-consciousness expressed here is a kind of depression, which is similar to, yet slightly different (in intensity of longing) from, that described in Wordsworth’s Book XI of *The Prelude*:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{With sorrow, disappointment, vexing thoughts,} \\
\text{Confusion of opinion, zeal decay’d} \\
\text{And lastly, utter loss of hope itself,}
\end{align*}
\]

\(^{218}\) Ibid., p. 16. \\
\(^{219}\) Ibid., p. 4. \\
And things hoped for.\textsuperscript{222}

From the lines above the reader sees that both Hart and Wordsworth suffer the same “solitude”, and both of them are eager to get out of the “morass of inwardness” and to achieve an “anti-self consciousness”, and finally to obtain the “Unity of Being”. Geoffrey H. Hartman diagnoses the symptom of Wordsworth’s depression when he proposes that Wordsworth had suffered a depression linked to ‘the ravage of self-consciousness and the “strong disease” of self-analysis.’\textsuperscript{223} and for the disease, there is a remedy or antidote, which is “almost coterminous with art itself in the Romantic Period.”\textsuperscript{224} The antidote to self-consciousness, according to Hartman, is drawn “from consciousness itself”, that is, “to return to the state of innocence” or to have a second naivety via knowledge. For this “we must eat once more of the tree of knowledge”\textsuperscript{225}:

\begin{quote}
Having tasted knowledge, man realizes his nakedness and his sheer separateness of self … the naively sensuous mind must pass through separation and selfhood to become spiritually perfect. It is the destiny of consciousness … to separate from nature, so that it can finally transcend not only nature but also its own lesser forms.\textsuperscript{226}
\end{quote}

In Hegel’s words, the restoration to the state of innocence “‘is found in thought, and thought only: the hand that inflicts the wound is also the hand that heals it’”.\textsuperscript{227} So, only when one has eradicated “the baffled residue” “in the self that blocks imaginative work”, and annihilated one part of the self, can the “Unity of Being” become available to him. This “unity” is found within poetry itself.

Hartman’s diagnosis and prescription for Wordsworth’s case can also be applied to Hart’s, for Hart “chooses himself”\textsuperscript{228} as Wordsworth does, and his way of questing or restoring the state of innocence almost resembles that of Wordsworth. Some similarities can be seen in two poems in particular: The Prelude by Wordsworth and ‘The Little Air’ by Hart.

\begin{quote}
a. “Love of nature leading to love of mankind”
\end{quote}

Hegel’s above-mentioned “thought” refers to memory, reflection, and the reconceptualisation of something buried deeply in one’s mind, from which one’s identity or former self can be recovered. That is in accordance with Bloom’s comment on Wordsworth; for Wordsworth, “Memory is the mother in poetry”, “because the poem’s half of the act of creation cannot proceed without the catalyst of recollecting the poet’s response to an earlier version of the outward presence of Nature.”\textsuperscript{229} Bloom also states: “To see into the life of things is to see things

\begin{small}
\textsuperscript{224} Ibid., p. 48.
\textsuperscript{225} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{226} Ibid., p. 49.
\textsuperscript{227} Ibid.
\end{small}
for themselves and not their potential use. The poet attains to this state through memories of Nature’s presence." Bloom’s commentaries are also practicable in analysing a few poems by Hart, since memory, for Hart, is one of the main sources for literary creations, as some poems are written from memories of his childhood and earlier life. These memories include how he loved Nature. If we regard “love of nature” as one side of reality, then we can say that “love of mankind” is the other side of reality. In this sense, love, as a kind of reality, is also doubled. A comparison of the two poems, The Prelude and ‘The Little Air’, will show that the two poets have a similar interest in Nature, and that their poems have some similar features related to their internalised quest.

In ‘The Little Air’, the reader sees that the boy Hart and his playmates in England were curious about and interested in natural phenomena:

First thing on a winter morning there was ice
Inside the window: I’d scrape it with my nails [187].

Secondly,

The pipes outside were sometimes frozen stiff
And kids would double dare each other hard

To see whose fingerprints of flesh would stick
… [187]

And next is

… ice that hung from classroom windowsills,
And we would throw them at each other’s eyes

While running mad: you’d breathe the little air
That felt just like those needles in your cheeks [187].

Within the embrace of Nature, and together with other children, the boy Hart was as happy and merry as the boy Wordsworth was. Wordsworth’s happy experience is preserved in the following lines of The Prelude:

And in the frosty season, when the sun
Was set, and visible for many a mile
The cottage windows through the twilight blaz’d,
I heeded not the summons: – happy time
It was, indeed, for all of us; to me
It was a time of rapture: clear and loud
The village clock toll’d six; I wheel’d about,
Proud and exulting, like an untired horse,
That cares not for its home. – All shod with steel,
We hiss’d along the polish’d ice, in games
Confederate, imitative of the chase

230 Ibid., p. 134.
And woodland pleasures, the resounding horn,
The Pack loud bellowing, and the hunted hare.\(^{231}\)

From the two poems’ descriptions, we see how both the poets adore the gifts given by Nature. They were in “rapture” – chasing, running and shouting “mad”. This innocent state can also be reached when a child becomes an adult, according to Wordsworth: by the time he has lost himself in “aching joys and “dizzy raptures”, his love for nature becomes mature and “The still, sad music of humanity” in Nature is audible to him.\(^{232}\) This mature love, through inner transcendence and transformation, would lead to love for other people, and the romantic proposition finds its echoes in ‘The Little Air’. Like Wordsworth’s, Hart’s love of Nature leads to his love for man and his sympathy for the suffering of the poor and unfortunate. This pattern is summarised by Bloom, according to whom the first eight books in the thirteen books of *The Prelude* form “a single movement summed up in the title of Book VIII, ‘Retrospect – Love of Nature Leading to Love of Mankind’”, and the other books “carry this Love of Mankind into its natural consequence ...”\(^{233}\). Traces of this pattern are found in Hart’s poem ‘The Little Air’. As Hart’s “Love of Nature” is shown in the first part of the poem, the rest embodies how the poet expresses his “Love of Mankind” through his sympathy for the poor and the lower class of society. The boy Wordsworth’s love for Nature leads to his sympathy for the suffering and the poor, like the old beggar and the “hunger-bitten” girl. The following lines are filled with his deep compassion for the old blind beggar:

\[
\text{Of a blind Beggar, who, with upright face,}
\text{Stood propp’d against a Wall, upon his Chest}
\text{Wearing a written paper, to explain}
\text{The story of the Man, and who he was.}\(^{234}\)
\]

The description of the sight of the “hunger-bitten” girl and the cow strikes a sympathetic chord with the reader and makes the poet’s indignation for the injustice of society understandable:

\[
\text{... we chanc’d}
\text{One day to meet a hunger-bitten Girl,}
\text{Who crept along, fitting her languid self}
\text{Unto a Heifer’s motion, by a cord}
\text{Tied to her arm, and picking thus from the lane}
\text{Its sustenance, while the Girl with her two hands}
\text{Was busy knitting, in a heartless mood}
\text{Of solitude ...}\(^{235}\)
\]

Hart’s sympathetic feelings for the lower-class people in the East End of London are seen from similar descriptions in the sequential stories in his poem. The sad story in the second part of ‘The Little Air’ is a story within a story, told by a girl called “Millie Steele” who has stayed in the

\[^{233}\text{H. Bloom, } \textit{The Visionary Company}. \text{Ithaca and London: Cornell University, 1971, p. 141.}\]
\[^{235}\text{Ibid., p. 165.}\]
poet’s memory since he was “ten years old”. The girl was good at making up stories and
spinning “a lovely tale” about her mother’s sorry treatment by a man called “Mr. Wrong”. In her
tale she covered the fact that her mother was beaten by “Mr. Wrong” by saying that “mum’s
mascara bled into her face”. What “a lovely tale”! Any reader would applaud the technique used
in the poem, in which both the innocence of the girl and the poet’s craftsmanship in exposing the
suffering of the mother are so brilliantly demonstrated.

The second sorrowful story in part seven [189-190] is about an Irish girl called Clare and her
unfortunate family “who lived next door”. Because of her family’s poverty-stricken condition, she
became such a shabby-looking and hunger-bitten girl that

… her hair
Was made of fire, her body mad with lice.
…
… her head
On fire, her dress all torn …

And Clare was so hungry that she

… was looking hard
Into our backyard window – a white face
That knew a week or two of bread and lard –
Right through the glass, right through the plastic lace [189–190].

Due to her father’s desertion of the family – he “had gone off one moonless night”, her mother
had been crying “all bloody afternoon when she was tight”. The reason for the misfortunes of
Clare and her family is self-evident: it was ultimately caused by the injustice of society.

The last part [191] of the poem is a general description of the condition of the poor and their
hardships in London’s East End. In the first place, a common topic of the conversations among
them was “debt”. Secondly, the girl customers of the tailor mother were “often thin” – they were
working-class people who were undernourished. In the third place, although the “coal man” was
hardworking and humorous-natured he could not afford to keep his wife with him – his
“duchess” could not bear to live or suffer a life of poverty with him and “scarpered off one June”.
In the fourth place, another poor person was the “Paraffin”, who was sick and weak but he still
had to work – adding “paraffin” into lamps on the streets “on Friday nights”:

On Friday nights it was the Paraffin.
…
His fingers shook; he fell; his face was mush [191].

Lastly, although the Hart’s family lived in better conditions than the other people of the area,
“Nan” often complained to Hart’s mother by saying “Old mother’s ruin, needle ‘n’ pin” while
“mother” sang, now and then, the song with three words “Needle ‘n’ pin”. The miserable
conditions of London’s lower-class people and the injustice of society are vividly depicted
through one picture after another.
It must be pointed out that contemporary times are different from Wordsworth’s, and the sufferings of the people are different in form. War is one of the main modern reasons. Therefore, Hart expands the topic of “Love of Mankind” by disclosing the dangers and effects of wars which brought / bring / will bring sufferings to the common people of the world, and Hart’s sympathy for the common people is embodied in the following poems: ‘Prague, 1968’ [34–35], ‘The Twenty-First Century’ [28], ‘The Family’ [36], ‘A History Of The Future’ [38], and others.

In ‘Prague, 1968’, the reader sees the effects of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. The disastrous scene is described through a third-person point of view:

As if the entire population but you
Slipped off the globe at night …
…
But feel a carbine thrust in your back,
…
You off, across the city, past mounds of things
Still burning, tanks blundering down streets
…
Thunder of orders, tanks, guns, contracts
To a crowded Square where soldiers raise their flag,
Divided those captured into groups …
…
It is too cold for a dream: your breath
Hangs like the clouding smoke from the nearby tank
That points you, with the rest, to the Square.
What is happening? The old man beside you
Is trembling like the edge of a flag [34].

It is conspicuous that the invasion brings sufferings to the common people, and the sufferings caused by war are also seen in the poem ‘The Family’: when the father’s and mother’s son “does his bit” he

… is hit – he does not continue –
So father and mother
They go to the graveyard to visit [36].

The poet does not give a detailed description as to how sad the parents are when they visit the grave of their son, but the reader can imagine how sorrowful they are for the loss of their son. The death of their son is just one example of many thousands of young men who are slaughtered on different battlefields.

The above are disastrous and miserable occurrences in the past and present. What about the future? The reader sees them in the poem ‘A History Of The Future’:

… steeled armies
Marching through abandoned Squares
As they have always done.
There will be fields to plough,
The wind will shake bright trees, acorns
Will fall,
And plate will still crack
For no apparent reason [38].

In ‘The Twenty-First Century’, the poet give a warning to those who are in power by reminding them of the possibilities that

… our hands will be empty,
We will have nothing to give, only our stories
Of how everything we should have held before us
Like a candle
Was lost, forgotten, as we made our way
Across the fields of sadness, walking towards the horizon [28].

Unlike Wordsworth, who put forward his revolutionary idea for the solution in the name of “Natural Man” through the mouth of “Beaupuis” “‘Tis against that / Which we are fighting.” Hart does not suggest a solution for the injustice of society through a radical action like the French Revolution. Maybe it is because the two poets are writing from within different historical contexts. But there is something in common – both poets believe there is a better society waiting in the future – Jesus Christ and the Apocalypse are to come, which is a much better solution for Hart. M. H. Abrams points out in his essay “English Romanticism: The Spirit of Age”:

The great Romantic poems were written not in the mood of revolutionary exaltation but in the later mood of revolutionary disillusionment or despair. … To Europe at the end of the eighteenth century the French Revolution brought what Saint Augustine said Christianity had brought to the ancient world: hope. This “hope” is expressed in both the poets’ poems. Abrams states “the militancy of overt political action has been transformed into the paradox of spiritual quietism: under such militant banners is no march, but a wise passiveness”, as Wordsworth’s “apocalypse of nature” becomes, in The Prelude,

Characters of the great Apocalypse,
The types and symbols of Eternity,
Of first and last, and midst, and without end.

There is no lack of hope in Hart’s poem ‘Jerusalem’, which suggests the arrival of the New Jerusalem.

238 Ibid., p. 65.
Where two opposing forces clasp: this is the room
Where bread is broken
To make us whole, the inn of our desire [48].

An ideal society or a paradise will be regained through the spiritual wedding of the soul and Jesus Christ, and this echoes Wordsworth’s belief that

long before the blissful hour arrives,
Would chant in lonely peace the spousal verse
Of this great consummation.240

The romantic element in Hart’s poems is not expressed merely through “Love of Nature” and “Love of Mankind”, for “clarifying his true identity” is another aspect of romanticism in Hart’s poems.

b. Clarifying his true identity
For Wordsworth, choosing himself as the subject of The Prelude naturally involves dealing with other topics. One of these deals with the crisis of identity. As Abrams, in his Natural Supernaturalism, points out, Wordsworth has ‘a crisis of identity, which was resolved in the discovery of “my office upon earth”’.241 “the specification of this office entails the definition … of particular innovations in poetic subjects, style, and values, toward which his life had been implicitly oriented”242. Abrams’s commentary on Wordsworth can also be applied to Hart, for he also faced a crisis of identity when he was a boy.

The composition of the poem ‘The Little Air’ gave Hart a chance to clarify his true identity, to intensify his self-knowledge, and to strengthen his self-consciousness. This includes his apology for his bad reputation and poor school record (namely, being “a slow boy”, and his failure in “eleven-plus”), and his disclosure of the unfair treatment meted out to him by his former teachers, represented by “Mr. F.”. The poet said, in an interview, that he was regarded as “a slow boy” who “stayed near the bottom of the class”, and found “the examination intimidating and bewildering”. One of his teachers even complained to his parents that “I did not know my times table, could not tell the time.”243 But, is the boy Hart really so “slow”? If he were so, then, were there any reasons for this? ‘The Little Air’ provides the answers.

In the fourth part of the poem, the poet provides a description of one of his teachers, who is called “Mr. F.”. When he was drawing or “conning” a picture, “it took a year for him to get one right”. The slowness of “Mr. F.” makes such a deep impression on the poet that

Three decades on, I saw my year, for him,
Was making ‘Hadleigh Castle’ almost his [188].

242 Ibid.
Besides this, “Mr. F.” was very harsh to the boy Hart:

One day I hid behind the big uns’ rooms
When F. was on his tour around the yard.
…
He spied me with his little eye, his fist
Came through the blur and pulled me back in bounds.
I saw his stick; he tried to grab my hand;
He got the fingertips, then struck my wrist [188].

As “a shy child”, the boy Hart must have been much frightened by the harsh teachers represented by “Mr. F.”.

The stupidity and harshness of “Mr. F.” remind us of another teacher called “Smithy”, described in the poem ‘The Glorious Age’ [125], who always complained about the students, but never paid any attention to his own behaviour. His image is no less stupid and cruel than Mr. F.’s – he taught “grammar” by “parsing” a very long sentence on the blackboard, with excessive literary information for ten-year-olds. In addition, he even “takes another swig” in class although he did this behind the blackboard. It is obvious that it is the teacher who does not know basic teaching methods. So far, it is clear that it was those so-called teachers who were really “slow” and stupid, but not the boy Hart himself.

There are other elements contributing to the boy Hart’s reputation as “a slow boy”: the rough circumstances of his life. Firstly, the area in which the Harts lived was the East End of London, the slum district inhabited by the poor and labouring people who hardly received any education, and therefore their behaviour and language were coarse, indecent and uncivilised. These vulgar circumstances are described in several parts of the poem, for example, part five [188–189]: among his mother’s customers,

… two tizzy blondes
Sat either side and tried to make me blush;
They stroked my legs, and whispered silly things
…
One taught me how to kiss when mum slipped out,

The other said I really was a one [189].

In part nine [190–191], the poet describes “a bloke” or a pervert who “stopped me”

And talked about the girls who came around,
…
He’d like to leave his mark on that there girl,
He said, he’d like to do a lot of things
Oh yes, and then unzipped his hairy parts,
And held them, looking hard at me, and hard [191].

Besides the outer circumstances which were unfavourable to his growth, the family circumstances were not good for him either, for his mother was sometimes in a bad mood, especially when her Singer sewing machine broke down; the whole floor of the room would be covered with the parts of it: when something was wrong with mother’s work, “mum ripped out, row by row”. Whenever such things happened, “mum” would be so upset that she would say something to transfer her anger: “That fruit don’t grow on trees, you know!” when she saw “me” eating “another apple” and “spitting out”.

By now, the reader understands why the boy Hart appeared to be “slow” – “I was a mile beneath my skin and bone.” It was the teachers who were harsh, slow, and stupid; it was the people he met who were vulgar and uncivilised; and it was the family and neighbourhood environments that were unfavourable for his development and growth. It was all these elements that contributed to his reputation as “a slow boy” and his failure in the eleven-plus. Another impact of Hart’s poor early environment is that these unfavourable conditions played a vital role in turning him into an introverted person, and drawing him towards his “inner world”, and this impact will further be mentioned later in this dissertation.

The eighth and ninth parts [190–191] of the poem tell the reader whether the boy Hart was really “slow”. The true identity of the boy is reflected in several respects. The first is his response to his teacher’s comment on him: he could write “KH in half a dozen ways” and “I didn’t trust their world”. The second is that he had a good understanding of birds, such as the robins he mentions:

… birds I understood all right, oh yes,
I knew each robin’s nest in Parsloe’s Park
And knew my way there even in the dark [190].

The reader finds that the boy Hart, like the boy Wordsworth, felt quite at home when he was within the embrace of Nature. Like Wordsworth who loved and knew birds well, such as “woodcocks” that “ran / Along the open turf,”244 Hart was fond of birds like “robins” and good at climbing trees to “feel those warm eggs.”

Thirdly, his bravery in facing the pervert without being frightened again bears witness that he was not “a slow boy” at all. The reader perceives a kind of power that Hart achieved from nature as Wordsworth did. Normally a child as young as he was would have been frightened and burst into tears when facing such a horrible “bloke”. However, he showed no sign of being scared, and he had the power to “walk(ed) on”. He was calm and collected in dealing with the pervert who talked salaciously about girls and did nasty things like exposing his “hairy parts”. Indeed, bravely facing such a perverted person is enough to show the boy Hart was clever and bright rather than “slow”.

Like Wordsworth’s internalisation in *The Prelude*, Hart’s internalisation of the romantic quest undergoes the process of purgation, redemption at the cost of the destruction of “the social self.” As Wordsworth does in *The Prelude*, Hart shows his “Love of Nature” which leads to his “Love of Mankind”, and his ‘The Little Air’ and other poems give him the chance to identify his true “self” – his deeply buried past. The comparison between the two poets’ poems makes the dual reality of romanticism in Hart’s poems clear, and Hart’s poetic space witnesses further evidence of the dual realities from the romantic structure of some of his other poems.

### 3. Romantic Structure and Fragment

The dual realities of romanticism are much more evident in Hart’s poetic structure, which is similar to that defined by Abrams and J. H. Van den Berg, further illustrated by Bloom, and also explained by Lacouie-Labarthe and Nancy. In some “greater Romantic works”, according to Abrams, there is a similar structure contained in “the descriptive-meditative” or “the descriptive-meditative-descriptive” poems with the “repeated out-in-out process.” Van den Berg’s observation is from a Freudian point of view and endorses to Abrams’s formulation: the libido or energy of the inner self

> … partly detaches itself from the I and conveys itself to outside objects. … If the objects get lost, the libido attached to them can be transported to other objects; or, if this is not feasible, it can return to the source from which it originated. If this is what happens, the libido will come home.

Bloom thinks that the “cyclic movement” is “from appetite to repression”, showing the drive of the romantic internalised quest as “finding paradises within a renovated man”, and “in the arena of self-consciousness”.

Reflected in the structure of a poem, this process appears to be the “fragment” which Lacouie-Labarthe and Nancy think belongs to “the Romantic genre *par excellence*”, and it “does not exclude systematic exposition.” Hart supports this view by stating that “the Romantic fragment contains a whole hidden far within itself: it promises a higher unity than is available in formal systems of philosophy,” and “these fragments could suddenly bring an entire lost world

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247 Ibid., p. 206.


252 Ibid., p. 42.

back to life, if only for a moment,” and he also summarises Blanchot’s view on fragments as follows:

First, it posits a hidden center in each text. Second, it is considered as a self-enclosed item without due regard to the spacing between itself and other fragments. Third, it was required to be relatively short. And fourth, it remains in fee to identity: not a formal unity … but a supposedly higher, imaginative wholeness.

Either in original form or in variations, the structure or process, along with the “fragment”, frequently used in great romantic works, also appears in some poems by Hart, like ‘My Grandfather’s Chair’, ‘Facing the Pacific at Night’ [103], ‘Nights’ [166–168], and others. The theorists’ formulations and illustrations provide us with the theoretic bases for a further study of Hart’s poetic work through an examination of the romantic structure in these poems. Hence in this subsection I attempt to demonstrate how Hart utilises the romantic structure in his poems with the romantic genre of the fragment to present the dual realities of romanticism.

The same structure, or variants of it, is found in the poems mentioned above. The speaker in each poem starts with a description of an outer scene or an object or a trip, and then provides a detailed account of his meditation or reflection, including his memory, thought, anticipation, and feelings or emotions, which are interrelated with the external world or the outer scene. It is the outer scene that stimulates the speaker’s meditation and reflection, which further leads him on an internalised quest involved with the past until he achieves an insight, or Bloom’s “Unity of Being”.

The prose poem ‘My Grandfather’s Chair’ presents convincing evidence of this type of structure. It is presented through a first-person point of view with a description of the “chair”, on which his “grandfather” had been sitting for many years: The “chair” “is empty now, showing only the imprint of a body, its shifting weight, its curves.” The owner of the chair has left this world, but his chair triggers the speaker’s internalised quest. As a grandson of the late man, the speaker loves him and his absence makes the speaker sorrowful. Seeing the empty chair, the speaker seems to have felt “its shifting weight”, seen its curved shape, even the “imprint” left on the chair by his “grandfather”. To translate into Freud’s terms, the speaker’s energy of the inner self partly detaches itself from him and conveys itself to the outside object – the chair.

The speaker’s emotion for the loss of his “grandfather” is strengthened by the two rhetorical questions: “How many hours did he sit here, how many hours in eighty years?” Images of his grandfather rush into his mind:

It is the point from which, again and again, he set out, leaving the house in the unearthly grey before the trains to work a crane forever saluting London Bridge. Or

254 Ibid., p. 71.
255 Ibid., p. 72.
257 Ibid.
Glasgow, seated above those streets of steel and whisky, those houses built by the dead over the dead. Or to wait out a war, another war, in Amiens or Cairo.\textsuperscript{258}

Fortunately, the “grandfather” “[a]lways … returned” from the battlefields, with his “lines meet(ing) in this chair”.

The impression of the grandfather’s image related to the chair is further heightened through another rhetorical question: “How much tobacco was smoked in this chair?” Following the question is a further description of the chair: “The room is brown with it, the colour of pipes, the colour of this chair …”. Now the speaker sits on the chair doing the same thing as his grandfather: “I sit and smoke and settle in between two arms, hear the radio breathe its static, and watch the photograph of the smiling couple standing arm in arm …”\textsuperscript{259}

The physical reality – the chair – possesses the quality of the dual reality, as the speaker regards this chair as no longer a chair – it is transcended and transformed into a symbol, an embodiment of his grandfather. Through his imagination, his grandfather reappears and is resurrected to him. The speaker’s gesture of sitting on the chair indicates not only his deep love for his grandfather, but also that there is a life-circulation that he will, some day, become a grandfather to his own grandchildren. The object and subject are fused – the chair, his grandfather, and the speaker himself are transformed into one. This testifies to Coleridge’s dictum “‘Love transforms the souls into a conformity with the object loved.’”\textsuperscript{260} Accordingly, the speaker’s love for his “grandfather” “transforms” his soul “into a conformity with” the chair that he loves. In other words, the speaker is to achieve the “Unity of Being” through surpassing the state of being sad and sorrowful. The poem therefore follows the romantic structure, namely, “the descriptive-meditative-descriptive” structure or the “out-in-out process”, and “the energy of inner self” “return[s] to the source from which it originated”.

Another exemplary poem with this structure is ‘The Evening of the Fiesta’\textsuperscript{261} in Hart’s fifth volume of poetry, New and Selected Poems. The monologue poem begins with the first-person speaker’s introduction of the outside scene: all is quiet, “clear, calm” in the dead of night, with the moon shining “over the distant mountains”.\textsuperscript{262} Then the inside scene is presented: “You are asleep” while the “I” stands inside the house watching “through the balcony windows”, all by himself. Normally, this time and this scene should be the perfect time for lovers to stay together, for the time is “born for pleasure”. However, “you are asleep” while the “I” stays alone. Through the description of the scenes, a conflict is set up. That is, both the outside and inside scenes trigger the speaker’s meditation or self-consolation. It is from here that the speaker’s internalised quest begins. The speaker’s melancholy feeling is, at first, seen in the lines:

\begin{verbatim}
Now you cannot tell
What great pain sits on my heart
\end{verbatim}

\textsuperscript{258} Ibib.
\textsuperscript{259} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{260} J. A. Appleyard, Coleridge’s Philosophy of Literature. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1965, p. 47.
\textsuperscript{262} Ibid., p. 17.
and then the speaker shows something outside again: “I stand outside, and see the star …”.

Through his meditation, the speaker seems to have, at this time, realised something by watching the scene: those stars

…. tell me not to hope for you,
To wipe away my tears, to live for something else

Following is the speaker’s imagination:

But now you … dream
Of those you pleased today, of those
Who so pleased you. I know
That as you turn in sleep you do not dream of me.

The speculation or reflection deepens the speaker’s sad feelings, making him become more jealous, and this ends the first round of the “out-in-out process” or structure. To know how the conflict is settled, the reader needs to see the description of the second round of the process, which begins again with the description of the outward scene:

… and yet I stand here, cold, beneath the stars
…
And along the road
I hear the fading sound
Of someone walking home, still singing of this day.

This is followed with the his meditation:

I cannot but think of how all things must pass
And leave no trace. …
…
Think of the Romans swinging their swords in sunlit arcs,
Their galleys thrusting to strange lands …

The self-persuasive meditation includes his knowledge and memory of an incident when he was a child. As a result of the meditation, the speaker reaches an insight: the ‘I’ should follow the example of this “someone: be happy and merry”. The speaker transacts with the outward scene through which his thought incorporates everything that he sees and hears. He persuades him not to be sad by urging him to look forward and think of something for the future, and his mind has reached a more rational conclusion: everything will become the past or history and “leave no trace”.

Through the “repeated out-in-out process”, the speaker’s pain has been eased, and his emotional problem has been solved through transcendence and sublation. As Keats says, “the excellence of every Art is its intensity” which is “capable of making all disagreeables [sic] evaporate, from

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their being in close relationship with Beauty & Truth.”

Indeed, through the fusion of the object and subject, the discordant things, the speaker’s pain or emotional problems, “evaporate” from this fusion of object and mind.” This “drawing into unity is beauty” or harmony, and even if it happens just for a while,

… in this harmony that ‘Beauty’ and ‘Truth’ come together … the harmony with truth will remain, and even deepen, to the extent that the emerging reality is being constantly matched at every stage by the ‘depth of speculation excited’ – by the corresponding release and extension, in other words, of human insight.

A comparison between Hart’s poem ‘Facing the Pacific at Night’ and Coleridge’s poem ‘Frost at Midnight’ will provide further evidence that Hart has been influenced by the romantic poets, for the two poems have much in common, especially their structures. In the first place, the titles of the two poems have something in common – ‘Frost at Midnight’ and ‘Facing the Pacific at Night’ show that the time of each poem is related to “night”. Another key point is that each poem’s title is related to a natural scene or landscape: one is “frost” and the other “the Pacific”.

In the second place, Coleridge begins his poem by creating a serene atmosphere in which he addresses himself to his “abstruser musings”. The stillness of the frosty midnight is so deep – it is only now and then broken by “the owlet’s cry” and gentle breathing of his “cradled infant” who “slumbers peacefully” besides him, and the bird’s cry and baby’s rhythmic breathing make the stillness of the night even deeper. Surrounded with calmness or peace among the vast and spacious “sea, hill, and wood”, which are “inaudible as dreams”, the poet begins his meditation or inner pilgrimage – his memory flashes back into the past, which is skilfully equated with “thin blue film”, making it “a toy of Thought”. Similarly, a profound silence or calmness is implied in the opening line of Hart’s poem, and it exists “in the darkness between two stars” or “between two thoughts”, making the space appear much more mysterious and spacious. Through the third-person speaker, the reader is shown that “driving east, you are a child again”. The “greatest ocean” is transformed or metamorphosed into a cradle, in which “you” begin sweet dreaming or reflection, as Coleridge does his “abstruser musings”. Thus, the description of the outside world in each poem is a preparation for the process of inner meditation and reflection by the speaker.

In the third place, each of the poets shows his memory and reflection in the same manner – a dream-like manner. In Coleridge’s poem, through watching the “fluttering films” portending the arrival of an absent friend and serving as a transitional point, the speaker or the poet lets his memory flicker into the past:

… at school, with most believing mind,
Presageful, have I gazed upon the bars,
To watch that fluttering stranger!

265 Ibid.
266 Ibid., p. 203.
The loneliness of Coleridge’s childhood and his eagerness for the accompaniment and coming of a friend or a family member is further seen from the lines below:

… I snatched
A hasty glance, and still my heart leaped up,
…
For still I hoped to see the stranger’s face,
Townsman, or aunt, or sister more beloved,
My play-mate when we both were clothed alike.\(^{268}\)

It is through the “fluttering film” that the speaker

… dreamt
Of my sweet birth-place, and the old church-tower,
Whose bells, the poor man’s only music, rang
From morn to evening, all the hot Fair-day,
So sweetly, that they stirred and haunted me
…
So gazed I, till the soothing things, I dreamt,
Lulled me to sleep, and sleep prolonged my dreams!\(^{269}\)

In the last stanza but one, the speaker begins to brood on his sleeping infant son’s future, as he listens to the gentle breathing of the baby. The speaker hopes that

… thou see and hear
The lovely shapes and sounds intelligible
Of that eternal language, …

… all seasons shall be sweet to thee,\(^{270}\)

which is better than his own, when the speaker’s mind has flashed back into his past:

… I was reared
In the great city, pent ’mid cloisters dim,
And saw nought lovely but the sky and stars.\(^{271}\)

The whole poem appears to be a memory within a memory or a dream within a dream.

In Coleridge’s poem, it is through watching the “fluttering film” that the speaker becomes a child again. In Hart’s poem, it is through “driving east” that the protagonist is “a child again”. It seems that “you” restart “your” life from the very beginning, for at this time “[t]he web of names is brushed aside from things”, and from “your” memory. The analogy makes “you” transform from an adult into an imaginary “child”. As an adult, all “your” purity and innocence may have

\(^{268}\) Ibid., pp. 241-242.
\(^{269}\) Ibid., p. 241.
\(^{270}\) Ibid., p. 242.
\(^{271}\) Ibid.
disappeared – how can they be restored or retrieved? The way of the transcendence or the journey of the soul to the highest being is interestingly shown through your or the child’s dream. During the trip to the Pacific, “you” have become doubled or split into two – one is the present “you” who is driving, the other is the child “you” – the child who easily falls asleep and begins his dreaming in his car, which becomes a cradle. When “you” drive and become a child again, things appear to “you” as what they are – the naked matter or essence. For during this period, the child has not been contaminated by worldly sins and he is as pure as a piece of white paper – chaste, clean, and innocent. Therefore, when “[t]he web of names is brushed aside from things” what is revealed is a kind of “energy, / An elemental life flashing in starlight.” [103]

If the “energy” is a kind of memory, then it can be said that the memory is the primordial memory of human beings. Things from the past, as the other part of the dual reality, are always treasured in Hart’s poems. For example, in ‘Flies’ [61] it is “flies” that “bring my past all back to me, like honey and light”. The “men from the other side” in ‘The Discoverers’ [131] are interested in what they have “heard in stories and from old folk”; in ‘The Room’ [136]:

At night I hear the crickets list their griefs
And let an ancient peace come into me.

These past things, “stories from old folk” and “ancient peace” belong to the category of memory or primordial memory which also appears in Coleridge’s poem ‘Frost at Midnight’. Like the speaker in Coleridge’s poem, who becomes a child when he dreams, the protagonist “you” in Hart’s poem also becomes a child –

The ocean slowly rocks from side to side,
A child itself, asleep in its bed of rocks,
No parent there to wake it from a dream [103].

Now the ocean has become the child’s cradle, with him so comfortably sleeping on it that no one can wake him, not even his own parent. Here “you” are seen in a deep “dream” and reflection, through which the romantic vision and imagination of the poet are represented.

Lastly, the parent’s love for the child is effusively exhibited in the ending of each poem, and each ending completes a circle or several circles of description – the out-in-out process. In Coleridge’s poem the speaker imagines his son enjoying the changing beauty of the country seasons, and the reader is brought back to reality and the present, which is shown through Coleridge’s powerful observation in the last few lines:

Therefore all seasons shall be sweet to thee,
Whether the summer clothe the general earth
With greenness, or the redbreast sit and sing
Betwixt the tufts of snow on the bare branch
Of mossy apple-tree …

Shall hang them up in silent icicles,
Quietly shining to the quiet Moon.\textsuperscript{272}

In a similar way, the ending of Hart’s poem has the same quality of silence as, which is seen from the lines:

Outside the world we know is here and now,
Between two thoughts, a child that does not grow,
A silence undressing words, a nameless love [103].

Thus, the two poems reach their endings, which are the same as their starting points, and hence one chronological circle in each poem is completed.

Were the endings of three other romantic poems to be compared, it would become more convincing that Hart uses a similar technique to the English romantic poets’ in his poem. According to Bloom, Coleridge’s poem ‘Frost at Midnight’ is the origin of the Wordsworthian mode, of ‘Tintern Abbey’. The poem ‘Tintern Abbey’ is the father of Shelley’s ‘Mont Blanc’ and Keats’s ‘Sleep and Poetry’.\textsuperscript{273} These poems’ endings testify to Bloom’s proposition. The ending of Wordsworth’s poem is addressed to his sister Dorothy Wordsworth:

… Therefore let the moon
Shine on thee in thy solitary walks;
And let the misty mountain-winds be free
To blow against thee …\textsuperscript{274}

Keats, in his poem ‘Sleep and Poetry’, has an ending mentioning a father’s tenderness towards his son:

I leave them as a father does his son.\textsuperscript{275}

Shelley ends his poem ‘Mont Blanc’ in the same vein as Hart does:

And what were thou, and earth, and star, and sea,
If to the human mind’s imagings
Silence and solitude were vacancy?\textsuperscript{276}

Through the endings of the great English romantic poems the reader sees that the ending of Hart’s poem has not only Coleridge’s tenderness, Wordsworth’s affection and Keats’s


consideration, but also Shelley’s magnificence and mystery. In short, Hart successfully fuses subject and object, the inner and the outer worlds, embodies the merits of the great romantics in this poem and develops his own distinguishing features as well.

Although there are similarities between Hart’s poem and Coleridge’s, there exist some differences between them. A salient one is that the frequency of “out” and “in” in Hart’s poem is higher than in Coleridge’s. In Hart’s, the high frequency of “out” and “in” is described not through the first-person speaker but through an omniscient third-person speaker who addresses a second-person protagonist. Consequently and naturally, the dual reality – both the outer and inner worlds – can be displayed as freely and frequently as possible. Unlike the speaker in Coleridge’s poem, in which there are fewer rounds of the “out-in-out” process, the speaker in Hart’s poem relates the details through an omniscient point of view that glides freely from the outside world to the inside world and vice versa. Take the first two stanzas for example. In the first stanza, “you” “drive east” and “reach the greatest ocean”, which is the factual, then the first half of the second line shows that the “driving east” is something imaginary, happening “between two thoughts”. The same can be said of the second stanza, in which the fact is that “you” “drive east”, while “you are a child again” is not a fact, at least, not a literal fact. What is more, when we read that “[t]he web of names is brushed aside from things” and “[t]he ocean’s name is quietly washed away”, what we see is not a description of a literal fact, but a description of the driver’s inner feeling or the speaker’s imagination. Thus the dual realities in Hart’s poems – the factual and the imaginary or outer and inner worlds – are coexistent as in Coleridge’s, but with a higher frequency than his.

The reader may have noticed that an obvious consequence of such a high frequency of the outer and inner movements is that the text consists of “fragment(s)”. As the poet states, the composition of a romantic poem commits the poet to searching for “the dialectical image”, such as

A waxworks figure, a window lit by a single candle, a passage from a forgotten serial novel: these fragments could suddenly bring an entire lost world back to life, if only for a moment. In that instant we could glimpse the hopes and the sufferings, the worries and pleasures, of people long dead.277

This proposition is testified to in ‘Nights’ [166–168] and ‘Old Man Smoking A Pipe’ [69]. The poems provide a quick glimpse of the images of a lost lover, past youth, and the speakers’ emotions. In an interview, when talking about Wordsworthian “healing and self-healing”, Hart said: “Writing a poem can help you find what needs to be healed; it can lead to ‘at-one-ment’ … But there’s always a risk that you will end up picking at old sores.”278

A typical example to show the “old sores” is ‘Nights’ with the romantic structure or the “repeated out-in-out process” or “fragment(s)” – the romantic genre. The first-person speaker reveals to the reader some details about the mutual love between him and a young woman, his enchantment with her even when their relationship had broken up, and his bewilderment at his

278 Watson, S. ‘‘The Radiance of Things … that can’t be Named’: Talking to Kevin Hart’. [The material was provided by Kevin Hart]
loss of her. Due to the structure, the poem is filled with fragments of their love happening at different times in the past.

The opening stanza is a description of embarrassment: “I had to learn to sleep alone” while “my mind fought with my heart”. The conflict leads to the poet’s inner crying: “Where are you?” which naturally results in the poet’s reflection on the past relationship with the “you”. The poet’s experience with the “you” is reduced to some “fragments” showing how they loved each other – the happy time they spent together, and how she gradually “vanished bit by bit” until she left him “for good”, and how the speaker tried to deal with the situation without her presence. The whole poem is filled with episodes and bits and pieces of his memories, described through a cinematic flashing back and forth, from now to then.

Although this is so, the reader sees that the speaker’s love for the “you” or her enchantment for him is dialectical. It is as Bloom observes: “two principles intertwine in the resistance to enchantment”: “one ‘organic’” and “the other ‘creative’”. The “organic” or “anxiety principle” is “identical to the ego’s self-love” defined by Freud as “object-libido”, which “was at first ego-libido and can be again transformed into ego-libido”. But it is the “creative” principle that “resists (the) enchantment in the name of a higher mode than the sympathetic imagination.”

That is to say, on the one hand, Hart’s libido toward the “you” undergoes the “reality principle” or ego’s self-love “through the great disenchanter, reason, the scientific attitude”; on the other hand, his love for the “you” “transcends the selfhood” through “a fusion between the libido and the active or imaginative element in the ego; or simply, desire wholly taken up into the imagination.” Accordingly, at the end of the poem, the speaker does not let himself be overwhelmed by his emotion for the woman; instead of “too many hours just thinking of you” he has a deepened understanding that “there is no way that I’ll ever win you back”.

Like romantic poems, ‘Nights’ comprises fragments narrated through a first-person speaker. But some of Hart’s poems with reflections and fragments are narrated through an omniscient third-person point of view, addressing “you” or “he”. As we are already familiar with the omniscient point of view addressing “you”, I would like to take the poem ‘Old Man Smoking A Pipe’ [69] as an example, in which an omniscient point of view addresses a third-person “he”. Through the point of view, the reader sees the “repeated out-in-out” structure deployed in the poem, that is, how “he” or “Old Man”, via “smoking a pipe”, moves into and out of his past through reflection and imagination. Therefore, the poem is organised as “fragments”.

In the first stanza the reader sees an image or a fragment: a sick old man sits in a chair, taking some medicine, which becomes “an instrument” to reduce “his past” life into fragments that appear before him and us. Through the smoke curling up around him, he seems to see his girlfriend appearing before his eyes: “A girl’s warm breath in winter, / A rearing horse”. This fragment of life related with his girlfriend is like a

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280 Ibid.
281 Ibid.
282 Ibid.
283 Ibid., p. 13.
Then, the old man’s attention is drawn to the “outside” scene where the sun is shining, or “[t]he sun sits on the church”, which triggers his meditation and imagination that God’s Son, Jesus Christ, is sitting on the roof or tower of the church. It seems to him that the church’s “brass bell” is “calling” those who are still “sleeping”, the spiritually unwakened people, to cross the “deep pools” between the secular world and spiritual world, to assemble or gather them to enjoy the radiance and grace of God.

The old man’s attention returns to the other fragment of reality: he sees

... on the table
A small knife, matches, the forgettable things
That compose a life [69].

The things on the table appear insignificant and negligible, but it is these things that reveal the “Unity of Being” – the old man’s deep buried memory of his past life comes to him. Even the “tobacco” in his “pipe” gives him some sort of enlightenment:

The tobacco
As brown as a young soldier’s hair
Preserved
In a glass jar, a family memento;
But once alight

It turns gray as this man’s hair
As the minutes pass and a life is considered
And finally understood [69].

The analogy shows how the old man’s consciousness or his understanding has finally been intensified through the “repeated out-in-out process” and reduction of his life into fragments; not only the “old man” but also the reader understands that a person’s life is like a tiny wave or a drop of water in the great river of history: momentary, fleeting, and transient.

4. Conclusion
The dual realities in Hart’s poems are confirmed in the romantic consciousness that is divided into two parts: “solitude” and “Unity of Being”. The romantic consciousness, in its internalised quest, seeks the death of the former and the existence of the latter. As W. J. Bate observes, “the irrelevant and discordant (the ‘disagreeables’ [sic]) ‘evaporate’ from this fusion of object and mind.”

284 The “fusion”, or the “Unity of Being”, “dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate: or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to idealize and unify.”

285 In romantic poems, physical nature is celebrated, but what is celebrated more is the power of the poet’s mind or the power of their imagination. The same can be said of Hart’s poems: they celebrate the power of imagination in the perception of physical nature.


285 Ibid., p. 137.
As demonstrated above, the romantic poets’ internalised quest involves the recovery of the “deeply buried experience” through the death of one part of consciousness, which leads to the existence of the other. The dual realities of romanticism are presented through a general pattern or structure: the repeated descriptive-meditative-descriptive or out-in-out process, and the romantic genre (“fragment(s)”). Enough evidence is found in Hart’s poems, showing that there are some romantic elements in his work. Through these demonstrations, we find that Hart’s way of expressing the romantic quest is not only congenial to romantic figures like Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, and Shelley, but to the theorists of romanticism represented by Abrams, Bloom, Lacouie-Labarthe and Nancy.

It may be noted that the romantic idea of negation has similarities with negative theory and foretells Bataille’s, Levinas’s, Blanchot’s, and Derrida’s negative thinking about death or dying. In the meantime, we cannot ignore the fact that some of Hart’s poems studied in this section contain strong modernist elements. The “fragment(s)” is/are highly valued by modernists. The romantic fragment reminds us of cubist fragments or dimensions. The special point that a romantic seeks is reminiscent of André Breton’s transcendent “point”. It is vital to note that the romantic point is a dividing point or line between death and life, which intensifies and strengthens the consciousness while the surrealist’s “point” is from the conscious to the unconscious. In the following part of this dissertation, cubism and surrealism will be my major focus.
Part III
Modernism in Hart’s Poems
Section I. Elements of Cubism

I. Introduction
Having examined the classical and romantic elements in Hart’s poems in Part II, I would like to explore the modern elements in his poems in this section, and argue that cubism also plays a vital role in Hart’s poetry, for some of his poems are written in a manner which accords with Guillaume Apollinaire’s cubist aesthetics. This will be seen through a discussion of the techniques used in some of his poems, which are close to those used by Apollinaire and Max Jacob, two leading figures in cubism.

I shall begin with a brief introduction of cubism. I want to emphasise three things concerning romanticism, as they are of assistance in our understanding of cubism. The first is that the repeated out-in-out process in a romantic poem results in the phenomenon that a poem is composed of “fragment(s)”; the second is that the consciousness of the speaker is intensified and strengthened in a romantic poem; the third is about the function of nature in a romantic work, in that physical nature does not play a key role, but instead it is the human mind that is celebrated for its absolute power of perception. The romantic way of treating nature is inherited and ramified in the modernist movement.

A cubist poem also consists of fragments or dimensions of an object or thing. In the process of perception, the consciousness of the speaker in a poem is, too, intensified rather than weakened. Nature, to a cubist, is nothing as compared to the human mind, for it “is no more than a source of an essentially formless play of sense phenomena whose illusory quality, though perhaps diverting, is of little significance to the artist”.286 One of the cubist doctrines is that “nature is essentially formless, and that the form we see in the world about us is but the result of an intellectual approach to a higher truth that transcends the merely human sphere”.287 In other words, what concerns a cubist artist or poet is “to paint” or describe “not the thing itself, but the effect it produces” rather than physical nature itself. Poetry or an artistic work aims to search for “pure essence”, which is “freed of all the individual qualities of the phenomenal world”.288 To a cubist, “nature” is “dead”.289

However, physical nature is by no means completely left out of a cubist work; it still acts its role as “a dictionary from which the artist drew the raw materials of his creations”.290 In other words, a cubist work expresses “a dual reality” which encompasses “both nature and the human spirit”291 or both nature and the effect that nature produces. According to Apollinaire, “[t]he cubists paint objects, not as people see them, but as people imagine them”.292 The dual reality can be traced back to Plato, who regards it as a kind of “faculty”, stating: “In speaking of a faculty I think only of its sphere and its result; and that which has the same sphere and the same result I call the same

288 Mallarmé, Propos sur la poesie, quoted C. Gray, Cubist Aesthetic Theories, p. 16.
290 C. Gray, Cubist Aesthetic Theories, p. 9. Also see note 4 on the page.
291 Ibid.
faculty, but that which has another sphere and another result I call different." 293 The “sphere” refers to “nature” while the “result” indicates the effect produced through the intellectual mind or the “human spirit”.

How can the “dual reality” be obtained? Almost like the internalised romantic quest that seeks to get rid of “everything in the self”, which “blocks imaginative work” 294 in order to gain “Unity of Being”, a cubist aims at getting “every bit of dross” cleaned and washed away to achieve the “pure, direct, primitive expression”, 295 which can also be called “higher reality”, 296 the “supernatural”, the “surreal”, 297 “conceptual reality” or “internal reality”. 298 And this kind of reality has “three plastic virtues”, namely, “purity, unity, and truth”, resulting from “stand(ing) triumphantly over vanquished nature”. 299 A cubist, in contrast to a romantic, seeks for the “higher reality” that does not involve individual temperament, for it is “simply a new way of representing the world”, 300 as Juan Gris observes, and it does not involve personal feeling and emotion as much as in a romantic work.

Apollinaire believes that the “three plastic virtues” come from the “fourth dimension”, which Robert Gray includes in the second phase of cubism. In Gray’s opinion, cubism is divided into two phases with different features. In the first phase, the object is to be “analysed and interpreted, but it still retains its objective reality” 301 while the second phase is characterised as “synthesis”, 302 which means that “the artists and the writers became acutely aware of … the reality of form” belonging to “the realm of ideas, not to that of direct perception”. 303 Apollinaire’s “fourth dimension”, as the key feature of the second phase of cubism, “is supposedly engendered by the three known dimensions. It thus represents the vastness of space stretching eternally in all directions at any given moment. It is space itself, the dimension of infinity; it is what endows objects with plasticity.” 304 Gray’s analysis of the two phases of cubism is in accordance with Plato’s thinking, for the latter also believes that the world is divided into two: “the visible” and “the intellectual”. 305 Whether it is Plato’s two worlds or Gray’s two phases, the “dual reality” with “metaphysical forms” exists, and the main difference between the two phases or two worlds is that the former is more concrete and detailed while the latter is more abstract, hypothetical, philosophical, and “religious”. 306

295 C. Gray, Cubist Aesthetic Theories, p. 18.
296 Ibid., p. 27.
297 Ibid., p.6. Also see note 43 on the page.
299 Ibid., p. 47.
300 D. H. Kahnweiler, Juan Gris: His Life and Work, quoted by C. Gray, Cubist Aesthetic Theories, p. 45.
301 C. Gray, Cubist Aesthetic Theories, p. 54.
302 Ibid.
303 Ibid.
How can the “dual reality” or “metaphysical forms” be expressed in a poetic way? One method of writing is called “simultaneity” or “multiple perspectives or multiple points of view”, instead of the unitary perspective. It has been put this way: “the Cubist interest in simultaneity led to a freezing of time so as to explore the interlocking of multiple perspectives.”307 This is to say, texts are made up of fragments or different individual images overlapping together rather than comprising a chronological order or narratives that have a very strong sense of coherence and unity. But coherence or unity underlies a cubist work, and “requires the reader to reassemble the apparently random fragments in a new order”. 308 Gerald Kamber summarises the cubist techniques as follows:

(1) a pulling to pieces of the object; (2) a rebuilding of the pieces into an independent composition; (3) a placing together of objects (or parts of objects) from an unrestricted range of observations; (4) a shifting of emphasis from the “reality” of the object to the “reality” of the esthetic surface.309

Kamber’s summary goes further than Nicholls’s and shows how a poet uses the cubist techniques in a detailed way. I would group the first three items as one category, and regard the fourth one as Apollinaire’s fourth dimension or Gray’s second phase of cubism. This way, we see that Plato’s two worlds and Gray’s two phases, especially Apollinaire’s fourth dimension, are presented through cubist techniques. In this section, what concerns me most is how an objective reality, in Hart’s poems, produces the “dual reality” and “operates on two levels at once”310 through the changes and transformations of the images, which is similar to the techniques summarised by Kamber. With the theories in mind, I wish to read some poems by Hart and see how he practises cubist techniques in poems such as ‘The Clocks of Brisbane’ [21], ‘Pozières’ [33], ‘This Day’ [47], ‘The Real World’ [68], ‘The Old’ [37], ‘The Day Shift: Ford Works, London’ [18], ‘The Yellow Christ’ [27], ‘Heat’ [126], and the five shadow poems (four poems entitled ‘Your Shadow’ [45, 52, 64, 70], and one under the title ‘Your Shadow’s Song’ [76-81]).

II. Cubist Techniques Used by Hart

a. Plastic images with various cubist shapes
If the theory of cubism is utilised in analysing ‘The Clocks of Brisbane’, it is found that Apollinaire’s fourth dimension and the two phases of cubism with the application of techniques of simultaneity are well exemplified. The whole poem consists of three planes. The first four sentences make up the first plane. Each of the four sentences contains a cubist image with at least two dimensions:

Yes, the Town Hall clock, big as the moon, shining over the Doric columns, the Square where a man walks, drawing in on a cigarette, watching the clock's hands draw together [21].

The first image is described from an unrestricted point of view – from up to down, a giant figure which seems to be standing upright between heaven and earth. It is so high and so “big” that it is likened to the “moon” up in the sky, and it so low that the speaker’s point of view moves down to “the Square where a man walks”. Similarly, while the second image, “The Vulture Street clock”, is high above with “its grave Roman numerals”, “it looks down on all the bars, the offices smelling of old typewriters” or rather it is seen by the people drinking in “all the bars and the offices”. The two images are similarly composed. The third image or the clock at “the Tennyson Power Station” is multidimensional – it is “amidst the factories”, and it is so big that “the cranes” appear as “delicate as the husks of insects” by contrast. And the “Post Office clock” is also huge, for it is always “watching over Inala” up in the sky.

Aside from the fact that the four fragmented images proper are multidimensional or at least two-dimensional, they are overlapping and juxtaposed in succession, as if they were seen from the sky from a helicopter, which can fly up and down, or fly through the vast space of the city. Time in the poem seems to be condensed and the reader, while reading the poem, seems to be contemplating a huge picture or painting with cubic forms, covering the whole city of Brisbane, where the clocks are studded in the sky, just like the moon or stars high above are dotted in the vast sky. In the first four sentences, the third-person speaker has a bird’s-eye view, and everything appears simultaneously before the reader as if it were taken in at a sweeping glance.

This is reminiscent of a poem by Jacob:

You are as a foaming pot of boiling milk under the balloon, mountains and from there soon emerges, like a gigantic dicecup, good natured Old Man Globe, the forehead of Father Double Sphere.311

The point of view is that of a person on a balloon, which is rising to the sky. Watching from the balloon, the man seems to see the images in a succession – the “pot”, “mountains,” and the “Globe”. To a certain degree, the point of view in Hart’s poem is similar to that in Jacob’s. In addition to the movement of rising up to and sweeping across the sky, the point of view in Hart’s poem goes up and down, and thereby more dimensions are described and presented.

Having shown the four clocks with prismatic and geometrical shapes from a macroscopic view, the poet begins to present something more specific on another plane through a comparatively microscopic view. So there appears “The clock in … my father’s house”, surrounded with the “pen, telephone and pipe”, which are “still and quiet” “in his living-room”. In addition, the “clock” is situated somewhere near a “window” where it is given the privilege of seeing the “stars” and “moon” rising or, rather, the rising “stars” and “moon” watch the “clock” through the window. So, it is clear that the “clock” in “my father’s house” is multidimensional. The clock functions as a transitional bridge between the clocks and people, and hence comes another plane of the poem. That is, the poet’s descriptive focus is moved from the clocks to the people, to

exhibit the relationship between the clocks, or time, and people, or to show the significance of time to the people – “They are all within the clock’s hands”.

The description of the various people in the latter part of the poem adopts the same method as used to describe the clocks – one image is added on to another – “those wrestling in bed”, “those in cheap hotels”, “those out past Moggill” … The effect of “simultaneity” is achieved through the parallel sentence structure with the images juxtaposed and the polysyndetons omitted. As a result, the poem exhibits seemingly choppy, fragmented, and intermittent sequences. This provides multidimensions of the scene with details that are spatial, fleeting, broad, and specific all at once.

In the poem verisimilitude is not very important, and the detailed actions or gestures of a human subject count for very little. What is important is the means of the descriptions, which are very much like “Picasso” or “a surgeon dissecting a corpse” – from far to near or from outside to inside, then to the final focus or target, which is the clock on the man’s wrist or the man in his bedroom. Hence the diminution is doubled: on the one hand, the reduction is from the moon to the clock or watch on the man’s wrist; on the other hand, the figures from the giant tower outside to the man who is reading inside. If the man with a watch on his wrist is what the poet wants to describe, then it can be said that the poet wants to illustrate how powerful and significant the clock or time is to the man. Equally important are one’s faith in and piety towards God. The subtle implication can be seen from the transformation of the clock to the moon, and then to the star, the diminution of the bigger clocks to the smaller clock in “my father’s house” and lastly to the mini-clock or watch on the “wrist” of the man “in prayer”: this is typical of the cubist method of description.

The juxtaposition of the images with the diminution of the shapes recalls two similar plastic images by Apollinaire and Jacob. One is the moon in Apollinaire’s poem ‘The Betrothal’, as a symbol of desire transformed into “[t]he moon” that “is a fried egg” or “[t]he moon” that “fries like an egg in the pan”. The other is a gradual diminution of the importance or significance of one group of things or people, as demonstrated in a poem by Max Jacob:

The countryside in these countries has less importance than the cities, and the cities less than the people, and the people less than the costumes; just as the houses have less importance than the balconies and the balconies than the blinds.

Like Apollinaire’s or Jacob’s focus, which moves from a larger object to a smaller one, Hart’s focal point slides from the remoter one to the closer one or from natural reality to a higher and internal reality. “There occurs at the same time a corresponding intensification of meaning”, as Kamber convincingly specifies, “from the external and banal to the internal and subtle” while the meaning in Hart’s poem becomes more moral, spiritual and mysterious, with the

intensification gradually reached and resolved. Like Apollinaire or Jacob, who employ the technique for multiplying images, Hart glides his focal point, like a balloon, across the space of Brisbane city, and thereby overlays one image of clock on another in succession; then he causes focal point to enter another level, demonstrating a chain of images of the idle ways some people waste their time, which forms a striking contrast with the man in his bedroom, who is making the very spiritual gesture of praying. Consequently, prominence is given to the significance of one’s religious belief. Thus, the poem’s theme of believing in God, and the morality of making good use of one’s time, are equally and doubly highlighted. This might be equivalent to Gray’s second phase of cubism or what Apollinaire calls the fourth dimension of the cubist description, in which an intellectual idea or higher reality is expressed.

A similar description is seen in another poem, ‘Pozières’ [33]. Technically, this poem follows the example of ‘The Clocks of Brisbane’ or Apollinaire’s and Jacob’s poems discussed above. The diminution of focus in ‘Pozières’ occurs in much the same manner as in the previously discussed poems. Basically, ‘Pozières’ can be approached through two ways: one is by tracing the relationships between the shapes of the main objects, and the other is by dividing the images into several groups or categories. Likewise, the effect of being simultaneously present is achieved through the bird’s-eye and panoramic view from “the moon”, with everything in sight in a single glance.

In the first stanza, the movement of the moon is from the external to the internal:

The moon shines over the field,
It looks at itself from the bottom of the Somme;

And then,

It enters the houses of Pozières
And spills across the tables … [33]

It is not difficult for us to find a pattern of description which is from the outside to the inside. The pattern is repeated in the second stanza: it not only shines “over the church” and “over the white-haired man” but also enters the inside and “sees” – the “burning candles” and the “drinking” “man”. The moon’s focal point or, rather, the poet’s, is on something very specific – “this face”, which “is deepest white”, and “remembers nothing”. The sense of the outside-and-inside pattern is further enhanced when the moon enters people’s dreams:

A clock that says it is all over now,
A plate that says eat all you wish [33].

Now this plastic moon is in a similar process of reduction to that which happened to the moon in the poem discussed above: from the moon to the white-haired man’s face, then to the “clock” and the “plate”. The process of the moon’s reduction continues in the last stanza of the poem until it appears “at the bottom of the old man’s glass”, “sparkl[ing] like a coin”. The successive plastic images are stuck together through the movement or transformation of the moon as its point of focus diminishes / grows smaller.
In the meantime, the reader’s attention, following the moon’s movement and transformation, is gradually narrowed. It shifts from the larger objects outside down to the minute details inside the “church”, the people’s dreams, the “house” and finally “at the bottom of the old man’s glass”. As a result, the significance of the moon’s movement or metamorphosis is narrowed to something essential. The plastic moon is another typical cubist image which possesses temporal-spatial volatility: the big moon shining brightly, high in the sky, becomes a small “coin”, and therefore we see the fourth dimension of the moon – the aesthetic significance of the moon through which the old man’s whole life is seen at a glance. Thus Hart, like a cubist artist, devotes himself to “making concrete the abstract and reducing concrete to the essential”.

The metamorphosis of the moon in this poem acts as an analogy or an extended metaphor to show some of the changes occurring during a person’s life – from his prime to his older years. When the old man was young he was perhaps handsome and ambitious and full of energy and vigour, his future was as bright as the shining moon. However, when he gets older, he has lost his energy and his face becomes wrinkled, dark and dim, and he is not as ambitious as before, just like the opposite side or “the other face of the moon”. Although he is old now, he sees things penetratingly and profoundly, as he understands the real meanings of the “clock” and the “plate” – the value of time and the importance of food. During the course of the old man’s life, he might have wasted much of his time when he was young, and he might have suffered hunger or have seen others suffering hunger. But when he is older, he becomes devout and spiritual. In a word, the older he becomes, the wiser, kinder, and more spiritual he is. It is this natural law that the poet might want to tell us about. Hence, we have seen the dual reality or the two-dimensional life of the old man, and his mode of life experience can serve as a model of the life of all the people in this world.

Hart’s vision of dual reality is so comprehensive that even two different generations of people can also be placed on one plane simultaneously, a plane that consists of several dimensions, as shown in ‘The Day Shift: Ford Works, London’ [18]. The older generation has two dimensions: the mothers who come back “with packages / Smelling of vinegar”, and the fathers who return from their work “with the smell of grease”. We can see that the image of the mothers is mainly domestic and family-centred, while the image of the fathers, the working figures, is primarily as bread-winners. The younger generation also has two dimensions: the young girls and boys. Young girls pay more attention to their appearances – “Fiddle with their hair” before shop windows, which are regarded as “mirrors”; while the boys’ interest is in playing games with their fellows by running here and there.

The natural change of human beings – from the older to the younger – is sharply delineated: the young girls go along with their mothers and “the boys” “follow within their fathers’ shadows”. The mothers used to be someone’s daughters while the daughters will be wives and mothers in the future. In a similar way, the fathers had their childhood in the past whereas the sons have the prospect of being husbands and fathers. In other words, the task of taking care of families will fall on the shoulders of the young girls, and the burden of earning a living for their families will rest on the shoulders of the young boys. Human beings, in this way, will keep on going from generation to generation. It is in this sense that the “shift” and change happen in succession.

317 Unknown source, quoted by C. Gray, Cubist Aesthetic Theories, p. 56.
The technique of the poet’s utilising gradually diminishing images culminates in the poem ‘This Day’ [47]. The life of modern people, for Hart, can be compared to various kinds of objects with either round or sharp shapes. Through a demonstration of a series of transfigurations and transformations of the objects with these shapes, the poet expresses his complex feelings of lament, pessimism, and despair about this world which becomes fragmented and fractured.

The first object is the “clock” which is transformed to be “white as bread”. This day is transformed into a “compass”, that is, the desires of the men and women. The bad working conditions enumerated with fragmented details in the first two stanzas become “a compass pointing in all directions”. The modern world makes life uneasy and uncomfortable, working conditions excruciating and unbearable, and people more full of yearning / desires.

What is more, the “newspapers with headlines” turn out to be ink-blot tests, which suggests that the news contained may be good or bad and funny or sad, making the reader either happy or angry. The “red telephone” becomes “boiling” water and turns the listener into an excited or exasperated person, for the message from the phone may delight or outrage him, as summarised in the last line of the stanza: “this day” is metamorphosed into “a flame burning inside each one of us”.

Ugly things can also be symbolised through cubist shapes. The humming “mosquitoes” are metamorphosed into something sharp – “a tuning-fork”, which is ready to strike. As “the moon” is “the sun’s disguise”, the beautiful “girls” who are well dressed can be doing something nasty and ugly; normal “thoughts” changed into dark schemes and sinister motives like “sharpened knives”.

However, not everything that happens on “this day” is negative, positive things can also be seen. As shown in the poem, some objects have round shapes: “This day, sometimes a ship, sometimes an ocean” as the poet now shifts his focus onto something positive: a widower still “wears his dead wife’s wedding ring” to show that he is a married person, still loyal to his late wife. The “clock” is changed into a “host”, symbolising the presence of Jesus Christ. Indeed, everything that happens on this day is just like a diptych, a picture with two parts – the positive and negative.

Something abstract, dialectical, neutral, and philosophical can also be expressed through a cubist image. The metamorphosis or transformation of the good or bad can be outside one’s expectation, and this is conveyed through something round and sharp – a “nail”. And “this day, done with” will be like “a nail hit once and bent”, just as “each text has a tiny hammer, hidden deep inside, that can hit the author’s intention, bend it a little, and send his or her text astray”. 318 The reader is sure to be overwhelmed with admiration for the poet’s witty use of a cubist image – a tiny nail – to convey such a profound idea. Indeed, through the first phase of cubism, or the changes and transformations of different shapes of objects by means of fragments, the poet reaches the second phase or the fourth dimension by presenting a lucid and simple picture with profound meanings. The changes in the plastic objects testify to the three plastic virtues: “purity, unity, and truth”. 319

Another poem’s very title—‘The Real World’ [68]—seems to give “the world” a definite meaning, which is not advocated by deconstructionists who promote an endless delay of meaning for any text. The adjective “real” seems to give us an impression of a “true world”, which is contrary to the dictum: “There are no facts, only interpretations”.320 This paradox is interestingly embodied through cubist technique: “tearing down or tearing apart of the image” and “rebuilding” “the elements of that image into an independent composition”,321 as mentioned earlier. In this poem, the reader encounters “a systematic destruction”, to use Kamber’s words, “of the visual image” of the real world.322

The poet presents the so-called “real world” through various fragmented images, with each of the images superficially appearing to be irrelevant to the others by taking on its own independent identity. The first image is of the “rays of sunlight”, which have the cubist form of a rhombohedral pillar, but they are so fine and slender that they look like fishing lines. The image is calm, tranquil and relatively less mobile, exhibiting a natural scene in the early morning or late afternoon when the sun’s rays slant through the thick leaves and branches of big trees in a forest, as vividly put: “quietly fishing from tall trees”. The second image is of “a wrestler’s … fat” “fingers” which are compared to the “toes”, and the cubist round shapes are as conspicuous as the first image – the pillar. Like the shape of the second image, the third one is about old men’s ways of drinking “in bars” with their arms around glasses, or rather their “arms that end in glass”. Although the three images have no relationship at all – with one overlapping another, a second reading tells the reader that they are internally interlocked, for they belong to one category or one natural phenomenon with the same nature, which is summed up in the last line: “A haloed moon tonight, a hole within a hole.”

An examination of the first stanza of the poem (the other three stanzas follow the same pattern, expressing a similar idea) tells the reader that all the things in this “real world” are related to or affect each other, and there is no independent thing, although objects sometimes appear isolated in this or that way. If each stanza is regarded as an image of this world, then the reader can say that each stanza is a cubist image with multidimensions. Equally true, if it is said that the poet destroys the world as an image by tearing it into pieces in the first three lines of each stanza, then he rebuilds or constructs, in each stanza’s fourth line, the whole image through the fragmented images. This world is “really” made up of dual realities: unreality within reality, and reality within unreality, just as the poet says in the last line of the poem: the real world is “a hole within a hole that’s through a hole”. [68]

This method of description recalls Judkins’ summary of what he calls the primary components of cubism:

> Parts of an object displaced from the whole so that its recognition is made elusive, fugitive, intermittent; objects seen from two (or more) directions at once; sections

322 Ibid.
of objects shifted and adjusted so that they become either involved in other or new forms in their own right.\footnote{W. Judkins, ‘Toward a Reinterpretation of Cubism’, http://www.jstor.org/jstor/gifcvtdir/mi000145/00043079/sp020147/02x2214d_1.1.gif?js… (Accessed 20/09/2002).}

If the world is regarded as a checkerboard and watched from all directions on four different planes (as the poem consists of four stanzas), four different independent fragments are seen to be overlapping or juxtaposed to make up this “real world”. Indeed, on the one hand, this world is split and divided into fragments, and one cannot hope to have an organic and coherent or unified picture of it. Any attempt to do so is only a kind of delusion. On the other hand, although the world is split or divided, the things in it are interrelated, and do not exist independently. In the eyes of the poet, this world becomes a plastic image which has no regular shape, and what it has is only fragments seen from different angles and directions, though all the fragments can be rebuilt and become something meaningful.

In this subsection, it is argued that that Hart’s poetic images have similarities to the cubist images in the works of modernist poets such as Apollinaire and Jacob. Some of the plastic images go from bigger to smaller, and then to the essential. Some have no regular shapes. The ideas generated from the juxtaposition of the images with diminishing shapes or irregular shapes require the reader’s active involvement to work them out. This testifies to Apollinaire’s three plastic virtues and Gray’s two phases of cubism. As we will see, these cubist plastic features are best embodied in the images in Hart’s shadow poems.

\textbf{b. Understanding Hart’s shadow poems from a cubist perspective}

An objective reality in some of Hart’s poems becomes a kind of dual or doubled reality, which is presented through a multidimension, multivision or perception. This “structure operates on two levels at once”.\footnote{S. I. Lockerbie, ‘Introduction’, \textit{Calligrammes}. By G. Apollinaire, trans. A. H. Greet, and intro. S. I. Lockerbie. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991, p. 5.} Hart, like Apollinaire, in order to present a multiple form of consciousness, gives up the traditional ways of composition, such as classical “mimesis” and the romantic out-in-out process or structure, by using the cubist technique called \textit{simultaneity}: “a type of structure that would give the impression of a full and instant awareness within one moment of space-time”.\footnote{Ibid., p. 3.} As a result, two parallel phrases or worlds with multiple dimensions are presented with a multiple vision, conscious of, and ideas juxtaposed simultaneously in one poem. This requires the reader’s active involvement in rebuilding and reassembling the fragments or pieces into “an independent composition”\footnote{W. Judkins, ‘Toward a Reinterpretation of Cubism’, http://www.jstor.org/jstor/gifcvtdir/mi000145/00043079/sp020147/02x2214d_1.1.gif?js… (Accessed 20/09/2002).} in Judkins’ words.

An objective reality operating on “two levels at once” is exemplified in Hart’s five shadow poems. This corresponds with Plato’s two worlds – the visible world and the intellectual world, and Gray’s two phases of cubism. In the first phase or the visible world, the cubist way of representing an object or body is to emphasise the ‘dual reality’ through its two or more dimensions. These dimensions both can and cannot be perceived directly though the senses. On the one hand, some dimensions are reduced into the phenomena of the senses produced by light,
which can be perceived through the senses. On the other hand, the fourth dimension, or the second phase or intellectual world, is about the “form” or “idea”, a product of the intellectual understanding of nature or sphere based on *a priori* or logical reasoning, which cannot be perceived directly through the senses. These two phases can be found in both Apollinaire’s and Hart’s poems relating to shadows.

Everyday experience tells us that an objective reality such as a human or an animal body, in a place with light, appears to have two parts or become doubled: one is the body itself and the other is the body’s image – the shadow, which changes in various forms according to the movements of the body and the light. In other words, the shadow is the combined effect of an objective reality and light. In fact, the shadow’s changes were exemplified as early as 350 B.C. in Plato’s *Republic*. To the chained prisoners in the cave, their shadows on the walls are the truth, or in Plato’s words, “the truth would be literally nothing but the shadows of the images.”

Apollinaire’s “three plastic virtues” – “purity, unity, and truth” echo Plato’s proposition, as Apollinaire tells us: “All bodies are equal before light, and the modifications of shadows are the consequence of that luminous power.”

The shadows in both Apollinaire’s and Hart’s shadow poems have the meanings of the two phases of cubism.

Although he did not write as many poems that directly deal with shadow as Hart has, Apollinaire wrote several, such as ‘Twilight’, ‘The House of the Dead’, ‘Clotilde’, ‘Procession’, ‘The Traveller’, and ‘The Betrothal’ in the book *Alcools*, as well as a poem entitled ‘Shadow’ in *Calligrammes*. A brief look at of Apollinaire’s shadow poems might be of great assistance in understanding the poems by Hart.

If we analyse the shadows in his Apollinaire’s poems according to Gray’s two phases of cubism, we see that some shadows belong to the first phase, whereas others belong to the second phase. As one dimension of the speakers or an objective reality, the shadows are directly perceived through the senses because they are the effects of a body, an object, and the sun or the moon: “My shadow my snake-in-the-grass”;  

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Our shadows meet
Until the sun
Is squandered by night.
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If the effects in the first phase are expanded a little, then “living shadows” can be “marched across the mountain”; “Bearded shadows wept like men”;

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But if a day comes when shadows are solid
Multiplied to accomplish the body of my love.
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329 Ibid., p. 48.
331 Ibid., p. 61.
332 Ibid., p. 73.
333 Ibid., p. 139.
The shadows in the following lines are tied up with the second phase of cubism, for some of them may symbolise the appearances of the dead: the speaker is “Brushed by the shadows of the dead”; the dead are regarded as “their shadows” and “their lives”; the shadow is symbolised as the highest being:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Gods of living water} \\
\text{Let down their hair} \\
\text{And now you must follow} \\
\text{A craving for shadows.}
\end{align*}
\]

The shadows in the poem entitled ‘Shadow’ may indicate both dead friends and the poet’s innermost self, as the speaker fuses the shadows of his dead friends with his own shadow. The above is only part of the significance of shadows in Apollinaire’s poems, according to which we can say with certainty that Apollinaire’s shadows have two phases: one is a shadow proper as the dual reality’s first dimension of an objective reality, and the other comprises the ideas created or evoked by a shadow. The same can be said of Hart’s shadows in his five shadow poems. In the first phase or the visible world, we see the shadows in Hart’s five shadow poems through our direct senses and perception.

In the first shadow poem, ‘Your Shadow’ [46], we see two dimensions of the “falcon” – its body and its shadow. The body of

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{… the falcon} \\
\text{Swims with the flooding wind, watching} \\
\text{Its shadow … [46].}
\end{align*}
\]

Similar to the dimension of the body, the falcon’s shadow as another dimension of the bird can be perceived through the direct sense of visualisation:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Its shadow writhe} \\
\text{Like something left half-dead.} \\
\text{Open your hand} \\
\text{And see the darkness nursed there, see how} \\
\text{Your shadow blossoms,} \\
\text{Your body’s very own black flower [46].}
\end{align*}
\]

It is clear and distinct that the shadow is presented through the direct sense. However, the other meanings of shadow can be understood through a deconstructive and philosophical approach. Hence, our understanding of the shadow enters the second phase or intellectual world. In the second phase, the meaning of shadow itself is deferred or delayed, and appears in the traces of ideas, as it is transformed endlessly – multiplicity evoked by unicity:

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334 Ibid., p. 43.  
335 Ibid., p. 49.  
336 Ibid., p. 61.
It is a gift, a birth right, your baby shawl

Now growing into a shroud [46].

Following the transformations, the shadow changes further into “your pupil” which is “shining”, then a “trap-door”. The causal relationship is broadened when the shadow becomes a “trap-door”, which leads to another causal relationship – the present “you” and “the child you” which is “covered with dirt”. Hence a cubist world is set up, as the past “you” and the present “you” can be seen at once. The duality or two sides of “you” are further emphasised, for

It will not hurt you, it simply shows
That you are not alone,
That what you fear is part of you,
That you are both the killer and the kill [46].

Thus the “you” has a better consciousness of “yourself”, as Apollinaire says that he “finally” knows “myself / As I know others”. 337 It is in the second phase that we cannot see the things themselves through the senses, and they can only be seen or perceived with the eye of the mind. Although it is in the “secret earth”, the “you” is deconstructed, split, and doubled. The shadow becomes pure and philosophical ideas or “traces which are to be found nowhere in nature”. 338 These ideas or traces become “the vision of the truth”339 as a result of synthesis.

The same is true of the shadow in the second shadow poem, also called ‘Your Shadow’ [52]. Although the poet does not describe the dimensions of the body, we realise its existence: “you”, and “your skin”. But the dimension of the shadow is comparatively clear:

It is a thing
Beside you when you wake, a cold sheet
As delicate as your skin [52].

No sooner does the poet provide a little of the description of the two dimensions for the first phase than he gives the description of the second phase. Like the shadow in the first poem, the shadow appears as philosophical ideas, and its meanings are multiplied with different hypothetical traces: it is “the lie”, “the stain”, “the reserve of evening”, “the blueprint”, “a mirror”, or “a curtain”. Like the shadow in the first poem, the shadow in the second poem serves as “a curtain” protecting or covering “you” and separating this world and the other world. The “darkness” shows how hard “you” are working “on this earth” – working on a new theory, writing a new book, as the poem says:

You are …
Standing on the brink of something new,
…

While you are working hard, “your shadow” is always very patient, which

338 Quoted by C. Gray, Cubist Aesthetic Theories, p. 59. Also see note 11 on the page of the book.
Waits behind, paring its nails,
And it will follow you
Across the earth, until it brings you home [52].

Some unique characters or qualities of the “shadow” are exhibited in these lines: the shadow is patient, faithful, loyal, enlightening, guiding, directive and intimate to “you”.

In the third poem under the title ‘Your Shadow’ [64] the poet pays more attention to the description of the second dimension, the shadow, by neglecting the first dimension, “you”. If the “you” and the “shadow” are regarded as a binary pair, it is the shadow receiving a primary description rather than the “you”. This is seen from the negation of the first or secular item through negative syntax in the following lines:

Not the one in mirrors,
Not the one shut up in photographs,
Not the one who feels her hand at night
Not the one who trusts in words [64].

Through the detailed description of the picturesque ness of the second dimension, we see the effect of the body and the sun: the “shadow” is “The one without a face”, “the snake-charmer”, the one who “prostrates” on the ground, “when evening comes” as if he were “on circus stilts”. Indeed, in the visible world, the poet concentrates on the analysis of the object or shadow itself through a sensual description of it. Then the poet shows the meanings or ideas of the shadow in the intellectual world, as we see that the shadow is further described as a “gift”, which is endowed to “you for company” by the “sun” or God’s Son, Jesus Christ. Or the shadow is “a fallen angel”, and a “friend” as well.

In the intellectual world, the shadow, as “your friend”, is so faithful to “you” that “he” is “attentive” and considerate to all “your” needs. The two metaphors present a lifelike description as to how intimate the relationship between “you” and “your shadow” is:

As the ocean caresses the shore,
As the bee trembles beside a blossom [64].

What is more, “He will not let you die” – he’ll keep you fit and healthy both physically and spiritually. Therefore, “you / Must trust in him more than your heart” or yourself. Some day, you will become him – “your shadow” – “that other man” – “the silent one” – “the one in black”. Obviously, this “other man” is none other than “God” who is represented through sacred darkness, with whom “you” become One in the other world. From the descriptions, we see that “he” – the “shadow” – is filled with special functions and religious ideas.

The fourth shadow poem, also called ‘Your Shadow’ [70], makes no direct mention of the dimension of the “you”. Although there are descriptions of the effects – the shadow’s transformations, which belong to the first phase of cubism, such as: “At daylight” “Wearing black”; “at noon” “it crawls in under your feet”;
… noses ahead of you like a dog
Or lags behind,
Sprawling on the pavement peering up dresses [70].

These descriptions are a preparation for the second phase that is to express and create ideas.

An objective reality has dual reality. So does the soul, in which either God or the devil can live, as shown through the second phase of cubism – the realm of ideas. In other words, both God and devil want to live in it. Personified with feelings and anticipation, the “shadow” is upset and exhausted with the darkness of the night when it is dawn. At night it looks like it was “expecting your funeral” and “trying to be a grave”. The shadow seems to be the “devil” that lives in the “soul”. St John has a quotation from Jacob in the Bible on the devil: “He sleeps under the shadow, in the covert of the reed, and in moist places.” The shadow “refers to the devil, because in the moisture of joy and the vanity of the reed (of the vain work) he deludes the soul”. Night-time is the time for “the two extremes”, “divine and human”, to be joined, producing a “kind of pain and affliction the soul suffers”, when the soul, the “human extreme”, receives “purgative contemplation” from the “divine extreme”, for the “divine extreme” tries to purify it by driving the devil away from the soul in order “to renew and divine it”. Having suffered a night’s pain and affliction, the soul looks depressed or “obsessed” at dawn.

Although there are some descriptions of the effects of the shadow, the effects become symbolic meanings or ideas. God or “the sun” tries to comfort the soul or “distract” him from the painful experience by “Displaying mountains, offering flowers”, the soul with the devil living in becomes stubbornly vitiated. Hence God is extremely

… furious,
Burns it within an inch of life
At noon, when it crawls in under your feet [70].

But when it is “freshened by failure and rest”, “it returns” and seems to be “vast, superior”, and arrogant. Actually, the shadow or the appearance of the soul deceived by the devil is mean and disgraceful: it is “like a dog” or “Sprawling on the pavement peering up dresses.”

The shadow, as the devil, has no knowledge of its own weakness; on the contrary, it “sees you as fat, dwarfish, beneath contempt”. Still, it overrates its abilities by persisting in “dreaming victory” and stretching “its long tentacles to others”, and “pulling until your last strength goes”. Indeed, the devil accompanies “you” all “your” life, and it visits you at any time without invitation, making the soul dirty. So even when you “hope” to free the soul from the devil or purify the soul by driving the devil away from it, the devil is not easily “defeated”, and it is just like a slithering fish escaping from a fisherman when it is caught. The symbolic meaning or idea of the shadow is understood from the second phase of cubism.

341 Ibid., p. 337.
342 Ibid.
The duality of a person’s life, especially the dual quality of the “shadow”, is further demonstrated in the poem ‘Your Shadow’s Song’ in the sphere of the intellectual. The shadow, as one dimension of a person, may indicate one’s sin, but it is not dreadful. The relationship between the two dimensions – you and your shadow – is dialectical, like the ocean which has dual qualities: there are some beautiful “opal fish” in it, but its water is “bitter”; like this world which has “tall glass buildings filled with light”, but “the future” is “jammed in reverse, out of control” [76], or just like the earth which is white and it is dark as well, for it is cut into two halves by “sunlight”. So it is not strange when we see a person who has sin or shadow, for “The mind takes root in mounds of dirt” [77]. Since the very beginning when our forefather ate the “forbidden fruit”, thereby committing “the original sin”, human beings have been perplexed with sin, which seems to have “carved its name upon your flesh”. Even when “a child is born”, it has sin impressed on it. The more you think or meditate, the more sins you can discover: “You close both eyes”, you will find “A darker shadow cast inside”. Hence, it is futile and useless to “hold God in your hand” or to “paint your shadow white” or to “hide it in your father’s grave” [77]. Though this is so, your sin or shadow has a special function, which is beneficial to you:

Your shadow simply points ahead
And you will never lose the way. [77]

It is not frightful to have sin or shadow, so do not “hate the man who wears your face”. It is of a great help to “you” in your life in this world. In fact, “you” and “your shadow” are so intimate that you are conjoined like twin-born brothers. As the poem says:

Our God has cast us in this world
Not into hell: one flesh, two minds,

Identified in the one light [78].

The “I”, “your shadow” or the “solid shadow cast by God”, sleeps with you, “your bony arms holding me closer than your soul”. In this world, “I follow you, you follow me” [79] until “someone” is “knocking on your door” [80].

The dialectical relationship or dual senses of reality are further emphasised with the following examples: “A perfect world with perfect flaws”, the “music” is nice and pleasant but it is filled “with lies”, a plant may have flowers or “bud(s)” but “thorns appear along the stalk”, and even “paradise has roots in hell”. The implication of these examples is in accordance with Plato’s saying that “the beautiful will in some point of view be found ugly”.343

Anything that is related to the darkness or “your shadow” is not dreadful, but it can become interestingly favourable. God comes to “you” through darkness either “as fire” or “as woman’s touch”; in the dark place where “the dead” are lying underground: they

… do not complain, they see
The roots of things abound with life [81].

If you have any “worry” or “sorrow”, you can put them to “the dark side of the moon”. Through darkness people can attain the kingdom:

The sun’s home in the honeycomb,
The quiet waters, the fragrant field [81].

There is a Chinese saying that goes: nothing is beautiful under the sun. I would change the saying a little by saying that nothing is beautiful without the darkness or shadow or sin, or one cannot live or exist properly if one does not have the darkness – the “shadow”. So the poem shows the poet’s interest in negative theology, which postulates an “anabasis” to God through darkness.

From the above illustrations, we see that the shadows in Hart’s shadow poems possess a dual reality with various dimensions. The poet pays more attention to the effects of an objective reality and light. A shadow, as one dimension of an objective reality, can be further divided, and thereby some meanings and philosophical ideas are conveyed through division or splitting. The dual realities, however, are not just limited to these shadow poems, for there are some other objective realities that have the quality of the dual reality, which is to be dealt with in the following subsection.

c. Two or more dimensions exist simultaneously

From Hart’s shadow poems, we have seen that reality is dual or doubled or multidimensional, and within their structures “past, present and future” can be seen “in a single glance.” The structures of the shadow poems find their duplicates in other poems. That is to say, some other poems’ structures also “operate on the two levels at once”. In some poems, one dimension of objective reality is no longer a shadow, but is instead a kind of vision or fantasy which is based on reality. Although the shadow is replaced with vision or fantasy, the dimension(s) is/are absolutely the effects of the present reality. In presenting a vision about future effects, the poet eradicates the time gap between the present and the future by placing fragmentary aspects of the present or the future in his poems simultaneously. This way, a person’s life can be seen at once; and a history of the present and future can be seen with a single glance.

Hart, as an original poet, presents his insight of future things like a prophet. Conveying the dual reality in his own way, he makes his poems lucid though an objective reality is described with two-dimensional, three-dimensional, and even multidimensional visions. Therefore, one’s consciousness is fully restored through the empirical and visionary dimensions of an objective reality. For example, the different stages of a person’s life can be simultaneously placed on one plane through a parallel structure, and this is also seen in the poem ‘The Old’ [37]. At the beginning of the poem, the speaker gives a warning: although “you” are not old, “You cannot forget the old”, for the obvious reason that:

They become part of you.
They take you for themselves [37].

The two lines together present a plane on which the dual reality of “you” – the younger “you” at the moment and the older “you” of the future – appear simultaneously and synchronously. As each person is eager to be conscious of what he or she will look like and what he or she will do, the poet presents an image of his vision:

They stack themselves up
Against the walls like chairs.

They always seem to be waiting
For something to happen [37].

Indeed, ‘the old’ used to have a good health and a vigorous spirit as “you” do now, and they tended to be as ambitious and vigorous as “you” are now. However, “you” yourself are changing without stopping for a second, and approaching or transforming into “the old” gradually but continuously. Soon, you will see that

Someone old will be inside your flesh
Not long from now

Taking you over completely
Going about your business

Sleeping with your wife [37].

The poet puts the dual reality of “you” – the younger and the older on one plane, revealing a dialectic of the binary pair: the “you” (the younger you) exists in the “someone” (the older you), and the “someone” contains the “you”, and the two cannot be separated; the present “you” will become “someone” in the future, and the future “someone” is what the present “you” looks like. In this sense, there is no absolute “the young”, nor is there an absolute “the old”. So the present “you” approaches the “someone old” all the time – “he” is always the older “you”, and “you” are always the younger “him”.

The speaker in the poem also uses his own visionary or imagined experience about his future to highlight the dialectic of the poem by changing the pronouns from the “you” and “someone” to “I” and “he”. Like “you” and “someone”, the difference between them is that the “I” is the younger, while “he” is the older. As a Chinese saying goes, when a person has grown older, he looks back on the achievements of his youth; when a person is young, he looks forward to the future, full of ambitions. So the speaker knows

… the one who wants me.
Sometimes I think I know his thoughts.

What about him? He is quite nostalgic and sentimental for his past:

He will know me very well,

…
He will walk for miles
Just thinking of me.
He will leaf through old books
Where I have written silly things.

He will search out photograph albums
And stare at pictures of me,
Adjusting old white corners
Smelling the gum [37].

Time and space in the poem become static, so we can see a whole picture of one’s life. Through the poet’s vision and imagination, the dual reality – the dimension of the younger “I” and another dimension of “me”, the older “I” – vividly appears before “my” and our eyes at once. When we have finished reading the poem, we seem to hear the poet asking us this question: What should “I” or “you” or we do now before getting old? The answer is waiting for each reader to give, for each person’s present action or gesture will have effects which will be seen in the future – when one becomes old.

Two kinds of worlds – the sacred and the secular – can be placed on one plane. At first glance, we see the two worlds in the poem ‘The Yellow Christ’ [27] – the sacred and secular appearing as a binary pair ramified as several other binary pairs, which include the following: Jesus Christ / man; milkmaids / two women and a man; here (the centre of the field) / there (not far from “here”). The Man is different from a common man, although “he carried a shadow like ours, / … his face was lined like ours”, for he is a man as shining and bright as the sun, and he is none other than the Son of God. The spiritual world is clearly demarcated from the secular world with the “hedges”. In the former, Jesus Christ is crucified, where “The Cross holds him a little above …”, which is the centre of a field, “not far from a row of blue houses” where the secular world exists, and where everything is materialised in modern form – modern facilities, advanced infrastructure, and good houses. Accompanying the modern facilities, there are other less attractive things, such as sins, crimes, and wars. In the two worlds, people are divided into two kinds according to their different attitudes. The “milkmaids”, God’s faithful followers, differ from the “two women and a man”, who are common people having no faith in God. The former still attend and follow Jesus Christ as usual even when He is crucified, whereas the “two women and a man” desert Him. The common people go to the secular world where “they can understand”, and specifically they go the place where they can enjoy modern life. In the meantime they also have to endure the sufferings resulting from various sins and crimes in the secular or modern world. So the greatest difference between the two worlds is that one is spiritually rich where people can enjoy God’s favour and grace, and therefore live a peaceful and happy life, and the other is materially rich, filled with various sins and crimes. Consequently, people may have to endure different types of suffering while they may live a materially rich life. To the poet, the two worlds are not separated, and the sacred world is within the secular world or vice versa, for God becomes invisible but He is still within this world. People can communicate with God through a negative or apocalyptic way, which will be discussed later in this dissertation.

Hart’s application of the technique of simultaneity can also be seen from his placement of two attitudes of young people towards the “heat” on one plane in the poem ‘Heat’ [126]. The attitude
of the “blokes” towards the “heat” is completely different from that of the speaker. In other words, the effect of the “heat” on the young “blokes” and the speaker is quite different. This is seen from the poet’s introvert and extrovert descriptions. Due to the scorching heat, “those old iron sheds” “are blazing”. Following the description of the feelings of some “young blokes mowing paspalum there” and their responses to it, we see some other natural phenomena resulting from the heat:

Heat strumming the horizon

And burnt air shimmering [126].

The poet, just like a cubist painter, shows the reader how the scorching heat makes the horizon tremble, when seen from a certain distance. Each stanza containing one line reminds us of lines in Apollinaire’s one-stanza calligramme poem under the title ‘Singer’:

And only one in the world chord ocean horns

Hart’s one-line stanza, like a piece of thread or string described by Apollinaire, resembles the horizon in the distance or a speck of smoke curling up into the sky. Thereby the effect of the combination of the “heat” and light is further emphasised or intensified, and it seems we can really “see” the horizon as the string of a musical instrument being played, plucked and strummed, and the air, like a pile of fire, burning, twinkling and flashing in the distance.

The “young blokes” do not mind the heat, rather, they have affection for the heat and they love it so much that when the “sweat” is running down from their “foreheads” and “cheeks” “they lick it off their lips, they taste it in the grass stalks”. However, the speaker’s feelings for the “heat” are not as positive as theirs, for

I see the sun is vast and terrible
I see the gums are hanging down their leaves,

… dead grass screams and lashes air [126].

The two different kinds of response to the heat establish a binary opposition: the young blokes like it whereas the speaker finds it threatening. As we know, the poet used to be a weak, timid child, who came from London where it is not as hot as in Brisbane. So he would like to stay in his house all by himself or go to the library where there was air-conditioning, rather than go out with the young blokes. This poem corroborates what we learn from other sources, that Brisbane’s heat contributed to the poet’s academic and literary successes, as it was the heat that made him stay in the Queensland Library to read the books that he loved.

The poem expresses the poet’s broken and momentary thought through its fragmentary structure, and the juxtaposition of two dimensions or responses to the “heat” in Brisbane. The plastic images of the horizon caused by the heat increase the speaker’s self-consciousness of his identity. The moving images, such as they “wipe sweat off their forehead”, sweat running “straight down their cheeks”, and “the city grows around them”, further strengthen the poem’s cubist

temperament, and the reality created by Hart is in a constant state of flux and change, which is similar to cubist art expressing “metaphysical forms”.346

These examples, indeed, show that an objective reality can operate on “two levels at once”; this reality is not limited to something concrete as mentioned above, and it refers to something abstract as well. Vision, or fantasy, or a negative attitude to something can also be one dimension of one thing or matter. Like shadows, they are the effects resulting from something comparatively concrete, and through the effects the poet expresses his hypothetical ideas and profound thinking.

III. Conclusion
In this section I first recalled some features of romanticism to begin the introduction of the cubist theory, ranging from Apollinaire’s teachings on cubist aesthetics to Gray’s two phases of cubism and Plato’s two worlds, to show that what most interests the cubists is not nature itself but the form they see in the world, which is the “higher reality” or the effects resulting from an intellectual approach. Therefore, “a dual reality”, including both nature and the effects, is a kind of metaphysical form which is abstract, philosophical, and religious. I then introduced the techniques whereby an objective reality is shown to have a “dual reality” and “operate on two levels at once” and pointed out that the way the images in some of Hart’s poems change is similar to the techniques summarised by Kamber.

I then demonstrated, in detail, through three sections, how an objective reality is divided, and that the various dimensions of the dual reality in Hart’s poems are presented in a way similar to cubist techniques. I showed especially how some plastic images in Hart’s poems, such as moon and shadow, are similar to those in Apollinaire’s and Jacob’s poems. Finally, I demonstrated that the dual reality presented through various dimensions is not merely limited to something concrete, but can be extended to something abstract like a person’s life, a history, an attitude towards religion, and a natural phenomenon.

We notice that the dual reality in some of Hart’s poems, presented through various dimensions, has the quality of unicity resulting in multiplicity, and this is reminiscent of Derrida’s différence, which is to be studied later in this dissertation. It is also noted that cubist art expresses the metaphysical form that is religious, and Hart’s poetic interest in his faith will also be explored later. But what concerns me most is that the higher reality expressed through cubist techniques has a kind of closeness to that in surrealism. It is this kind of closeness that I shall deal with in the following section.

346 C. Gray, Cubist Aesthetic Theories, p. 61.
Section II. Elements of Surrealism

A. Introduction

From the discussion of the techniques used by Hart in the previous section, we have understood that reality for cubism does not simply depend on physical nature but on the mind’s creativeness, and it is the effects that cubism wants to embody and convey to the reader. Hart, like a cubist, seeks a new way to represent, or rather, “create” the world, and in doing so the consciousness of a perceiver is intensified and strengthened. In the meantime, Hart also utilises surrealist techniques and contributes another conspicuous feature to his poetic space.

It was Apollinaire who, in the preface to Les Mamelles de Tirésias, coined the word “surreal” which was “to designate the human ability to create the unnatural”.347 Apollinaire experimented with the theory of the “fourth dimension”, in which it is suggested that “the infinite” is pouring over all directions at once in the immensity of space, or as Gray says, that “dimension is … metaphorical”, 348 and is conveyed through the conscious as “a fusion of science and metaphysics.” 349 But “the infinite” or “higher reality” can also be expressed through another way – the unconscious. That is, unlike cubism, which stresses the conscious, surrealism understands the automatic development of man’s subconscious psychic powers. Consequently, unlike the cause and effect in a cubist work, which can be detected and identified, the causal relationship in a surrealist work becomes ambiguous and obscure.

The differences between the two schools are only one side of the story. The other side of the relationship between them is also crystal clear. Surrealism, like cubism, seeks a kind of higher reality or dual reality, which seems to have no difference from that pursued by cubism. In a process almost identical to cubism, which aims at intensifying the conscious by getting “every bit of dross” cleaned and washed away to achieve “pure, direct, primitive expression”, 350 surrealism emphasises that “the voice of the unconscious was above all prophetic, pointing not to some psychic dislocation but rather to a promise of the self’s eventual unity” 351 by inverting the hierarchical order of the conscious and the unconscious. This does not mean that surrealism completely ignores the first item of the hierarchy, the conscious, in order to engage fully with the second, the unconscious. Instead, it is this “double articulation of the unconscious with the conscious, of desire with reality” 352 that a surrealist’s writing discloses. In his first manifesto, Breton defines “these two states, dreams and reality” as “a kind of absolute reality, a surreality”. 353 This kind of surreality can be achieved in “a secret society” or “death” into which “Surrealism will usher you”. 354 This “death”, Kevin Brophy believes, is “the death of the

348 C. Gray, Cubist Aesthetic Theories, p. 63. Also see note 22 on the page of the book.
350 C. Gray, Cubist Aesthetic Theories, p. 18.
352 Ibid., p. 282.
354 Ibid., p. 32.
personality” that leads to the “realm of unconscious impersonality”, as “[c]hance provided one method of holding back the involvement of a conscious personality.”355

Georges LeMaitre also provides a detailed explanation about the process of entering the “secret society” or “death”:

A subject is invited to clear his mind of any specific preoccupation and to formulate rapidly the words or sentences which may present themselves to him, without giving his intelligence an opportunity to censor or to interpret whatever surges up from the depths of his subconsciousness. In this manner, deep, genuine sentiments come to the surface which otherwise would remain concealed, unknown to the patient himself, buried in the secret recesses of his personality.356

P. Nicholls states in the same vein that surrealism “understands experience as essentially continuous, and its delight in unbroken contiguity”. 357 Balakian’s observation is similarly pertinent to the point:

The purpose of their existence and art, then, was to seek both physical and metaphysical satisfaction by pushing back the frontiers of logical reality and revealing the infinite possibilities within the scope of the concrete world. This process implied a closer association between the one who sees and the object of his sight. The venture was an act of creation and an expression of vertiginous freedom on the part of the artist.358

It is obvious that these statements illustrate a basic way to attain and present dual reality or surreality “through the medium of an unbridled verbalism” – “automatic writing”.359

The two schools’ processes for the creation of “the unnatural” or higher reality belong to a kind of negation: cubism negates objective reality itself by paying more attention to its effects and thereby achieving a higher reality, whereas surrealism negates or separates the conscious self by “attacking murderously this obvious aspect of things”360 to reach a higher reality. For the effect of the negation, LeMaitre rightly comments: “the longing for the so-called Surréel was naught but the counterpart of an attitude of negation and destruction towards all the ruling standards of our life.”361 The object of the negation and destruction is the “reality” which prevents and obstructs the continuous experience of a surrealist. “Reality” indicates the rules and regulations or social conventions that bind our perception and understanding of this world from a deeper or subconscious level. Once the “reality” is negated or destroyed through the channel of the unconscious, a “certain point of mind” would appear, at which “life and death, the real and the

361 G. LeMaitre, From Cubism to Surrealism in French Literature. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1941, p. 188.
imagined, past and future, the communicable and the incommunicable, high and low, cease to be perceived as contradictions”. So it is this “certain point” that a surrealist spares no effort to search for. Through this “point”, the higher reality would naturally appear in a dream or a half-sleeping, half-waking state. In this state the unmediated experience of the “unified self” is provided and realised through “automatic writing”, which makes “the process of writing continuous with the experience itself and thereby prevent[s] any gap from opening up between sign and event (the space of representation)”.

Having understood these, we can say that the perception of an objective reality or an entity consists of two or more dimensions, and can be completed through a combination of both the conscious and the unconscious. Like cubists, who had a strong sense of geometrical structure or framework with systematic dislocation of forms and shapes, surrealists moved further to another stage in which the cubist sense of structure more or less remains, not in the conscious, but in the unconscious or dreams. Or in Nicholls’s words, it is a “stage in which fantasy and structure are inextricably linked and where ‘structure’ is shaped not by the conscious mind but by desire and the unconscious”. Indeed, through “a certain point” “desire and the unconscious” will be functioning and the higher reality will be achieved. A reading of some of Hart’s poems will testify to this.

Hart himself insists that he can be called a late romantic poet on the condition that surrealism is included. In his own words, “I don’t think of myself as a late Romantic, unless of course you include surrealism … I’m not a surrealist … but my roots reach back to surrealism”. Therefore surrealism must play an important role in his poems. In this section I wish to argue that cubism and surrealism, or the conscious and the unconscious, cannot be separated when modernist elements are explored in Hart’s work, for the two forces, the conscious and the unconscious, are joined together as one force, playing a vital role in his poems, and an entity is described from two or more dimensions in two ways – conscious and subconscious. Consequently, the conspicuous, noticeable and the hidden, mysterious sides of things are exposed and revealed. In other words, the conscious collaborates with the unconscious or vice versa, presenting a geometric structure of an object from two or more dimensions.

### B. Two modes of perception

As we know, “automatic writing” involves two modes of conception: the conscious and the unconscious. They are complementary to each other, as Balakian observes: “the dream and the state of wakefulness, constantly connected with each other and contributing to each other’s intensity”. The collaboration of the two modes of perception can be found in quite a few of Hart’s poems, among which ‘The Sea’ [22] and ‘The Street’ [32] are very typical.

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364 Ibid., p. 287.
In ‘The Sea’, the poet’s vision of simultaneity in mother nature – a sea or an ocean – is manifested from two sides: one is perceived through the unconscious from the sea’s point of view, while the other is perceived from the conscious with the land’s point of view. First of all, a natural phenomenon is introduced – “The sea is very calm today.” Then the speaker draws an absurd or irrational conclusion that “someone, for a bet, dropped a powder in the water”, and as an uncanny consequence “the whole sea set overnight”. The absurdity of the illogical deduction and the light and playful tone are deepened by another funny image: “two sailors” are “passing dolphins caught in mid-plunge with eyes still moving”. Common sense tells us how absurd this image is: the sea, normally, cannot be “set” in such a fleeting instant that there was not enough time for the “dolphins” to return to the water when they had leapt out of it. Here we cannot see the logical or causal relationship of the things; what is left are merely some absurd phenomena. The degree of the absurdity can be compared to that embodied in the surrealist painting *Time Is a River Without Banks* by Marc Chagall, in which a fish flies above a river staring at something with a human eye, and with a human hand near its head playing the violin, and also with a clock hanging down below its body; inside the clock the pendulum swings from one side to the other. Indeed, what happened to the sea and the dolphins is impossible, inconceivable and irrational. This kind of thing, no doubt, can only happen in one’s dreams or through the unconscious imagination.

The second part of the poem describes a completely different dimension of the sea, which is seen from various points of view on land. Unlike the two sailors in the first part of the poem, whose destination is the land or “the nearest port”, the destination of “a small boat” is “the open sea”. The first viewer of the “sea” is the reader of a novel who sees the boat off until it becomes “a blur of smoke in the distance”. Then the “sea” is viewed by a group of children. When they see that “water is fountaining up”, the “children on the beach are jumping up and down shouting, ‘A whale! A whale!’” Despite the fact that the description of the sea here is through the conscious perception of the people on land, and the second part reads like a descriptive novel, we hardly know any details of the background. We do not know who the reader is and what the novel is about, or what the destination of the small boat is when it “sets off towards the sea”. In short, no cause and effect can be detected. It is a kind of conversion or revision of realistic writing where a causal relationship is clear and distinct. The actions seem to be in progress rather than completed. Therefore the text has the kind of immediacy of a dream; the reader seems to have the feeling that he or she is on the spot of when everything is happening. The two ways of experiencing the “sea” represent at least two dimensions of it, with the former coming from the unconscious and the latter from the conscious. In this way, two or more aspects of “the sea” are conveyed through two or more modes of perception, and thereby the perceptive effects are further strengthened.

The two modes of perception are also seen in ‘The Street’ [32]. Basically, the whole poem is a description of perception from the unconscious while sometimes the speaker’s consciousness is comparatively functional. The reader sees that the poem is recorded more likely from a dream or the unconscious rather than from the conscious, for the absurd and illogical points indicate that, although the poem seems to be a sort of memory about the speaker’s experience on a long dark street in London, which is part of a museum exhibit, it is not known when and why the person enters the museum; there are no other people around, while he is all by himself and “perilously” making his “way through no man’s land”; the “vast exhibit in a museum” is “made larger than

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367 Ibid., p. 195.
life”; “I see the full moon which doubles as a clock for the entire museum”; and “I” have no sense of time – the “museum is closed and I am locked in for the night”; and “I” am waiting here “until morning, as all these dead have been waiting for years”. All the descriptions build up the features of a dream in which the unconscious is at play.

The simultaneity and the indefinite prolongation of the scenes are embodied in the first two sentences, which do not have verbs or predicates; instead there are an adjective and two present participles. In the sentences the actions seem to have lost their senses, as they show thinking or “spoken thought” rather than finished actions. Scenes then appear in sweeping succession, if not entirely simultaneously: a “film” featuring a girl; “two armies deadlocked in battle”; and “In their grey faces I see the frenzies … fought over in the Somme” but see no more the young “girl” in the “film”, for the girl’s identity is split and she is transformed into “a memory … in one of the soldiers’ minds”. Time in the poem freezes, as a result of interlocking perspectives and the effect of “automatic writing”, which “disorientates us in relation to our own memories” by “depriving us of any system of reference”. The scenes are just like fragments of a dream, in which the images “contain a dose of absurdity and the element of surprise”.

If the first stanza is one dimension of the perception of the scenes, resulting from the speaker’s subconscious, then it can be said that the second paragraph is another dimension of the perception: the speaker’s consciousness has, to some degree, recovered a little, though not completely. Through the limited recovery of consciousness, the mysterious scenes are gradually unravelled through an adamantly affirmative tone: “I am of course walking through a vast exhibit in a museum”, and “The girl is … on film, a clever mechanical device”. Through the introduction, we see that the conscious and the unconscious are interwoven and complementary to each other. The prose poem, indeed, is important evidence systematically illuminating the speaker’s entrance into the forbidden territory, or “no man’s land”, where both the conscious and the unconscious take effect in collaboration.

The collaboration of the conscious and the unconscious in the two poems, particularly in ‘The Street’, is reminiscent of Breton’s and Soupault’s work, *The Magnetic Fields*, in which this paragraph occurs:

> THE CORRIDORS OF THE GRAND HOTELS ARE UNFREQUENTED and cigar-smoke keeps itself dark. A man descends the stairs of sleep and notices that it is raining: the window-panes are white. A dog is known to be resting near him. All obstacles are present. There is a pink cup, an order given and the men-servants turn round without haste. The skies’ great curtains open. A buzzing denotes this hurried departure. Who can be running in so leisurely a way? Names lose their faces. The street is no more than an abandoned track.

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When Hart’s poems are read together with this surrealist work, it is not difficult for us to see that ‘The Sea’ and ‘The Street’ share some similarities with the paragraph. Like the surrealist work, Hart’s works are a revision of literary realism: neither work provides background information; they situate objects in the realms of both the conscious and the unconscious, and the use of the present tense and almost identical syntax in the texts implies a strong sense of simultaneity and indefinite prolongation of events; the details constantly lead us to the anticipation of causalities, which are always absent; they present thinking rather than unfinished actions. From these features we see that both the surrealist work and Hart’s two poems regard experiences as essentially continuous and take fancy from the continuity, and the higher reality shown in both Breton’s and Hart’s works is achieved through negation or destruction of “reality”. Therefore, the double articulation of reality is systematically disclosed and a new understanding of the universe is exhibited through the reconstruction of a new and arbitrary plane in which both the conscious and the unconscious function.

C. Different Mediums in Binary Pairs as Entities
An entity in a surrealist work may consist of two or more dimensions. Some dimensions, like those in a cubist work, can be easily seen, while some others cannot. This is just like an iceberg with part of it exposed, while the rest is hidden under water. An object or an entity has more than two dimensions, with some exposed and others covered and unseen. When it is made up of something concrete and abstract, those that are concrete can be seen easily, but those that are abstract or hidden are different – they can be recovered through both the unconscious and the conscious or imagination, as has already been partially demonstrated above. Here, I would like to discuss the topic further to show that between the two perceptions there is “a certain point” connecting the two kinds of reality – one is objective reality, and the other the higher reality.

In ‘The Street’, the speaker enters the “no man’s land”, and it is said that there he is no different from those “dead” when he is “waiting”. At this time the demarcating line between him and the “dead” disappears or becomes indistinct. “These dead” are not regarded as something dreadful and horrible, and they exist just like some other beings or creatures in the other world, to which every mortal being in this world will go. When the speaker is locked in the museum, with no other people around, the situation provides him with Breton’s “certain point” from which two dimensions or two worlds can be perceived at once. The speaker is lingering or waiting on an edge or demarcating line between this world and the other world in which “these dead” stay. So the museum becomes an entity possessing two dimensions.

The speaker’s experience reminds us of Apollinaire’s ‘The House of the Dead’ in which the speaker went to a graveyard where he saw that

… so many
Bourgeoisie so beautifully
Exposed awaiting for burial

became suddenly alive, and “The corpses accosted me”. In addition, he befriended the dead and walked “arm in arm” with them, and “a female corpse” “Permitted a student / To propose

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There are more examples of the dead behaving like the living in the poem. So it is not strange that the speaker in Hart’s ‘The House’ sees “from each branch there hung faces of the family, men with moustaches and pipes, women with faces fine as spiderwebs” [74]. The “graveyard” in Apollinaire’s poem, like the “museum” in Hart’s, may make anyone present frightened. But both unusual places serve as “a certain point” joining two worlds – the living and the dead.

The dissolution of a binary opposition of the concrete and the abstract, or this world and the other world, is also illustrated in the poem ‘The House’, in which there are lines that indicate a similar process and effect:

Lying down I began to slip away from the world, becoming the size of myself in a photograph, myself reflected in an eye. Like father, I could see my life from the other side – unfinished, all hidden errors exposed – like a needle pushed through embroidered cloth [74].

Having been walking for a long time, the speaker sinks into a hazy sleep when he is lying on the bed. In a half-waking state, the process of coupling this world and the other world has reached a stage in which the distinction between the two is lost, and the speaker is standing by his late father’s side to see his life from the other point of view, that is, from the other world. Hence the dividing line between this world and the other world, or the living and the dead, has disappeared. Therefore, reality is negated and the boundary between the living and the dead is dissolved in this hazy state.

In fact, the medium, or the “certain point”, between the two or more dimensions of an entity may take various forms. They can be a special place like the “museum” or “graveyard” in the poems discussed; it can be a kind of state, which is half sleeping and half waking; or it can be something transparent such as a window. The mediums in the poem ‘Membranes’ are a kind of half-sleeping and half-waking state, as well as something reflective, such as a window. Serving as demarcating lines, they become “membranes” in the sense of “points” that simultaneously separate and connect certain binary pairs as entities, which are represented by the past and the present, or this world and the other world. In the first part of the poem the medium is the special time, at which the speaker’s perception of both conscious and unconscious takes place. It is “in the wee hours” of a “summer night”. “When no one else is home”, the speaker is unable to fall asleep. In a half-waking state, he feels dimly that there comes “A voice, almost a voice, though not a voice” that sounds like it is being uttered by “That girl from years ago”. The “voice” is

Something between the mind and night, perhaps,
Something that tries to speak but always fails

And leaves a memory with nothing there [147].

In the second part of the poem the surrealist element is more revealing. It is a description of a dream, and almost all the details are the experience of the unconscious. In other words, the poem reads like a nightmare, which is full of terrifying things, and everything is uncertain and wavering. The place is “somewhere”. The time is “Some Sunday”, and the tense is the past tense.

373 Ibid., p. 51.
indicating the details are something that happened before. What happened was that “I” was walking all day, and then “I lost my way”, and then “I” was “climbing up and down”, the things “I” came across are the horrible, such as

... spiky fences running fast for miles
At Wacol Prison or the ‘Private Road’
...

“a factory defunct for years”, “broken glass”, “cobwebs” and also some “graffiti” like “swastikas and clumsy hearts”. The weather was terrible – it was so hot that “the mercury went mad”. The things beneath “my” fingernails were disgusting: “the red brick dust that ran beneath my nails”. In addition, “I” was infested with “loud mosquitoes”, which were “ripping up my arms”. In the dream, everything becomes vague, ambiguous and indefinite, what is left is “only a nameless fear” that comes “nowhere” [148], for it is just like

... drunken voices flapping in the wind,
And someone, me, now smashing through the bush
And leaving someone, me, still sleeping there [148].

If there is something like a “membrane” between the conscious and the unconscious, then the “membrane” can be penetrated, and the speaker enters the other world or dreaming world where he, through his subconscious, experiences a deeper self in a higher reality. The two dimensions of the speaker’s perception are fully exhibited here: the conscious “me” is sleeping while the unconscious “me” is dreaming the dreadful dream.

The third part is the result of “half-dreaming”, as the expression “I thought” in the second line confirms that this part is also a dream experienced by the persona in the “half-dreaming” state, and narrated by him from his memory. This part of the poem is about the speaker’s way of treating “a kind girl” without their being any sexual contact between them. At that particular moment the speaker stops doing something that may “unfold[s] and make[s] a life”. If the girl’s maidenhead is regarded as the membrane, then the speaker does not break the membrane. If he had done that, he might have entered another world, which is different from the present one. Likewise, the girl would have been a different person and she might have lived a different life afterwards. Thus both the speaker and the girl do not enter the other dimensions of their lives.

So far, we have seen the membrane or membranes, which is or are something separating two worlds. The two worlds are perceived through the conscious and the unconscious, or when one’s mind is in an unusual state, such as being half asleep and half awake, or in a certain condition such as loneliness. There are other mediums between two dimensions, which constitutes an entity, such as a kind of scent, sound, mood, atmosphere, and even a glamorous person. Although these mediums separate the two dimensions of certain entities, they do not belong to surrealism. Mediums of this kind will be discussed in the later parts of this dissertation.

D. Conclusion
In this section, I pointed out that it was Apollinaire who fabricated the word “surreal”, and then compared surrealism and cubism by showing certain differences and similarities between the two
schools. The differences include the following: cubism is interested in the conscious while surrealism is interested in both the conscious and the unconscious; the causal relationship can be detected in a cubist work whereas the causality in a surrealist work is ambiguous and indefinite. The major similarity lies in the fact that the two schools have one thing in common: both negate something superficial to achieve a higher reality or surreality.

As regards the two modes of perception, I demonstrated that the conscious and the unconscious are complementary in Hart’s surrealist work, which is a kind of revolution against literary realism; as there is less introduction of background information, fewer changes of syntax, and all these contribute to presenting the immediacy of a dream, which only “automatic writing” can make available. I talked about certain kinds of mediums, such as the hazy state of half-waking; and some dreadful scenes. They serve as demarcating lines or “points” with the function of linking two or more dimensions of entities.

From this section, we have seen that Hart’s poems with surrealist elements represent a kind of dual reality similar to that in a cubist work. It is through the negation and destruction of one part by emphasising the other that the dual reality or higher reality is achieved. No doubt, Bataille, Levinas, Blanchot, and Derrida benefit from the concept of such a division, doubleness, and negation, from which they develop their own theories. These theories and their influences on Hart’s poetry will become major concerns in the last part but one of this dissertation. However, the pattern of division, doubleness, and negation promoted by classicism, romanticism, cubism, and surrealism can be traced back to the Bible and negative theology, and evidence is found from Hart’s faith and his interest in the works of the Christian mystics such as St. Augustine, Eckhart, Bernard of Clairvaux, St. John, and Pseudo-Dionysius. Therefore, Hart’s faith and his interest in negative theology, embodied in his poems, are to be my concern in the following part of this work.
Part IV
Hart’s Faith
and the Dual Tradition of Theology
The dual realities, as the essential phenomenon in Hart’s poetic space, also find their analogous expression in the poet’s understanding of God and in his religious beliefs, which are shown in his theoretical articles, books and poetry. For Hart, there are two representations of God, as he observes: “We must be ready to separate two senses of the word ‘God’. There is the God that enters philosophy at its inception, the *causa sui*, and there is the God of faith.”\(^{374}\) One is concerned with philosophy, and the other is related to faith and spirituality, or in Pascal’s words, “the God of philosophers” and “the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.”\(^{375}\)

Related to the two kinds of God are positive theology and negative theology. A passage in *The Divine Name and Mystical Theology* defines the binary nature of the traditional theology:

… the theological tradition is double, being on the one hand a tradition which is not expressed in words and which is mystical and, on the other hand, a tradition which makes manifest and is better known. One is symbolic and aims at initiation, the other is philosophical and demonstrative. What is not said is woven together with what is said. One persuades and makes known the truth of what is said, the other fulfills and situates souls in God through a mystical guidance which is not learned by teaching.\(^{376}\)

The dual tradition of positive and negative theologies works together to affirm God’s highest being or “God’s preeminence.”\(^{377}\) On the one hand, positive theology is concerned with the doctrines, tenets and “truths” of religion, which are clearly written in the Bible and various catechisms, which provide knowledge on how to understand God and teach devout believers how to conduct themselves in this world; and on the other hand, negative theology is contemplative and mystical, calling all the beings in this world to seek to become one with God through different ways, such as through darkness, by contemplation, silence, meditation, mystic love, and prayer in solitude.

John D. Jones provides a further explanation of the difference between the two modes of religion by saying that “affirmative theology would bring to light the sameness of the divinity and beings, where this sameness is understood analogically or on the basis of the causal likeness which prevails between beings and divinity”, whereas “negative theology would bring to light the radical difference between the divinity and beings.”\(^{378}\) That is to say, “affirmative theology gives us a knowledge of the presence or immanence of the divinity in beings” which appears in the form of various traces, while “negative theology “exhibits” the separation or transcendence of the divinity from beings” and “the divine cause over all.”\(^{379}\) The difference does not prevent the collaboration of the two; as Jones says “affirmative and negative theology become complementary aspects of metaphysics.”\(^{380}\)

\(^{379}\) Ibid., p. 22.
\(^{380}\) Ibid.
Hart, too, says something similar about the relationship:

> We need an account of what God is, and of the differences between God and us, so that we can try to do what God would have us do: we need, in short, to develop a positive theology. Yet developing an explanation of God’s actions in the world is only one part of the task; we need to ponder what it is to speak of this God whose ways are not our ways, we need to analyse our talk of God, and this involves us in negative theology.\(^{381}\)

As to the functions of the dual tradition, Hart makes the following statement:

> Whereas positive theology follows a Spirit that descends and enlightens, negative theology beckons one to ascend to God through the darkness of unknowing. In positive theology one is concerned to represent God to His people; in negative theology one broods on the status, scope and strength of representation while trusting that, in doing so, one will find the God who is beyond the spheres of presence and representation.\(^{382}\)

Hart believes that there is a need for the double tradition: “No longer in harmony with God, this world becomes a chiaroscuro of presence and absence; everywhere one looks, there are signs of a divine presence that has withdrawn and that reveals itself only in those signs.”\(^{383}\) Hence, in order to have the likeness of or become one with God, one must adhere to the double tradition. That is, on the one hand, one should study Christian teaching and learn the “truth” about God, and on the other hand, one can make an “anabasis” towards God and reach Him by denials of Him “through darkness of unknowing”.

The double tradition is reflected in the experience of Hart’s earlier life. Hart grew up in a family without a “pronounced interest in religion”. His mother was a strong-willed woman who was “dismissive of religion”, but his father “had strong, unfocused religious feelings,”\(^{384}\) although the only occasion on which he went to church was to attend a wedding, as the poet latter recalled in an interview. In spite of the fact that the family seemed to have influenced the young Hart little in terms of his spiritual faith, he had an exceptionally strong religious feeling. The poet revealed the experience of his faith in an interview:

> From an early age, though, I had strong religious yearnings; and these flared up during adolescence. I became associated with a Baptist sect; later, when I was living in California, I attended Episcopalian services; but when I returned to Australia I decided to convert to Catholicism. … It felt right, emotionally and intellectually, and it still does … \(^{385}\)


\(^{385}\) D. McCooy, ‘“Intersecting Worlds”: An Interview with Kevin’, *Meridian*, 15: 1, p. 34.
Hart’s rebellious spirit is not without its reasons. In an interview with Stephen Watson, Hart revealed how he became committed to God after a small episode: the boy Hart stayed away from school, feeling sick, and his mother, thinking that that “he was putting it on”, said to him harshly: “You are going to grow up to be an idiot.” This hurt the boy extremely, and from then on he turned to his interior world and God, and his religious belief was so strong that he gravitated to philosophical theology. He was deeply fascinated by some major Christian mystics, such as the Pseudo-Dionysius, St John, and Meister Eckhart. As to how he became deeply involved with mystical theology, Hart makes the following statement:

I became seriously interested in mystical theology in the late 1970s, several years after I had graduated from university. My undergraduate studies had been in English and philosophy. As I passed from one year to the next, I found myself increasingly concerned with philosophical theology, and in the end I decided to take honors in that area.

Whether from his religious experiences or from his theoretical articles or books, we see that Hart’s God is approached in two ways: positively and negatively. Accordingly, I wish, in this part, to deal with two main topics: positive theology and negative theology, and to examine how Hart’s faith and philosophical understanding of God are expressed in his poems.

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386 S. Watson, “‘The Radiance of Things … that can’t be Named’: Talking to Kevin Hart.” [The material was provided by Kevin Hart.]
Section I. Positive Theology

The New Testament records Jesus’ instruction concerning “the kingdom”. Once Jesus was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God was coming, and he answered, “The kingdom of God is not coming with things that can be observed; nor will they say, ‘Look, here it is!’ or ‘There it is!’ For, in fact, the kingdom is among you.”

Hart’s understanding of this is significant: “God withdraws in the very act of his self-communication … the Trinity has passed through as a trace.”

On another occasion, he stated that “Nothing is given to us in an experience of God except a calling forth of love and a desire for God.”

Hart’s statements tell us that although God is invisible in this world, He still appears in the form of His created things. Through one’s desire or longing for God, one can find “the kingdom” in the here and now. Indeed, to get to the kingdom it is not necessary for us to wait until the end of this world comes, or the eschatological situation appears, for the kingdom is already among us. In this section, I wish to explore the traces of God and the kingdom in Hart’s poems, which demonstrate that God grants salvation to His only Son to the mortal world to save fallen beings from sin, and that the divine presence or immanence is found in the form of traces in either nature or the humans of this world. This involves an explanation of the Bible’s teachings and doctrines, which reflect the nature of the Unity, the Trinity, and the Virgin Mary, and a demonstration of Hart’s closeness to some mediaeval poems by known and unknown figures in related subject areas.

1. The Divine Traces

Positive theology, as we know, represents “a trace of the truth: that which the human mind can think about it.” The “chiaroscuro of presence and absence” in this world shows the doubleness of God, for although He is not visible, He still appears in the form of traces through His creations, and the kingdom is within this world among us, as Jacob Boehme states: “There is another world, but it is within this one.” This corresponds to a statement by J. D. Jones:

Affirmative theology celebrates the divine causality. In it the divinity is manifested as cause, and beings are manifested as what is caused by the divinity … (It) celebrates the differentiation of the divine unity … (In affirmative theology) It is all named and all intelligible.

God is the cause or origin of all beings, and it is through Him that all beings come into existence. Therefore God is embodied through two kinds of trace. One kind of trace is in nature, the other in human beings.

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A similar idea about the attributes of the deity and the divine trace is found not only in Hart’s interviews but also in poems. Hart once said: “[W]hen one talks about God, there is only ever these traces, and traces of traces that you have to put together. God always withdraws from his presentation.” The poem ‘Three Prayers’ exhibits the “chiaroscuro” of the divine trace: He

... withdraws behind death
Like horizons we never touch
Who can be One and Many
Like light refracting through glass. [39]

These four lines make it clear that God is the Unity and the Trinity, and He is simultaneously withdrawing and revealing.

Though the divinity is hiding and uncovering at once, Hart believes that

... the spiritual world is within this one: not as a secret, but as a radiance ... There, often enough, is the first moment of glimpsing the radiance. We find it through God’s grace and our attention. [396]

God is the highest being from which all other beings receive rays as “it sends the rays of its goodness first to those beings which are nearest to it – the highest among beings – and then extends them downward to the last among beings.” God’s radiance can be everywhere, and He is omnipresent and He stays everywhere and “hides in equations and wind”; He “is constant as the speed of light”; and He “stretches over the Empty Place”. He is so omnipotent that He “hangs the Earth upon Nothing”, and “strikes like lightning”. In addition, He is omniscient and considerate:

You do not speak to me of death
You do not pester me ... [40]

He knows “our” needs, seeking out “our softer parts / Trying to squeeze yourself in” in order to provide help and give redemption and salvation. He may appear either as natural scenes such as “mountains”, or as human forms and gestures such as “A hand slowly stroking my thigh” at night. Indeed, although God is invisible in this world, He is immanent – omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient.

In Hart’s poetry there are more examples showing that God appears in double form – in nature and humans. St. Bernard compares God to natural scenes: “Christ the Lord is a mountain, a mountain gathered ... and rich. He is a mountain in sublimity, gathered in the bringing together of a multitude, rich in clarity.” The poem ‘Mountains’ is full of traces of God’s presence. Although His essence appears in different forms and in various ways through His created things, they point to the operation of divine activity and show forth His presence and existence. The immanence of God exemplified in the poem testifies to the kataphatic or affirmative assertion that it was God who created the universe and

made everything in it, including the mountains and rivers, and other natural scenery. God signifies Himself in His creations and reveals His presence and Himself in them, and He “is known in His effects.”

In the opening line of the poem, the speaker assures that “They (will) come for you”. The “they” are the traces of the divine nature or essence: “The colour of stormclouds, the weight of oceans”. The “mountains” proper are the traces of God’s presence and they are works of God, manifesting God’s omnipresence. One of the Catholic doctrines is that the divine essence can be known or “seen” in the “mirror of the soul”, as St. John states: “the cleaner the window is, the brighter will be its illumination.”

Only when the soul becomes as purified as a clean mirror, can an image of the Son appear on it. Only those who have a “purified soul” can see the mountains “lean upon you”, or are able to comprehend the divine, and see or experience the presence of God. (This involves negative theology, which is to be the topic in the following section.) The divine nature seems to have a special feeling for “you”:

They will cross deserts, cities,
And lean upon you through a window [66].

Although the traces of the Deity are not available to everyone and “Their words would be too hard to bear”, “you” are assured of seeing them in various other forms or hearing “a voice in the throats of birds”. This “voice” is nobody’s but God’s. “You” can perceive His “presence” and have communication with Him through listening to ‘His words among the birds” in the forests of a mountain. However, “you” are told that God cannot pay particular attention to an individual person, but He does take care of those who have devout faith in Him.

By believing in God devoutly, loving and desiring Him strongly, the communion between “you” and God is sure to happen, and the kingdom will come eventually. In the poem, ‘Poem to the Sun’ [90], the speaker sees God’s and the Son’s omnipresence, omnipotence: “you” are within the “Clean wood that splits”; “all this dust is you”; and you are “inciting the insects / And making the windows sweat”, “singing, dancing, in the knife before it cuts”, “resting / in the creases of the river”, and “drawing the darkness / Out of each thing”. God, through His created beings, or One in many, shows the revelation of Himself as the Unity and the Trinity – the Father and His Son and the Holy Spirit – and this is the central mystery of Christian faith and life.

If the poems discussed above are about the divine traces in this world, then the poem ‘Midwinter Summer’ seems to be more concerned with the divine presence in “this other world”. The title of the poem, ‘Midwinter Summer’, [49] itself describes a sort of dual reality that is “this other world” – the kingdom within this one. The image draws upon Hart’s experience of Australia, especially Brisbane. Anyone who lives in this city knows that the temperature can vary greatly within twenty-four hours. During June and July, winter in the southern hemisphere, the temperature in the daytime is quite warm, as the poet says, the “city” is “made of heat” [142], whereas the temperature is rather cool in the evenings. Indeed, the oxymoron contained in the title of the poem suggests the fact that only Australia has this kind of summer existing within winter, which is a double season: a season within a season. So is the day: a day within a day. On

this other day, in this other season, in this other world, nothing “dies” and disappears, and everything becomes eternal and immortal. To the speaker, it is here that his love exists. Hence, the speaker says: “my love, / I go to be with you.” In brief, the kingdom is here where God exists in the form of traces, and it is in “the other world” that “I” can find “my love”, and this other world is here and now, in Australia, in this other world.

God appears not only as the traces in natural images but also in natural phenomena: God takes the form of “wind” or “air” in ‘The Letter’ [114] – when the “scientist sighed” and could not figure out whom the letter is from and whom the letter is for,

(HER cigarette was lying on a bench –

A breeze came in and took a cheeky drag) [114].

When everyone is writing to answer the letter, “though no one knows who he is writing to”, it is “the wind” that “drops by to read a line”. In the poem ‘Peniel’ [115], God appears in the form of ‘breath’ and the moonlight: “So softly you could almost hear a breath” and “I” can see “the moonlight sleeping on my cheek” [115]. These natural phenomena testify to the presence of God, for the poet.

God can be seen not only in natural images and natural phenomena but also in human images. In the Bible, God says: “‘Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness …’”, so He “created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; / male and female he created them.”[401] There are quite a few examples in Hart’s poems to show that God appears in the form of human traces. The most obvious example is the “man” in the poem ‘Jerusalem’, where we read:

Here, a man once came
As one of us
To speak of all that we are not [48].

The “man” is Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who was sent to this world with a human form, or rather with the form of God, the Father, to save fallen mankind from sin, and change and transform them from their fallen state and make them become One with God.

Another figure, in the poem ‘That Bad Summer’ [100], has a similar function to Jesus Christ. Before we talk about the person who appears in this poem, it may be helpful to introduce the scene in which he occurs. The key word in the title is the adjective “bad”. The heat is so “bad” that everywhere becomes desolate and barren: “Vast cobwebs in the sky”,

Airports deserted, and the trains on strike;
Odd bits of cargo litter Lygon Street [100]

– a bleak and desolate sight. The reason for this is simple: “No wind for months”, as the sentence in the first line explains. No wind in summer is really unbearable weather, and it is sultry, humid,

and uncomfortable. Consequently, the traffic and transportation of the city are at a standstill, and the street is full of “odd bits of cargo” and other rubbish.

What of the people in such “bad” weather? They keep kids “inside on sedatives”, and “the air [has] gone thick and bad”, which is the second time that the speaker mentions the shortage of fresh “wind” or “air”. There are still “bad” effects due to the deprivation:

… Some days it takes  
An entire afternoon to cross a road,  
Some days an hour to wink at one you love.

What’s worst, the hottest year this century!  
Our bedroom windows have begun to sweat,  
Reflections in mirrors cannot stay awake,

While numerals peel off the Town Hall clock [100].

Through rhetorical devices such as overstatement, personification, and humorous expressions the speaker presents more “bad” effects: people spend their time in pointless ways:

… good citizens lie down  
Beneath skylights, observing spiders mate –  
A blue movie curving round our sky;  
Or watch that regiment attack the webs [100],

for there is no other better way for them to spend such unbearable nights.

All the stanzas before the last present a broad picture that is desolate, depressed and lifeless for lack of fresh “air” or “wind”. The situation is similar to that in ‘Jerusalem’:

That woman with a broken jar,  
That young man  
Feeding swine in the sad desert twilight [48].

Why were the man and woman in such a sorry situation? The answer is simple: the people there did not have faith in God, and as a result they were physically poor and spiritually sad. In precisely this situation, Jesus Christ came among them and saved them from their sins and helped them to find the right way to live.

Like the situation in ‘Jerusalem’, the desolate condition in ‘That Bad Summer’ [100] results from the lack of “wind” or “air”, a metaphor referring to one’s faith or spiritual sustenance, which is what the people need. Consequently, everything in the city appears lifeless and listless. And just like Jesus Christ who came among humans, the “little man / With a bald patch” appears before the people of the city, doing something most important and urgent – “Intently peddling jars of human breath”, to save lives by “puffing from door to door”. As Jesus did in ‘Jerusalem’, “the little man” provides spiritual nourishment to those who desperately need “human breath” or fresh “air” so that the situation could be changed, and the people could benefit from it and live an easy and comfortable life. The whole situation of the city is an analogy or extended metaphor – the desolate situation is the state of fallen human beings, and the
situation results from their having no presence of God. However, the coming of the little man saves the sinners or people in the city with the “air” or “wind” which is none other than spiritual nourishment from God.

Taking human form, God descends to this world to save mortal beings from sin by giving them love and hope, and by teaching them to have faith in Him so that they can live in the right way. This leads to our next topic, God’s search for fallen beings.

2. “God Goes in Search of Us”

Before we discuss Hart’s religious beliefs as expressed in his poems, let us examine what Martin Buber says in a short passage entitled ‘God Waits for Man: ’God wills to need man for the work of completing His creation … But that God wills this means that this “needing” becomes working reality: in history as it takes place, God waits for man.”402 Here, Buber’s God seems to be a little different from Hart’s God, for He (Buber’s God) “waits for man” to help Him to complete His work, instead of searching or looking for man, as believed by Hart. Hart’s God appears much more active and more eager to give salvation to His created beings, and this is seen from Hart’s statement in an interview: “… Christianity is not essentially a religion … Christianity tells another story, that God goes in search of us in our fallen condition.”403 For Hart, God does not “wait for man” but He descends and searches for man, for the sake of saving him from his sins. As an example of this, God sent His Son down to this mortal world in human form, to be the “Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” or a “Redeemer” to “redeem us from sin, that is, to pay the debt of our sins.”404 This doctrine is reflected well in Hart’s poem ‘The Companion’.

The God in ‘The Companion’ [84] treats “me” like a close friend, accompanying “me” all the time, and following “me” just like “my” “shadow”:

There is a man who will not let me sleep,
Each night he comes and trembles by my side.
He cannot be touched yet wind disturbs his hair,
He cannot touch yet shadows cover me.
…

I hide within myself and he draws close.
…
And stretches out both arms as if in pain.

I hear him though he does not speak a word,
The sound of someone breathing, wind in trees.
…
‘I come to wound you and to heal the wound.’ [84]

403 My interview, September 2002.
404 John 1:29, The Holy Bible.
The pantoum invites us to overhear the soul talking to itself. In order to make a way for the soul to escape the chains of Satan and man’s sins, God let His only Son, Jesus Christ, incarnated with the corporeal body in the form of fallen humanity, suffer the penalty for man, and “made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” Anyone contemplating an image of the crucifixion will be deeply impressed and moved by the pain that Jesus suffered, and will meditate on the Passion which would bring “tears to the eye and sweetness to the heart”. The “idea” that “the meditator grieves and loves” is the “cornerstone of the Middle English Passion lyrics.” As a devout believer, the speaker understands that Jesus was suffering for him, or for human beings, because of his sin, and certainly sees Him trembling “by my side” in his mind or soul. The speaker sees not only Jesus’ physical pains but also His spiritual pains – His concern for the speaker or human beings. But when the speaker tries to avoid being seen by God or wants to shyly “hide within myself” or “Recoil into myself, [trying] to get by alone” [27], because of his sin. Just as “the soul” does in one of George Herbert’s poems, Hart’s God magnanimously and forgivingly comes or “draws close” to him and “stretches out both his arms in pain” to embrace him, to tell him, through “the wind in trees”. His mission – “to wound you and to heal the wound”, to point out man’s sin, and make him become a sinless person and finally become One with Him. The sweetness and tenderness of Hart’s God are no different from the qualities described in George Herbert’s poem ‘Love (III)’, in which man or the soul is warmly received by Love or God:

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LOVE bade me welcome: yet my soul drew back,
Guiltie of dust and sinne.
But quick-ey’d Love, observing me grow slack
From my first entrance in,
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning,
If I lack’d any thing.

A guest, I answer’d, worthy to be here:
Love said, You shall be he.
I the unkinde, ungratefull? Ah my deare,
I cannot look on thee.

Love took my hand, and smiling did reply,
Who made the eyes but I?

Truth Lord, but I have marr’d them: let my shame
Go where it doth deserve.
And know you not, says Love, who bore the blame?
My deare, then I will serve.

You must sit down, says Love, and taste my meat:
So I did sit and eat.
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406 2 Corinthians 5:21, *The Holy Bible*.
The poem presents a picture in which the soul’s, or a Christian’s, shyness is overcome by Divine Love’s warm welcome to the communion or salvation, and the affectionate reception of him by Divine Love, or God, who serves him personally. This effect of a Christian’s reception through liturgy is found in a few other poems by Hart, whose understanding of God is similar to, but developed further than, Herbert’s. In ‘Jerusalem’ [48], God’s sweetness and tenderness are embodied through images in which God, with a different name – “silence” – holds “our” hands and shows “us” the right way “home”:

They say that silence leads us here,
That we are led
As if by hand, wind running fingers through the dust;
Inside, the silence
Will take you by the hand [48].

Jesus Christ came and taught “us” to eradicate our sins by calling or gathering together all men and women, scattered and divided by sin, into the unity of a family, the church or Jerusalem. God “wills all to be saved’’, and “[t]hat will to save us is so great that he did not spare His only Son, but sent Him to a horrible death, to make eternal life open for us.” Therefore “we” can

Now feel this stillness
Where two opposing forces clasp: this is the room
Where bread is broken
To make us whole, the inn of our desire [48].

Through the Eucharist, fallen sinners are transformed and become sinless persons possessing the likeness of God. Hart’s poems showing God’s sweet and tender feelings for fallen sinners by calling them together are much closer to some poems by anonymous mediaeval poets. For example, the God in an anonymous poem entitled “Christ calls man home”, in which Jesus calls to man:

Com home againe!
Come home againe!
Mine owene swet hart, com home againe!410

The mediaeval poem directly tells man the reason why Jesus calls him to “com home againe”. One reason is that: “Ye are gone astray / Out of youer way”, therefore, “com home againe!” Following is another reason: “For love I mad thee fre”. In order to make man free from the Devil – Satan:

… I am he
That shall los thee
From Satan the Phinnes bonde.411

The divine love that God showed to fallen sinners or erring souls by calling them to Him is testified to in both the mediaeval poem and Hart’s poems.

411 Ibid., p. 256.
To the speaker, Jesus Christ in the poem ‘A Silver Crucifix on My Desk’ [87] is ready to descend to this world to save the fallen sinners:

Your arms
Raised as if to dive into my element,

Your bowed, precise body
Broken into the ways of earth [87].

Different from the way that God in ‘The Companion’ communicates through the “wind in the trees” with the speaker, God in this poem speaks to the speaker through two different mediums: “By evening / I no longer look your way,” “you” try to contact me through “your shadow” which “Steal[s] toward my hand”, and “you talk” to “me” “in the clock’s dialect”. God has even more tender feelings and emotions, for

Once,
I put you behind me, and all day
I felt your long, torn look
Upon my back [88].

But, when He is returned to the formal position God is believed to become happy again, and

To watch me
Answer letters, light cigarettes,
And place my books
Beneath your feet [88].

From this poem we not only see God’s sweet love for fallen sinners but also His affection and emotion. God, indeed, is “gentle and kindly and gracious, and present to anyone when he wishes”.

In the meantime we seem to hear the speaker’s murmuring to God to establish a kind of personal emotional relationship with Him through mutual love. The mutual love between God and the human soul will be discussed further in the section on negative theology.

3. On the Topic of Death

There is further evidence of dual realities in the two different attitudes towards Death and God in some of Hart’s poems, and his closeness to some mediaeval poems can be seen in his treatment of the subject of “death”. A comparison between a few of Hart’s poems and some mediaeval poems will make the similarity strikingly clear.

In Flame Tree there is a poem called ‘Till Sotell Deth Knoked at My Gate’ [86], whose title is a line from a mediaeval poem, ‘Farewell, this world’. The speaker of this poem has one hour left before he leaves for the other world, or, in his words, he has “oone houre space / To make asithe

412 Quoted by D. Carabine, The Unknown God. Louvain: Peeters Press, 1995, p. 105. Also see note 2 on the page.
for all my grete trespaces. Before he leaves for the other world, he makes his farewell to this one, and expresses his wishes:

… I pray God grant it me.
When I have ended all mine adversite
Graunte me in Paradise to have a mansion,
That shede his blode for my redempcion.414

When he was waiting for Death to come and take away his life, he “sat full ryall in a cheire, / Till sotell deth knoked at my gate.”413 We see that the speaker, when praying to God, appears to be humble and his tone is full of respect and admiration for Him. But “Death”, to him, is horrible and macabre, for the speaker is to be “brought low with worms” by “Death”.

The topic of horrible Death is traditional, and it is frequently depicted in fourteenth-century works such as The Pardoner’s Tale and The Pride of Life. In the former, dreadful Death is regarded as “a real person, who slew the rioters’ former comrades ‘with his spere’”, and in the latter Death is a figure that carries “a fighting weapon,” seizing the lives of people by force. Death is a terrifying, ugly figure that is surely unwelcome, and all upright people will reproach “Him” and try to avoid meeting “Him”. This is what we see in Hart’s poem, ‘Till Sotell Deth Knoked at My Gate’ [86].

The poet’s attitude towards Death is reminiscent of Abulafia’s attitude towards God, which is seen D. Bakan’s quotations. To make clearer the poet’s attitude towards Death and its related features, I would make a comparison between how Death is abhorred in Hart’s poem and how God is adored with Abulafia’s warm reception of Him, to show another aspect of the dual realities in Hart’s poems. From the comparison we shall see that Hart’s poem, with one line borrowed from the mediaeval lyric, shows satirically how people should receive Death or avoid Him in a way that is quite different from that in which the Israelite receives “the influx of divine power.”417

In preparation for Death’s coming, the speaker in Hart’s poem suggests that the listener should:

Cut off the telephone, and plug both ears;
Divorce your wife …
Let all your mail pile up outside;
…
Forget your friends …
…
Eat from a coffin lid, and sleep inside [86].

414 Ibid., p. 207.
415 Ibid., p. 206.
The speaker suggests that the listener stay all by himself or rather “live a living death in order to escape death”\(^{418}\). The advice is humorously nasty, different from Abulafia’s instruction given to an Israelite on how God should be received in solitude:

> Make thyself ready to direct thy heart to God alone. Cleanse the body and choose a lonely house where none shall hear thy voice. Sit there in thy closet and do not reveal thy secret to any man … Cover thyself with thy prayer shawl and put Tefillin on thy head and hands that thou mayest be filled with awe of the Shekhinah … \(^{419}\)

Although both the speaker in Hart’s poem and Abulafia advise that the receivers should stay alone or in solitude, the essential difference between the two suggestions is that God is to be respected and received “with awe”, whereas Death should be avoided with contempt, and with every means that can be used.

To avoid meeting the repellent Death, the speaker further suggests the setting or surroundings should be as dirty, messy, and gloomy as possible:

> … put out
> Some bottles of rancid milk beside the gate.
> You must let paint peel from the walls, and grass
> Go troppo till it chokes the garden beds.
> Ensure the lights won’t work; a rat or two
> Around the place … [86]

Abulafia’s suggestion is completely opposite: to show that “thou art about to serve God in joy of the gladness of heart”, the listener should: “Cleanse thy body … Cleanse thy clothes … let all thy garments be white … If it be night, kindle many lights, until all be bright.”\(^{420}\)

What is more, Hart’s speaker, to retard Death’s coming, recommends that the listener make sure to

> Think of him constantly, and scratch his name
> Upon your glasses so you won’t forget;
> …
> Be vigilant …

> … Think if anyone
> Has died inside your place: a father, child,
> Or dog perhaps [86].

In contrast to the suggestions given by Hart’s speaker, Abulafia thinks that the listener should make psychological preparations to receive the divine presence:

\(^{418}\) Personal communication with Kevin Hart. September 2005.
\(^{420}\) Ibid.
... turn all thy true thought to imagine the Name and His exalted angels in thy heart as if they were human beings sitting or standing about thee. ... turn thy whole mind to understand with thy thoughts the many things which will come into thy heart ... Thy whole body will be seized by an extremely strong trembling, so that thou wilt think that surely thou art about to die, because thy soul, overjoyed with its knowledge, will leave thy body. And be thou ready at this moment consciously to choose death, and then thou shalt know that thou hast come far enough to receive the influx. ... and rejoice at thy lot and know that God loveth thee.\footnote{Ibid., p. 79.}

From the comparison we see that Abulafia’s attitude towards God serves largely as a foil to Hart’s attitude towards Death. It is the former’s respectful attitude towards God that makes the latter’s attitude towards Death prominent and obvious. Hence the dual reality is exhibited in the two speakers’ two attitudes, towards God and Death. Death should be received in disrespectful ways in contrast to Abulafia’s respectful ways of receiving God. To Hart, Death is so detestable that nobody wants to meet it, while God is so highly respected that He should be received with trembling fear and a strong love for Him – a kind of meditation in which there is “an intellectual ecstasy identifiable with psychological insight”\footnote{Ibid.}. It can be seen that when Hart was composing ‘Till Sotell Deth Knoked at My Gate’, he might have had in mind Abulafia’s instruction to the Israelites as to how to receive God, as a contrast; indeed, that he drew his inspiration and subject matter from some mediaeval poems.

We also see that Death is apostrophised in some mediaeval English lyrics. In the lyric “Ha! cruell deeth, contrarious to creatures in kynde”, Death is denounced as “a tyrant and murderer, whose malice is insatiable”: “Thou art to alle creatures hidous to be-holde”. Death, in the following line, is regarded as “a cruel tyrant, whom kingdoms should rise up against and overthrow: Ffor pi malice, me semeth reames sholde arise / To destruye cruell deeth and do hym of dawe.”\footnote{R. Woolf, English Religious Lyric in the Middle Ages. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968, p. 341. Also see note 1 on the page.} This tradition of reproaching Death as “a tyrant and murderer” is followed by Hart, as can be seen from his poem, ‘Haranguing Death’ [101].

Death in ‘Haranguing Death’, as in the poem, ‘Ha! Cruell deeth ...’, is addressed directly, and the reader seems to be invited to the scene where Death is denounced and whipped in the speaker’s imagination. Like Death in the mediaeval poem, Death in Hart’s poem is personified, and blamed for what “He” has done. As in the mediaeval poem, the tone in ‘Haranguing Death’ is imperative, commanding and domineering, as if the speaker reproached Him from a position of superiority. But the target of reproach is different from that of the mediaeval poem, for the speaker represents Justice, censuring and reprimanding those modern warmongers who launched cruel wars, and those who in power pay no attention to the health of the great majority of the people. Due to the dirty tricks played by politicians, countless innocent people have lost their lives. So the poem expresses a pungent censure of those guilty persons who are the killers of countless innocent people. Here in the poem the traditional Death becomes a modern Death representing those politicians and warmongers whom the speaker is actually haranguing.
The poem begins with an imperative sentence – “Don’t hide” – which is a stern order to, or upbraiding of, Death, who is declared to be “tedious”. In the poem, the speaker does not mention such crazy persons as Hitler and Mussolini, but we can sense the poet’s severe censure of warmongers from the lines. Through the poet’s imagination or imaginative displacement, “Death” proper has become a scapegoat, receiving criticism or censure in place of modern warmongers. The speaker’s seemingly naïve or childlike imagination makes “Death” appear to be sophisticatedly calm and composed –

… staring from my new electric clock,

   Forever playing patience with marked cards
   Or ticking over like a taxi fare [101].

Death is imagined as a person who does “tedious” things. In fact, while Death or “you” are playing with cards, countless innocent people’s lives have been taken away, through “your” cruel hands. Due to “your” stupid decisions; so many people die that there is not enough room to bury them. Though the ubiquity of the dead is not indicated in the poem directly, it is implied with a metaphor – “it’s you who puts those varicose veins // In ancient cheeses”. The image naturally leads to the next few lines, the ideas of which are absurd and awry:

   I hope people all over the world agree
   To have both legs chopped off before the end

   Just so their graves are small. [101].

The idea proposed for solving the problem of having so many deaths is not merely absurd but also shows the extremity of the poet’s feelings. The humorous sense is also shown in the lines that follow, in which people think of methods for dealing with Death:

   They open bottle shops in cemeteries
   And hold outrageous parties so you can’t sleep [101].

The persona also suggests another way to deal with “you”, which is bitterly sarcastic:

   And people come to funerals, half-pissed,
   In Life Be In It T-shirts [101]!

The poet’s satiric treatment of Death is original and is exhibited in modern terms. Here Death is not a skeleton figure with a spear in his hand any longer but a modern and “civilised” skeleton covered with a handsome uniform, killing countless innocent people without hesitation. The poem features a black humour, in which we can hear the poet’s tearless crying for the innocent who lost their lives in “those endless wars / And gaudy diseases.” [101]

Hart’s inheritance of the mediaeval tradition and denunciation of tyrants such as Death are extended in the poem ‘Lullaby’ [105]. The poetic form of the lullaby was popular during the Middle Ages. Hart follows the mediaeval tradition and adopts the poetic form but changes the subject matter to slash at modern Death – bad policy-makers. Reading the first two stanzas leads
the reader to enter a quiet ‘house’ where a mother is singing a song to coax her baby to sleep. When we listen to or read it, it seems that we become children again, feeling the noble love of a mother. Or we see the Virgin Mary holding the baby Jesus in her arms and singing a song to coax Him to sleep. From the song we know that it is a quiet evening, which “arrives on crickets’ legs”. We can also see there is a binary pair: day – night. During the day, it is very hot – “the body weeps” – and even in the evening “the mind” is still “lumpy with hot things”. Yet there is some sort of redemption – in the evening:

… the jasmine opens, your sheets are cool,
And sleep is quietly calling you by name [105].

The impressive mother-baby picture forms a striking contrast to another picture in which we are shown how the “politician” lures his people into believing that what he does is right. He cheats the people by saying that “we’re armed for peace”. The ugly face of the politician is depicted vividly in the third and fourth stanzas. He “smiles vastly”, and “holds you in his arms”, saying “Sleep now”. It is true that when a politician makes a speech on TV or radio, he does whatever he can to leave a “good” impression on his audiences and hearers and makes them believe that what he is going to do is undoubtedly for their benefit. When the two pictures, the Virgin Mary holding the baby-Jesus and the politician luring his countrymen, are put side by side, the lies of the politician appear mean and ignoble, which forms a striking contrast to the nobility of the divine Mother. This is a witty contrast, which lays bare the politician’s intrigues, making him more ugly and his heart more cruel and barbarous, especially when “he counts bombs falling”.

In the fifth stanza, we see some redemption: the jasmine blooms, night cools, crickets chant, and moonlight washes the dirty world and makes things black and white. In the meantime, we can perceive the poet’s sincere hope that God can really get rid of those who cheat the naïve people in the world, just like the “moonlight” washing “the dirty world”, so that there is no war, no suffering any more. The politician himself “cannot sleep”, feeling restless or having an uneasy conscience when “missiles jump the moon”. What the “jailor” says to “Socrates” in the last stanza but two should make those warmongers pause for thought before they launch into a war. “The good man has no fear for death” – even if he is dead, his good deeds will be remembered by future generations, and he will be living in the hearts of people. At the same time God will receive him into Heaven, according to the Christian doctrine mentioned above.

The expression “little one” appears twice in the text, and is hinted at once in the third stanza. Each time, the meaning is different. The “little one” in the first stanza is a father’s lovely baby. Later, the implied expression indicates that the politician treats the common people as his obedient goats who will believe him and do whatever he tricks them into doing. The “little one” in the last line reminds us of the dwarfish Napoleon, the great tyrant. Here, the poet hopes that politicians like Napoleon will stop playing their political tricks, and fall asleep. No matter how they behave themselves in the History Platform they are sure to be “little ones” before Justice, which represents a great majority of people.

The poem just discussed alludes to the Virgin Mary. The following section presents a much clearer picture of the poet’s high respect, admiration and love for the Virgin – the Mother of God.
4. In Praise of Mary:
As mentioned above, some Christian doctrines are embodied in mediaeval religious poems, which have had an important influence on Hart. There are many mediaeval poems concerning Mary or in praise of the Virgin. These poems fall into several groups, and two among them are worth mentioning here: “those that praise the Virgin and implore her mercy”, and “those poems – mainly lullabies – in which the Virgin is associated with the Christ-Child.”424 Those two groups undoubtedly influenced Hart when he composed both his religious and non-religious poems. His poems in praise of the Virgin Mary are as important as his poems addressed to God, the Father, the Son, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. Hart has also written poems which allude to the other group of mediaeval poems, that is, the lullabies in which “the Virgin is associated with the Christ-Child.”425

If we say that some of Hart’s poems have an affinity to the poems in praise of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, the poem entitled ‘To Our Lady’ provides strong evidence for the contention. A comparison between a few mediaeval poems and Hart’s work will support the argument. Before the comparison is made, let us examine St Bernard’s teaching on the Christian doctrine relating to the Mother of God. Bernard thinks that “Mary is the “channel” or, even the “neck”, through which the body is joined to the head, and likewise through which the head exerts its power and strength on the body. ‘For she is the neck of our Head, by which all spiritual gifts are communicated to His Mystical Body.’”426

‘… In all things and in all ways she provides for us in our wretchedness: she soothes our agitation, she stirs our faith, she strengthens our hope, she dispels our mistrust, and gives strength to us in our faintheartedness … I tell you certainly that she will be heard because of the reverence due to her. The Son hears the prayer of His mother, and the Father hears the prayer of His Son. … this is the sinners’ ladder, this is the firm ground of my confidence, this is the whole reason of my hope.”427

The poem ‘To Our Lady’ is in praise of, and a prayer to, the Virgin Mary. It is praise, for the speaker shows his admiration and adoration for the Blessed Virgin who had the Immaculate Conception of Jesus Christ, and who can intercede before her Son; and it is a prayer for help, because fallen sinners can, through her, obtain salvation, as “[s]he was Mother of the Redeemer precisely insofar as He is our Redeemer.”428 Similar praise of Mary combined with a prayer to her are found in some mediaeval poems, especially anonymous poems, such as ‘Mary moder of grace we cryen to ye’, ‘Thank and a plea to Mary’, and ‘In praise of Mary’.

In the first stanza of ‘To Our Lady’ [31], the speaker addresses the Virgin by praising her as:

Mother of all that is good,

425 Ibid.
Of the light that is always touching this world [31].

The poem ‘Mary moder of grace we cryen to ye’ has the corresponding eulogistic lines:

Mary moder of grace we cryen to ye,
Moder of mercy and pyte.429

In ‘In Praise of Mary’, the Virgin is addressed in a similar way:

Moder unwemmed and maiden clene,
Swich in world non other nis.430

In Hart’s poem and the mediaeval lyrics, there are some common features: the tone is affectionate, humble and full of devotion and devout feelings, and all the lines in the poems begin with the emotional address: “Mother …”, followed by the virtues of the Virgin.

Hart’s affinity to the mediaeval poems can be seen in another respect: the structures of the poems are similar – from praise to prayer. In Hart’s poem Mary is praised for her beneficence:

You tell us
Of the stone’s astonishment
At the sudden warmth of a first beam of light,

Of the horizons of dust
That cry to the clouds, Give us your fullness
And let us live,

You take from us
That mounds of darkness we bury inside of us
And make from them a night of stars
Where we can see your Son … [31]

Having offered praise, the speaker addresses Mary directly and asks her to grant him help:

Our Lady,
Withheld from death,
Mother of all things that must die,
Speak for us:
Do what we cannot do ourselves,
Help us to hold in our hands the bird in flight,

To pull from our feet our heavy shadows, to walk your way [31].

Bernard’s doctrine mentioned above is embodied well in this poem. The speaker in the last stanza prays to the Virgin to let him have the full presence of God, for it is an illusion to have

429 Quoted by R. Woolf, English Religious Lyric in the Middle Ages. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968, p. 120. Also see note 1 on the page.
His full presence if “Our Lady” does not intercede on his behalf. In other words, it is Mary who is the “ladder” to heaven and to God, and it is through her help that the speaker can “walk [Mary’s] way”, and attain the presence of God and Truth. The structure from praise to prayer used in Hart’s poem is found in some stanzas of the mediaeval poem ‘Thanks and a plea to Mary’:

Thu art god and swete and bright,
Of alle otheir icoren.
Of thee was that swete wight,
That was Jesus, iboren.

Maide milde, bidd I thee
Wid thine swete childe,
That thu herdie me
To habben Godis milce. 431

The speaker praises Mary for being “good, sweet and bright” and giving birth to Jesus Christ, and then he prays for her help: to “shelter me” and “to have God’s mercy”.

The poems discussed testify to the closeness between Hart’s poem and mediaeval poems which embody St Bernard’s doctrine on the Virgin Mary. She has such influence on her divine Son that whatever grace He bestows on humans is through her mediation. Through her, fallen sinners can be saved and through her “we” can “walk [her] way” and gain the full presence of God. All this can be seen in both Hart’s poems and the mediaeval poems.

Another group of mediaeval poems related to the Virgin Mary, as classified by Woolf, is the “lullabies” in which “the Virgin is associated with the Christ-Child”. Hart also has similar poems, in which we see his poetry’s affinity with the mediaeval poems. A trace of the mediaeval lullaby in which the Virgin Mary is taking care of the Child Christ is found in the poem ‘Facing the Pacific at Night’. In this poem, when “Driving east, you become a child again”, and the ocean becomes a cradle, rocking “from side to side”,

A child itself, asleep in its bed of rocks,
No parent there to wake it from a dream [103].

Together with the line “And rush of birth when beards of blood are grown”, the lines above remind us of the anonymous poem ‘A Lullaby of the Nativity’, in which the Virgin sings a lullaby to the Christ Child, which is repeated by the speaker:

Lullay, my liking, my dere son,
my sweting.
Lullay, my dere herte, my owen
dere derling. 432

The lovely scene of the intimate relationship between the Virgin and Jesus Christ appears between the lines. In Hart’s poem, there is no definite indication whether the maternal love is the Virgin’s love or the love of a mortal mother. The two kinds of love, in fact, are intermingled, and can be compared to the great ocean – so vast, so great, and so sacred.

Another poem by Hart relating to the Virgin’s love is ‘Her Name’ [128]. Although the poem is about the speaker’s romantic love for a girl I would say that this poem is a mixture of both secular or carnal love and sacred or spiritual love. There are several indications that the poem is about carnal love. First of all, the image of the “poincianas” glows with an incomparably bright radiance, just like a beautiful young girl in red standing outside the speaker's bedroom window, gazing into it while he is studying, sitting at the desk by the window. Next, more details about the flowers are presented: some of them are gracefully and elegantly erect before the bedroom window, some seem to meet the speaker face to face – by leaning forward towards “bedroom screen”. Why are they so flourishing and prosperous? We are told that the flowers “live off” “that heavy Brisbane heat”, which gives them the necessary nutrient. However, the scorching “heat” can “knock[s] you flat”, for its strength can “outlast” that of “beer”. This kind of hot weather makes the speaker feel the need of something redemptive, as the heat “bruises souls”. The speaker’s description of the flowers arouses our sympathy for them: the blooms’ thin petals were flickering when “thunder rolled”, which suggests a young girl in need of the speaker’s protection and love. Indeed, the flowers represent a beautiful girl whom the speaker loves. The description of the flowers foreshadows the erotic content described in the following lines of the poem.

The poem is also about sacred love, because the love between the two persons is presented symbolically through a picture of Our Lady. While he was preparing for his examination, the speaker took a fancy to “a girl from school”. It is significant to see how the speaker communicated with the girl. He called her sometimes late at night, while she sent him a picture of Our Lady with a scarlet lipstick kiss, signed “You Know Who” on the back, in the mail one steamy day. Here, the poet combines two kinds of love as one through the message on the picture of Our Lady. One is his girl’s love – human or secular love – and the other is Our Lady’s love – divine or sacred love. Two kinds of love, combined as one, represent the consummate and superlative love. Responding to the girl’s love, the speaker found “a needle from her mother’s room” to “Inscribe her name on the petals”. When he was doing so he felt “the needle cut through tiny veins”. As we know, beautiful things such as flowers are the traces of God’s presence, which is a kind of redemption given by God. Hence the flowers also contain the divine meaning or essence. Accordingly, when the speaker inscribed the girl’s name on the petals of the flowers, his love for her was also both secular and sacred, as hers for him. We should notice that the girl is not a common girl, for she, to the speaker, is the Virgin Mary transformed or incarnated (as indicated by the picture). Therefore, her love to the speaker and his love for her have become sublimated and made sacred, and it is not human love any longer but divine love, to which every devout person looks forward.

‘Madonna’, is an erotic poem which is a mixture of both the secular and the sacred. It seems to belong to part of the poet’s autobiography, dealing with fragments of the poet’s fervent love for

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some girls, or rather, some girls’ love for him. As it is a long poem dealing with the speaker’s relations with four or more girls, I have just chosen one part of it, which is related to Mary, to discuss.

In the middle of the poem, a displacement of two kinds of love takes place in the speaker’s imagination: when he

… looked at that ‘Self-Portrait’ with a long skeletal arm
And thought about my soul
…

Then sat before ‘Madonna’
And knew the mouth and lids I longed to kiss

But knew no woman like her, not at all,
No woman given to the dark [196].

Here, the distinction between his girlfriend and Madonna dissolved. While the speaker meditated or “thought about the soul” he

… felt an arm around my shoulders
And so we kissed [196]

To the speaker, the girl who kissed him, in his imagination, was none other than the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God.

The two aspects above show that Hart is indebted to both St Bernard’s doctrine on Mary and the related mediaeval poetic tradition. In the meantime, we see that Hart is an original poet, for he not only inherits the Christian tradition embodied in the mediaeval poems but also develops and enhances this tradition by composing his contemporary poems with new themes, attitudes and language.

As one item of the binary pair of the dual tradition of theology in Hart’s poetic space, the poet’s religious faith is related to positive theology, which is concerned with the similarity between the divine Being and other beings, and how the divine Being appears in the form of traces either as nature or as human beings; and with the doctrine and tenets expressed in the Bible and catechisms. When these doctrines and tenets are expressed in poetry, some mediaeval poems are good examples of the essence of the Christian religion. Hart’s poems, especially his religious poems, bear a strong similarity to these poems. However, we see that positive theology is only one side of the tradition, and that it needs the other side – negative theology – as a kind of supplement if we want to have a comparatively complete look at how Hart’s religious faith is embodied in his poetry. Therefore, I now move on to the following section, which focuses on negative theology.
**Section II: Negative Theology**

Positive theology teaches that God is omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent. In addition, it is said that God is Unity and Trinity as well. We also know that God loves His creations, redeemed them and saved them from sin by sending His only begotten Son to the mortal world to teach them how to follow the Word of God so that they might enter or ascend to Paradise and become one with God. To do this involves negative theology, which is demonstrative, mystical, and philosophical. Hart, in *The Trespass of the Sign*, quotes John D. Jones’s statement on negative theology, which is worth quoting here:

> There is a double sense to negative theology. On the one hand, negative theology functions within affirmative theology or, more specifically, metaphysics to express the preeminence of the divine cause. Here, if you will, the negations are “super affirmation.” On the other hand, negative theology provides the foundation for mystical unity with the divinity. Here negative (mystical) theology denies all that is and all reference to beings and, by my interpretation, ultimately denies all affirmative theology and, hence, metaphysics. Negative (mystical) theology involves the ultimate denial of divine causality and preeminence.

There are two movements that “represent the relation between beings and the divinity”; “vertical and circular or spiral.”434 This divine “causality and preeminence” results from the vertical movement of the divinity which “sends the rays of its goodness … downward.”435 Another movement of the divine being is circular or spiral, which causes the soul’s ascension to God by adopting methods other than those in positive theology, namely, the methods of purification, love, and silence to affirm the mode of access or ascension to God through “the spirit’s gradual ascent to ultimate self-presence and self-meditating identity in God,”436 or “through successive denials of ‘God’, resulting in an anabasis, an ascent to God through the darkness of unknowing.”437 From Hart’s poems we appreciate the ways of negative theology to gain ascension to God and achieve union with Him. Therefore, in this section I am concerned with those poems that demonstrate more features of the divine essence other than those demonstrated in the section on positive theology, and basic ways to attain ascension to and union with God.

1. **The Circular Movement of the Divine Being**

Negative theology does not deny positive statements on the nature of the divine – God is Unity and the Trinity as well – or, in Deirdre Carabine’s words: the methods of the two theologies “are not opposed when applied to God; they are rather, an ‘ineffable harmony’, for the conflict remains at the verbal level and not at the level of inner meaning.”438 In other words, the two theologies share something in common: the two are complementary in regarding God as the

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435 Ibid.
437 Ibid., p. 175.
highest being, although there are some differences between them. On the one hand, God is goodness and beauty, and he is omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient. On the other hand, “God is mind beyond mind and word beyond speech; nameless and many-named, eloquent and taciturn; always at rest and always on the move and never at rest and never on the move.”

Although the divine being’s movements in the two theologies are different, the source and destination of other beings are the same – in positive theology all other beings are from the One, “the good”, just like the rays from the “sun” that gives everything its being, while in negative theology the movement of the divine being is circular and revolving, and this determines other beings’ longing for ascension to the highest being and the features of the journey of the ascension: metaphysical, mystical, and philosophical.

The circular movement of the divinity is that “from out of which beings emerge, that in which beings dwell, and that into which all beings return,” and the divinity “revolves out of itself, through itself, and upon itself, always and in the same way reverting upon itself.” From the circular movement, we see that the divine centre is “everywhere and nowhere”, and this positioning of the divine centre is said to be “the culmination of the negative theology.” The circular movement of the divine being is found in the poem ‘Three Prayers’ [39]: the “Master of energy” or divine being is “Stepping in and out of logic”, “In and out of time”, “In and out of history”. In the two structures of movement, it is the highest being or the divinity that serves as their base or ground. No matter how the highest being moves, the divinity is always at once immanent and transcendent in beings. As has been said, the divinity or “divine love is like an everlasting circle moving around in unerring convolution through the good, out of the good, in the good, and to the good, always advancing, abiding and returning in the same and according to the same.” The circular movement of the divine being is reflected in such poems by Hart as ‘The Word’, ‘The Gift’, and ‘The Letter’, and also in some poems by Gerard Manley Hopkins and George Herbert.

In ‘The Word’, the highest being’s motion is similar to that in Hopkins’ poem ‘Let me be to Thee as the circling bird’. Like Hopkins’ “circling bird”, the divinity represented by “the word” in Hart’s poem also “circles around the world.” Hopkins’ “circling bird” makes the world charged with the grandeur of God, in which “a changeless note is heard” “in a common word” that is “the dominant of my range and state” while the highest being in ‘The Word’, in the form of the word, dominates the speaker’s whole life:

… it took the whole of life to say
That single word [159].

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439 Ibid., p. 293.
441 Ibid., p. 71.
442 Ibid., p. 69.
443 Ibid., p. 67.
445 Ibid., p. 28.
The motions of Hopkins’s divine being as “bird” and that of Hart’s deity as “Word” correspond to Pseudo-Dionysius’s representation of divine causality in terms of circular imagery. Accordingly, the highest being or “the Word” in Hart’s poem is “everywhere and nowhere”. So to say that the divinity is “everywhere” is because the content of “the Word” is “large enough // For me to live in now”; and to say the highest being is “nowhere” is because

I’d never notice it while reading hard
Or find it looking up a dictionary,

That word I say a dozen times a day,
A word that slips my tongue just when you ask,

A word my death will not confide in me [159].

Bernard, in his sermons on the ‘Song of Songs’, compares Jesus Christ to the sea: “As the sea is the source of fountains and rivers so the Lord Jesus Christ is the source of every kind of virtue and knowledge.”446 It is equally correct to say that the Word is “the source and origin of all other words, and in other words, Jesus Christ is “the first, original, and governing sign of all signs” 447

The divinity is immanent, for He is “everywhere”; the highest being, in the meantime, is transcendent, because it is “nowhere”. This proposition stresses the divinity’s spiral motion, which is surely to deny God’s full presence, but the divinity as the transcendental ground is certainly set up, and the metaphysical structure is definitely certified and confirmed. For this, more evidence can be found in another two of Hart’s poems, ‘The Gift’ and ‘The Letter’.

Like “the Word”, which is the original sign of all signs, the letter in the poem ‘The Letter’ [114] is the original letter of all other letters, and the gift in the poem ‘The Gift’ [120] is the original gift of all other gifts. Like “the Word” that is from the divinity, “the letter” as well as “the gift” comes from the highest being, existing “everywhere” and “nowhere”. From the poem we see that the letter’s source, destination and content seem to be so ambiguous and indefinite that it has to go to court to allow experts, scientists or scholars to judge. However, they cannot reach a unanimous decision or verdict: “the experts disagree”, “a scientist sighed”, and

The government will not commit itself
While thousands link it with a UFO [114].

The gift has a similar situation:

One day the gift arrives – outside your door,
Left on a windowsill, inside the mailbox,
Or in the hallway … [120]

There is no information with regard to the exact place where “the gift” is left or placed, and who the sender and receiver or receivers are; there is only the information that “the gift” is very big – “far too large to lift”. It is so large that

> Your postman shrugs his shoulders, the police
> Consult a statue, and the cat miaows.
>
> … [it] fills the backyard like afternoon in Spring [120].

The largeness of the gift reminds us that the capacity of the “Word” is so big that the speaker can live inside it. The letter’s content is also very large, and the love contained in it is so huge and abundant that it captivates and fascinates every person who reads it:

> Each reader thinks it’s somehow meant for him.
> (Nobody here has slept these past few days:
>
> Nights see us drafting marvellous replies [114].

So far, we have known that the letter, as well as the gift, has “no name, no signature, and no address” [120], just like “the Word”, comes nowhere and goes anywhere, circulating around the world, and “It is around and in and, indeed, is all beings, yet nothing at all.”

Although the letter and the gift seem to come from nowhere or anywhere and for nobody or anybody without detailed contents, we can unearth some hidden contents from the poems.

In the first place, the “letter” seems to have no source and no destination, but “the author’s voice” can be heard “much later on”. Is the “voice” from Paradise where God lives? Does the long distance from Paradise to the fallen world continually delay the arrival of His voice? In the second place, the “breeze” or “wind” that “came and took a cheeky drag” or “drops by to read a line” [114] is very meaningful, symbolising the momentary presence of the highest being – God or Word. The presence of the “breeze” or “wind” indicates the presence of the divinity. Just like the “breeze” or “wind”, the highest being has no form and no shape – He cannot be seen or touched, but can merely be perceived. Another piece of evidence is part of the letter’s content that is revealed in the poem. Although nobody knows how old the letter is, “the author’s voice” can be heard “much later on”: “My dear one, listen to me now …”; “If I left you (but I won’t)” and “As if you had forgotten everything …” [114]. These recall the story about Jesus Christ in the Bible. Although Christ died on the Cross, was then resurrected, ascended to Paradise and left fallen humanity, He is still within “us”, for this world is full of the traces of His presence – He is nowhere and He is everywhere. Only those who love Him can hear Him and become one with Him in His resurrection and ascension into Heaven. The voice, like divine radiance from Heaven, comes from God, showing His love for His creations, and His salvation for them.

Are there any hints about the gift as to where it comes from? Indeed, there are some hints, such as “To you, my dearest one, my all …”. God is very generous, as George Herbert says in his poem ‘Gratefulfulness’:

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Perpetuall knockings at thy doore,
Tears sullying thy transparent rooms,
Gift upon gift, much would have more,
And comes. 449

Hart, in accordance with Herbert, believes that the gift from God is everywhere:

... slivers of rain on the window,
Those gold-tooled Oeuvres of Diderot on the shelf,
... in a champagne flute

Were they part of the gift or something else?
Or is the gift still coming, on its way? [120]

Since the letter and gift are from the highest being, what are their functions? The function of the letter is so great that every reader is “drafting marvellous replies”, showing his or her love for God, and still “the letter works non-stop” [114], and the love contained in the letter of love keeps coming from God just as gifts keep coming, influencing or transforming fallen humanity. In other words, where there is humanity there is the love of God, and the function of the letter will not stop. The same can be said of the gift: like the love contained in the letter, the gift has an endless function: the gift keeps coming and transforms fallen beings into Christ-like persons, as is said in the poem – “the gift has set you up for life” [120].

Regardless of the fact that the Word is so large and tremendous, the love contained in the letter is so abstract and profound, and the gift cannot be known “as such”, yet all of them can be attained through faith in God, the highest being. God is beyond beings, beyond existence, therefore, has “no name, no signature, and no address”. The Word, the letter and the gift are transcendental, and they are beyond phenomenological determination, but they can be perceived through one’s faith, through one’s intellectual and transcendental understanding of the divinity. The Word, letter and gift can appear at any place or in any sign. They are original, functioning as the ground of metaphysical structure. Indeed, they function as the origin or ground of the text’s signification, although God is not fully present as He “reveals that He is yet conceals what He is.” 450

The hidden and revealing features of the Word, gift, and letter are brilliantly described by John Scottus Eriugena:

nothing is more hidden than it, nothing more present, difficult as to where it is, more difficult as to where it is not, an ineffable light ever present to the intellectual eyes of all and known to no intellect as to what it is, diffused through all thing to infinity, is made both all things in all things and nothing in nothing. 451

It is the dual side of the divine essence – immanence and transcendence; appearance and disappearance; affirmation and negation; the effable and the ineffable; the accessible and the inaccessible; the understandable and the unintelligible with its circulating movement which shows the necessity of making the soul ascend to God by adopting such ways as purification, love, and silence. These ways to make the soul ascend and be united with God will be my concerns in the following subsections.

2. Ascension and Union to God through Purification
The circular or spiral movement of the divine being requires devout believers to purify the soul so that it can ascend to God and attain the full presence of the divine essence. As a matter of death and life, the topic of purification leading to ascension and union is an important element in the space of Hart’s poetry, corresponding to St John’s doctrines. According to St John the relationship between death and life is dialectic, as he observes: “death is nothing else than the privation of life, because when life comes no vestige of death remains.”\(^\text{452}\) Having spiritual life is the basic condition to drive “death” away from the soul when the ascension and union with God are in progress. To acquire spiritual life, one must have “complete mortification of all the vices and appetites and of one’s own nature.”\(^\text{453}\) In other words, if the vices and appetites and one’s own nature were not mortified, death would remain, one would have no spiritual life and his/her soul would not be clean enough for the divinity to dwell in, and therefore one would not be able achieve union with God. When he talks about “the voluntary, inordinate appetites” hindering the soul’s ascension to and union with the divine, thwarting the spiritual life to come, St John states, “We are dealing with the denudation of the soul’s appetites … it is the will and appetite dwelling within it that causes the damage.”\(^\text{454}\)

How can one denude the “appetites” and deprive the physical influences to achieve spiritual life and realise ascension and union? St John gives his answer: through death and rebirth, as he observes “those who, in their rebirth through grace and death to everything … rise above themselves to the supernatural and receive from God this rebirth and sonship which transcends everything imaginable.”\(^\text{455}\) With God’s grace adorning her and “some rays of His grandeur and divinity” revealed to her, the soul would “go out of herself in rapture and ecstasy.”\(^\text{456}\) However, the soul suffers “great pain and fear in sensory part”, and the pain and suffering resulting from the process of union with God, in fact, are a kind of annihilation, negation, and purification – a kind of “death” which is the death of the physical self, a necessary step for the rebirth of the spiritual self, in consequence of which spiritual life comes.

The death of one’s natural self through denudation, dispossession, and negation results in a new self or spiritual self in which the soul is cleansed, purified and fit for God to dwell in. The process of self-denial or death is “patterned” or modelled “on Jesus Christ’s (death)” and “[a] man makes progress only through imitation of Christ,”\(^\text{457}\) as demonstrated by St John. The death

\(^{453}\) Ibid., p. 607.
\(^{454}\) Ibid., p. 49.
\(^{455}\) Ibid., p. 117.
\(^{456}\) Ibid., p. 406.
\(^{457}\) Ibid., p.124.
of Jesus Christ is a spiritual one, as “he died spiritually” and “at his death he had less”; at the moment of his death, “He was most annihilated in all things” including “His reputation”, “His human nature”, and “help and consolation from His Father,” and consequently Christ ascends to heaven and achieves union with God. The death of Christ set an example for God-believers to follow or imitate, and He is believed to be the “door”, “the Way, the Truth, and the Life”. This ascension and union is also practicable and attainable in this life: “The journey, then, does not consist in recreations, experiences, and spiritual feelings, but in the living, sensory and spiritual, exterior and interior death of the cross.” Following the model of Christ’s death,

A man makes room for God by wiping away all the smudges and smears of creatures, by uniting his will perfectly to God's; for to love is to labor to divest and deprive oneself for God of all this is not God. When this is done the soul will be illumined by and transformed in God. And God will so communicate His supernatural being to it that it will appear to be God Himself and will possess all that God Himself has.

The death of the natural or physical self leads to spiritual rebirth and union with God, and the exemplification of Christ’s death or purification provides the reader with a pattern for reading some of Hart’s poems. In fact, the impact of this pattern is so tremendous that it can also be seen in the works of theorists of the phenomenological school, which will be discussed later in this work.

We remember that some critics consider that the poet is afraid of physical death. In this regard they may have the two poems “Sin” [15] and “My Death” in mind [19]. It is true that the two poems are about “death”, as the title of the second poem suggests. In ‘Sin’, it is “death” that brings the speaker a second life, which is ascension to God and union with the divine: “in that darkness / Believe my life was still to come” and “I have my time again!” [15], and this is another life or spiritual life. To the speakers of the two poems, “death” seems to be a dreadful word, for “I cannot bear to face it” [19]. But the painful experience of facing death is similar to the suffering experienced by Christ on the Cross, which is spiritual death. Therefore, the speaker is still willing to face it as he says in the poem ‘Sin’:

I would unstitch my fate, erase
Those lines I scored upon myself, untie
This cord that joins me to my death [15].

The two speakers have something in common: they are afraid of ‘death’ and reluctant to face it, but this is not natural or physical death as the critics mistakenly believe. Death in the two poems refers to the “sin” which is “what I have been, what I have done” [15], and death is the necessary step of denial and negation of the physical self on the journey for the soul to ascend to God. Indeed, one needs to undergo self-denial, negation and purification to achieve union with God, and this is called the “death” of the physical self.

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458 Ibid.
459 Ibid., p.125.
460 Ibid., p. 117.
461 See ‘Introduction’ of this dissertation, p. 47.
As I said above, facing death is a painful experience, and this is attested in the speaker’s response to death in ‘My Death’. At first glance, the speaker seems to be afraid of “death”, as he

… feel[s] it deep within me, closer
Than my breathing,

Moving within me, slow as my blood,
Measuring me
With all I care to do,
… [19]

Indeed, the speaker is reluctant to face “death”, for he thinks that “it has nothing to do with me”, and that “death” is “a silence”, “a darkness”, and “a shadow”. A careful reader would recall the poet’s dictum: anabasis towards God through darkness462 or as it is attested in the last stanza of the poem:

I follow
Or that follows me
And leads me to my centre not my edge [19].

Like Christ’s ascension to Heaven and His reunion with His Father – for spiritual rebirth one needs to undergo physical death – the speaker aims at ascending to God and becoming One with the divine – “my centre”— by following Christ’s example. Therefore, I maintain that death in the poem is not physical death, but spiritual death or the pain that the speaker suffers when he denudes and negates the self to gain ascension to and union with God.

It should be noted that the process of “death” involves a kind of rapture and ecstasy, for God gives His believers grace and His divine ray. In several poems by Hart, we see that this ray is a kind of music, which makes the listeners enter a state of ecstasy. That is to say, music serves a function of negation and purification, which makes it possible for the soul to gain ascension to and union with God. The process of the soul’s purification is found in the poem, ‘The Members of the Orchestra’ [65], from which the reader sees that a ceremony of death or marriage is held, and the members of the orchestra give their performance. The long-awaited performance does not begin until the conductor appears on the stage. He, however, “cannot talk except in the language/ Of the deaf and dumb”, and the other members of the orchestra cannot talk, either: they can merely use their “complicated ventriloquism”, each “making his instrument speak our long-forgotten mother tongue”. This recalls Hart’s statement on negative theology: “negative theology, the discourse which reflects upon positive theology by denying that its language and concepts are adequate to God.”463 Since language is inadequate to describe the divine essence, the poet finds the “ventriloquism” – “our long-forgotten native tongue” – fit to embody Him, to purify “our souls”.

During the course of the performance, the metaphysical embodiment of the divine essence is fully manifested, as the immanence of the deity can be seen from the effect of “one violin” that “reaches above the rest”, allowing the performance to reach its climax. The reader’s mood and

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enthusiasm, together with the poet’s and audience’s, reaches a climax as well. The violin, like the presence of the divine ray, enlightens the audience suddenly, allowing them to enter a state of ecstasy, for “we” understand many things, among which two points are clearly shown. On the one hand, the audience suddenly discovers that the essence of the music – the divine trace of God, the theophany and the truth, metaphysical meaning – is discovered in “the relation between an object / And its name”. God is invisible and ineffable, and the right time to communicate with God is at night. The expressions “dark stage” and “tonight” in the opening stanza have already indicated an atmosphere favourable to communion with God. On the other hand, while “each instrument tells its story in details”, all the listeners’ souls have become purified and sublimated. “Our” kind of physical life has been stripped off, “our” multifarious mortal concerns have been removed, and the path to understanding the divine essence is opened. And subsequently, all of them have become themselves, and become simple, for “we” have given up “our” secular burdens and desires, just like an “entire forest” which “is” seen or “contained within a leaf”, and

… we have suddenly woken to find …

…

… We are taken by the hand and led
Through the old darkness …

… through the soft fold
Of evening … [65]

to attain the divine essence, for “we” realise that “the orchestra is quickly building / A city of living air about us where we can live” and this ‘city’ is “something new, something that was already there” which is the Kingdom with God’s presence. Indeed, in listening to the music or watching the performance of the orchestra, the listeners’ souls are purified to such a degree that “the soul sees nothing by means of the senses; it is totally intent on either imaginative or intellectual seeing within” and “intellectual visions involve the sight of both intelligible realities in the soul and the light which is God himself.”

To the living – the audience or participants – they, or rather “we”, are changed or transformed spiritually, having union with the divine, and to the dead, his or her death indicates the negation of the natural self and ascent to God (if the dead was a devout believer). After the purification, “we” find that the Kingdom is within this one, for the world is changed – it “take[s] on” a “new” look, and the world has become a better place. Therefore, through purification by music, the listeners undergo a kind of self-denial or negation and enter a state of ecstasy in which they attain the divine presence, although the state is momentary.

The state of ecstasy and the function of music are also manifested in the poem ‘Toscanini at the Dead Sea’ [85]. Music played by a well-known orchestra transforms both its listeners and the world, for it always stimulates the listeners to hope for and imagine something better – a happy life in the kingdom – and to hate what is dreadful and destructive like disease or war. Hope is metamorphosed into the desire for “summer / In a world of winters” which is full of sad

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phenomena like the Dead Sea. The words “Dead Sea”, while strictly they are a geographical expression, expose to us a darker side – some hideous imagery – a desolate and barren land:

… a century of Europe

Almost in love with death, the rotting fruit
Unable to fall, and careless smoke in eyes [85].

The phenomena described through metaphors align with one side of reality only. They remind us of wars, corrupting forces, and anything that does harm to human existence. Fortunately, we still have music composed by the great composers and conducted by Toscanini and many others. Their music is so great that it can make us momentarily forget the worries caused by wars, poverty, and corrupting forces, and think of the other side of the dual reality – fabulous things or imagery like “a young woman // Squeezing into the tightest silk dress” and “stones skipping water” [85].

Everything has its end, like it or not. The same can be said of a concert or “everything that we love”. An end is “inevitable yet unexpected” but it is decided by nobody but God, for “a will to change / That somehow raises us above the end”. Indeed, it might be God’s “will” that decides the end of things, or makes our end better or makes the Kingdom come. Listening to music, we find that something has changed internally – we have “stripped off” the “multiplicity” and obtained the knowledge or consciousness of the divine essence, though it appears in the form of traces. This is the way human beings live within the traces of the Trinity, which look

Like sunlight in a scoop of simple water,
This land where things reduce to the hard lines
Of light and dust, and make desire our home [85].

When listening to music, the souls of the listeners have been so purified that they become conscious of the presence of God, and there is no difference between immortal and mortal things in the soul. Sins would disappear from the world, unpleasant things would perish, and the “Dead Sea” would be transformed into a paradise for human beings. The sinful world would become the Kingdom, in which mortal beings would become One with God.

God’s “will to change” this world is witnessed in another poem ‘The Will to Change’ [62]. It seems that the poem deals with the cycle of life, from birth to death, during which change will take place continuously – from “taking its first breath” to “moving towards yourself, the one // Who will give up this world” [62]. All things and creatures are not only from the One or created by God, but also they will return to the One. The process of change, or metaphysical reality in terms of the procession of all things from the One and the journey of the soul back to the One, is an “anabasis” towards God. The journey entails a continuous annihilation of the natural self until the spiritual self is attained, a state in which ascension to God and union with Him are realised.

The first stanza of the poem shows us the very beginnings of all things:

The stone brimming with darkness, this weed

Taking its first breath,
This body intent upon the pure moment [62].

The three lines in the opening stanza give the reader a broad view of how things came into being in the beginning of this world. According to the Bible, it was God who created the heavens and the earth when the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep,\footnote{Genesis 1:2, The Holy Bible.} and it was He who made it possible for “this weed” to take “its first breath”, and “this body” to be intent upon “the pure moment” waiting to be born. The three things: mineral, vegetable, and animal form a metonymy, indicating that all the things or creations in this world are from God or the One.

When all these have come into being, we are shown, in the second stanza, their “future” undergoes many changes: “bending like a river bank”. The simile is followed by other images. The metaphor in the third stanza presents another vivid picture: changes can be so dazzling that they can be like a display of the bright red “flag of flame” seen at night. The series of images in the fourth stanza are interesting – the changing world is narrowed into “a bonsai metropolis”, all of which can be comprehended at a glance – a bird’s-eye view from the sky. The next two stanzas present two further images of changes. One is presented through an extended metaphor: the moving cars in a city centre are like the bees in a comb. In another extended metaphor – the changes of the world are compared to the different desires aroused by various materials and commodities, and the faces of shop girls. Indeed, the whole world is like a kaleidoscope – ever-changing, manifold and many-coloured, perceived from both macroscopic and microscopic views.

In the course of these changes, music has its peculiar function – purifying the mind or soul of a person. When a room is suffused with beautiful music, the listener, polluted by the material world, feels purified and his soul becomes elevated:

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The music in your room
Will change the room into itself, it will
Undress the objects around you

And you will feel
The sudden nakedness of pouring water [62].
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It is evident that music leads one to a state of ecstasy, and helps “you” make a step forward to change yourself. Indeed, when a person is old enough, s/he must return to where s/he came from. Death of the natural self, or “moving towards yourself”, is nothing dreadful. It is so common that it is just “like a river approaching the rapids” when a person “give[s] up” the physical world or leaves for the other. It is as natural as the way that

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… the afternoon blossoms from the cool morning,
As the flame reaches from the wood [62].
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Thus the poet concludes his description of the cycle of a life in this world and its readiness to return to the One or God.
The final goal of believers is to possess the likeness of God and to “escape” from this world to the other. Their concern is not merely to be sinless, but to ascend to God or to become One with Him. Death can be natural death, after which there is another life – a beatific life in the Kingdom. Death can also be the spiritual death of mortal appetites or desires, which leads to the spiritual ascension to and union with God. There are two points worth further mention. The first is that the spiritual life can also be realised in this world through God’s grace and divine ray, as exemplified by music, which brings listeners to a state of ecstasy in which “the soul’s intention is completely turned away or snatched away from the body’s senses” to enjoy “the direct apprehension of God in this life”. The second point is that the process of death or self-denial is in progress continuously during the course of one’s life in this world until the final goal – ascension and union with God – is achieved. Purification of one’s soul involves the dual reality, which means the death of the natural self and rebirth of the spiritual self. The dual reality is seen when the soul’s purification culminates in her marriage with the Word, as shown in Solomon’s ‘Song of Songs’ and Hart’s poems about “two forces” clasping when the Bride unites with the Bridegroom.

3. A Process of “Two Forces” Clasping

From the section on positive theology, we have learnt that God loves and redeems His creation by sending His Son down to this world to search for sinners and call them together under the roof of the church to save them from sins: “God loved us first, both in creating us and in redeeming us”, and “God is love”, and “love is the power that leads and unites us to God in both this life and the next.” God’s love for His creation is exhibited in His searching for fallen beings and offering them salvation and redemption. This love is double, for it is not from one side but two. His creatures also love Him, as the soul is also eager to ascend to God, for she suffers a kind of lovesickness for His presence. Here we find another expression of dual reality which is exhibited in some of Hart’s poems, and the treatment of this dual love is similar to that in the Song of Songs in the Old Testament.

Dual reality or love has two senses. On the one hand, dual reality refers to the passionate love for God felt by ordinary people and to His divine love for and grace towards fallen beings. On the other hand, dual reality relates to carnal love and spiritual love. The two aspects of dual reality refer to the soul and the Word of God, or Bride and Bridegroom. In the meantime, we see that the poet not only inherits the mediaeval tradition but also draws his nourishment from the Bible, especially from the Song of Songs. This is evident in poems such as ‘Desire’, ‘For Jenny’, ‘Come Back’, and ‘Jerusalem’. A comparison between the Song of Songs by Solomon and these poems by Hart reveals that certain hidden and unveiled meanings relate to the collaboration of the two aspects of reality, and this leads to the soul’s progress toward union with the Word, and also to some transformations resulting from the union.

To extend our understanding of the two aspects of the reality, we can say that they might be called two forces of love or desire. In the Song of Songs, Solomon uses the sensuous language of

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romantic love between man and woman to describe something beyond the literal meaning, as it is seen that the Song expresses the two kinds of love: human love for God and God’s love for His created beings. The female in the Song is the Bride, who is the soul of an individual person with a burning love for the Word or God, and the male is the Bridegroom, representing Him who is also eager to save fallen beings by showing His love for the soul or Bride. The same can be said of Hart’s poems mentioned above, in which there are two kinds of love or two “forces” – one is that of the soul or Bride, and the other is that of the Bridegroom. When the two forces become one, or if one’s soul ascends to God and or becomes united with the Word, certain transformations take place. A person would be transformed and the world would be changed – he or she can become a better person, and this world may become the Kingdom. The love between two sides – the Bride and Bridegroom or the soul and the Word – undergoes a process of development as follows: firstly an awakening which involves the suffering of waiting, seeking and calling, then union or the soul’s ascension, and lastly transformation. It is this process that I wish to explore through a comparison between Solomon’s dramatic poem and Hart’s works.

The love between the Bride and the Bridegroom is mutual and reciprocal in the Song of Songs. An experience of God’s love “is not exaltation, but an encounter with our dark side also, with sin and the absence of God.” It is called “the absence of God” and the “wound of love”, as quoted by Hart. Longing for this love can cause suffering through waiting, for the love does not come all of a sudden, and some time is needed to arouse and cultivate the love and make it come. The experience of awakening the love is like that between the Bride and Bridegroom in the Song, when the Bride says to the daughters of Jerusalem:

I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,
by the gazelles or the wild does:
do not stir up or awaken love

until it is ready!

In Hart’s poem ‘Desire’, there exists a similar kind of “waiting” and “awakening” “slow(ly)” for love to get “ready” to come between lovers. The awakening is like the opening of “a night flower”:

It is within you, waiting,
The simple energy of evening, growing all day [24].

The process of “waiting” is slow, but the expected goal will finally come: to make the love “ready”:

… the moon burning in your hair,
Scent from an enclosed garden … [24]

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Here, the sexual awakening of a young woman and her lover, or the Bride and Bridegroom, is symbolised through the slow opening of a night flower. A similar experience is also found in the poem ‘For Jenny’, in which the slow coming of the love is symbolised by that of “the bird”:

But now the first bird rises
Above the headland, slow as air in water [25].

While waiting for the coming or rising of the “bird” of love, the “ocean”, a symbol of the soul or Bride, is suffering: “All night I heard the ocean” or “Jenny” “grieve” sadly, longing for the coming or presence of the “bird” of love, or the Word. Jenny’s love-sickness has a counterpart in the Song. In order to find her beloved Bridegroom, the Bride was looking for the Word or God in the streets of the city when

the sentinels found me;
they beat me, they wounded me,
you took away my mantle. 472

Jenny in Hart’s poem suffers mentally while the Bride in the Song suffers physically, as explained by Pecknold: “… there is the waiting for love, and even, the suffering for love’s sake.”473

As mentioned earlier, the desire for union is mutual and reciprocal: it is not merely from the Bride’s side, and the Bridegroom’s contribution is also of significance. Just patiently waiting and diligently looking for the coming or “awakening” of love are not enough: the method of “calling” may be adopted, which is seen in both Solomon’s Song and Hart’s poems ‘Come Back’ [72] and ‘For Jenny’. The desire of the Bridegroom for union with the Bride is expressed in the Song as: “‘Arise, my love, my fair one, / and come away’.” 474 The speakers in Hart’s poems persuade and plead with their Brides: “Come back to me” or “Come back” and “Simply open yourself” or “Open yourself”.

The reasons articulated by both the Bridegroom in Song and the speaker in Hart’s poem ‘Come Back’ share the same features. The atmosphere of nature in the Song of Songs is hospitable and favourable for “your” coming back:

for now the winter is past,
the rain is over and gone.
The flowers appear on the earth;
the time of singing has come,
and the voice of the turtledove
is heard in our land.
The fig tree puts forth its figs,
and the vines are in blossom;

472 Song of Solomon 5:7, The Holy Bible.
474 Song of Solomon 2:10, The Holy Bible.
they give forth fragrance.\textsuperscript{475}

The springtime, indeed, is traditionally the ideal time for lovers to meet and make love while birds are singing and flowers are giving forth their fragrance.

The atmosphere in ‘Come Back’ is as alluring, inviting and hospitable as that in the Song of Songs:

\begin{quote}
The road is waiting quietly outside your door,  
The wind is blowing the leaves this way \textsuperscript{[72]}. \end{quote}

Besides, the time for ‘your’ coming back is also suitable:

\begin{quote}
It is late afternoon,  
The best time for making love; half the world  
Is sleeping now … \textsuperscript{[72]} \end{quote}

Therefore, your coming back won’t be seen by others. The Bridegroom in the Song of Songs has other reasons for asking his Bride to “arise”:

\begin{quote}
let me see your face,  
let me hear your voice;  
for your voice is sweet,  
and your face is lovely.\textsuperscript{476} \end{quote}

The reasons presented by the speaker in Solomon’s Song are that he wants to “see” and “hear” his beloved while those given by the speaker in Hart’s poem are that he is eager to “know” and “feel”:

\begin{quote}
I want to know, again,  
What it’s like to breathe your words;  
I want to know, once more,  
How it feels  
To be peeled and eaten whole, time after time \textsuperscript{[72]}. \end{quote}

Although the intensity of the language used above by the two poets is different, they have the same purpose of asking or calling their lovers to “arise” and to “come back” – to make love or to have union with each other, which is the step following the “calling”.

The most revealing description of the soul’s union with the Word, or the Bride’s and Bridegroom’s intercourse in the Song, is in the following two lines:

\begin{quote}
O that his left hand were under my head,  
and that his right hand embraced me!\textsuperscript{477} \end{quote}

\textsuperscript{475} Song of Solomon 2:11-13, \textit{The Holy Bible}.  
\textsuperscript{476} Song of Solomon 2:14, \textit{The Holy Bible}.  
\textsuperscript{477} Song of Solomon 8:3, \textit{The Holy Bible}.  

St Gregory of Nyssa illustrates the symbolic implication of the erotic scene with the following statement:

These two images teach us about the nature of the divine ascent. ... He treats the purified soul as a bride ... allows his Bride to participate in his eternal incorruptibility, gracing her with length of years and a long life with his right hand. With his left hand he gives her the wealth of his eternal bounty and the glory of God ... 478

St Bernard thinks the two images involve a kind of spiritual ecstasy: ‘The experience is one of true rest, where “the soul, overcome by the beauty of the spot, sleeps sweetly in her beloved’s embrace, that is, in spiritual ecstasy.”’ 479 Bernard further explains: ‘The sleep in Christ’s embrace is understood as “a vital and wakeful slumber illuminating the interior sense, driving away death and giving eternal life ...”’ 480

The elegant and subtle language used in the Song for the symbolic presentation of the erotic image of sexual embrace, is also employed in the service of the other steps of the merging of the two forces: mystical ascension, union and transformation. The scenes of union in Hart’s poems are evoked in similar terms. For instance, in ‘Come Back’ there are also descriptions about a sex scene: “The violins fit / Into their velvet cases,” to “make it blossom”, “To be peeled and eaten whole, time after time” [72].

The same can be said of the situation in the poem ‘Desire’ [24]. Though there is no direct description of the Bridegroom, we can still see His activities through analogies and metaphors: “The moon’s long fingers stroking your bare arms” and “bamboo knots in the night fields”. In fact, the sex scene is strongly suggested through related expressions. In the poem there are about ten verbal expressions, which can be divided into two groups. One group has the following words: “stroking”, “knots”, “rise”, and “burning”; while the other has “open”, “uncurl”, and “enclosed”. The meanings of these verbal items are so clearly expressed that any mature reader can see their literal sense, since some couplings like open/stroke; uncurl/knot and enclose/rise have self-evident meanings. Some nouns have the same implication. At one end of the scale, there are the following expressions: “longer fingers”, “bamboo”, “laces of light”, “sails”, and “moon” while the other end of the scale includes “night flower”, “bare arms”, “night field”, “pure depths”, “city”, “bay”, “you”, “your hair”, and an “enclosed garden”. From the symmetrical, juxtapositional descriptions, we see that the scene of making love is similar to that in the Song of Songs.

The sex scenes described in the Song are literal and specific, but they are about the soul’s ascension to and union with God or the Word. The difficulty in understanding the erotic language is explained by Warren Smith:

480 Ibid., pp. 205-206. Also see note 280 on page 505 of the book.
The problem of the Song’s sensual language … lies not with the Song, but with the reader. … only those Christians who have purified themselves by turning from the pleasures of the flesh and the world can recognize the spiritual sense …

Accordingly, only those whose minds have become spiritual can know and understand the implied meanings in Hart’s poems, which indicate the same spiritual ascension and union as that in Solomon’s Song.

Following the ascension and union is the final step, transformation, which is the most important move in the process of the embrace of the two forces. As Bernard teaches: “We are transformed as we are conformed.” Only when the soul has union with the Incarnate Word, can she have “the ability to pursue the way of salvation”, because Jesus Christ is ‘the source of all our strength.” Only when “we” conform to the Incarnate Word can “we” be transformed into “the perfected image and likeness” of God. Gilbert of Hoyland gives a vivid description of the procedure: “In the bed that is his alone, she boils over when driven to it by the fire of the Bridegroom’s love. She departs from herself, poured out and pouring herself out. She is totally transformed into him; absorbed into the similar mode of being.” This is the basic process of the transformation or transition from carnal to spiritual love, which moves from the lower to the higher stages of love in the mysteries of Christ’s life. Those who love Christ spiritually become one with Him in their ascension into Paradise, and in the event they become glorified and fully spiritual. In this sense, they rise from a carnal love to a mature and spiritual love.

In Hart’s poems there are abundant examples of transformations, which seem more concrete than, yet as spiritual as, those in the Song. When the Bride and Bridegroom in ‘Come Back’ have union, the Bridegroom can make the soul so happy that the clock can “count the hours as seconds / Until your sorrow is forgotten” [72], as promised by the speaker in the poem. Through carnal or sexual union, the “I” will make “you” happy and forget “your sorrow” caused by lovesickness. The happiness of the soul is metamorphosed into the fleeting passage of time – “hours” become “seconds”.

Similar promises of transformation are found in ‘For Jenny’:

Simply open yourself
And watch the change begin … [25]

What is the “change”? If the soul, Jenny, opens her heart to the Bridegroom and is faithful to him, the Bridegroom, the “I” will give his love to the soul without reservation. At that time, the Bridegroom’s love for “you” will “burst out” to “you”, just like

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483 Ibid., p. 175.
484 Ibid.
485 Ibid., p. 302.
… a seagull burning

In morning’s rush of light [25].

What is more, the Bridegroom describes an ideal picture for “our” future:

Our season will come
With the juice of orange and peach, and the dead
Will leave my mirror for good.

Open yourself and it will come,
As the ocean survives its long darkness, and the bird
Accepts all that is given [25].

“Our” world is just like a garden which is full of “the juice of orange and peach”, and “the dead” will disappear forever, and “we” live a happy life without hardships and worries. This garden looks like Eden, in which the Bride and Bridegroom enjoy the pleasure of their love. This season is none other than the season of the spiritual world in which the Bride becomes One with the Bridegroom. The “ocean” or soul “survives the darkness” and ascends to Paradise or is received into it by God and united with Him.

Indeed, when two forces – the secular and divine – are united, our world will be transformed and it will “become, / The city in its lace of light, the bay alive with sails” [24], and “Tomorrow” we will see “the new land”:

Another day …
A garden in blossom, a river’s hush, the promise
Reviewed through change: this world [53].

Like the Song, the poems discussed above, when first read, may give us an impression that they celebrate human sexuality or eulogise different forms of a being’s existence. If we just dwell on the sensual language in its literal meaning we cannot understand the poems’ deeper spiritual meaning. Hart’s language becomes more understandable and more meaningful if we appreciate the symbolic meanings from a Christian point of view. The dual reality or love forms a tremendous force, effecting transformations: a person can become a better person, and this world can become the ideal place – the Kingdom. The significance of the process of the two forces’ clasping encompassed in both Solomon’s Song and Hart’s poems is well expressed in an anonymous mediaeval poem entitled ‘Love unlike love’:

Love maketh, Christ, thine herte mine,
So maketh, love, mine herte thine.
Thanne shulde mine be trewe all time,
And love in love shall make it fine.486

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4. Silence, the Divine Essence and Transformations

To encounter God or to become One with Him, it is not necessary for one to wait to die, for one can, in this world, also have the chance to experience the divine essence through an intellectual and spiritual ascension. Being silent is considered one of the effective means for reaching the divinity, so it is recommended that “silence” is an “appropriate means” of attaining “the transcendent God.” There are several reasons for saying so. In the first place, God is invisible, ineffable, and transcendent; and language is inadequate to express the divine nature. As Augustine says, “whatever we can say of God is not worthy of him; whatever we have the power of saying about God is from beneath him.” In the second place, thinking and meditating are more important than saying, “when we reflect on God the Trinity”, for “whatever we think of God is truer than what can be said.” Although this is so, “thought cannot worthily think the reality” and “it is unable to comprehend him as he is.” In the third place, “the eternity and immutability of God cannot be known by a finite and mutable mind.” To indicate and attain the experience of the transcendent and ineffable God, Augustine recommends we “silence the tumult of the flesh and the images of earth, sea, air and the heavens, whereby through silencing all the works of God, including the self, one would be able to ‘hear’ the voice of God himself.” By this means a person can be transformed from a mortal being into a God-man like Jesus Christ, and possess His likeness. It is said,

The goal approaches as our mode of activity is gradually transformed into that of Christ, a transformation that is not mere external imitation but an interior reforming of the self through the action of Christ, “who not only by being born but also by living and dying gave us a form to be the model of our formation.”

Hart’s understanding of the divine essence is not fundamentally different from Augustine’s, for we see, through reading some of his poems, that his ways of approaching the divine essence also correspond with theories of mediaeval theologians like Eckhart and St Bernard. Hart puts these theologians’ negative theories into practice and provides detailed, exemplary ways for devout believers to follow.

For Hart, silence is everywhere and is possessed by all the creations in this world, as can be seen in the poem ‘Silence’ [30]. “Inside each hill”, silence “lodges tightly”; the silence is “Rounded forever above the earth” in the sky; plant life represented by “the poppy” has silence “as it dreams of red”; “the stone” has silence; the “string” has silence when “the hand has withdrawn”; silence also exists “between words”, which can mysteriously lead to the appearance of “a breeze”, symbolising the presence of the deity. The poem ‘Silence’ provides a paradigm for our understanding of the other poems related to silence. The phenomenal silence described in the poem can lead to the coming of the deity. So can the other side of the phenomenon – a deep or

488 Ibid., p. 262. Also see notes 5 and 6 on the page.
489 St. Augustine, quoted by D. Carabine, The Unknown God. Louvain: Peeters Press, 1995, p. 266. Also see notes 21 and 23 on the page.
490 Ibid., p. 266. Also see notes 22 and 23 on the page.
491 Ibid., p. 267. Also see note 30 on the page.
492 Ibid., p. 268.
inner silence, which draws devout believers close to Him. Phenomenal silence provides a condition necessary for one to have meditation and union with God, and finally for one to be transformed. Hart demonstrates this process in several poems.

According to the Christian point of view, a person is made up of two parts: the spiritual soul and the physical body. The existence of a person means the existence of both the unfleshly soul and the physical body. It is said that a person’s body is full of desires or sins whereas the soul is sacred, for “God dwells in the soul with everything that He is and all creatures are. Therefore, where the soul is, there God is, for the soul is in God.” In ‘Soul Says’ [151], the dialogue between the soul and the physical body shows how a person – soul and body – in silence, can become harmonious, and consequently experience the divine essence and be transformed internally.

In the opening stanza, the soul puts a suggestion to the body – “let us watch the old night sky until the darkness gazes back”. The time is night, and the place is somewhere in the open air without others around, and this condition contributes to the silence necessary for meditation about God and union with Him. The situation recalls Eckhart’s words in a sermon:

“It will sit in silence and hearken to what God speaks within me” … Because it is so secret, this Word came in the night and in darkness. … “The light shone in the darkness, it came into its own, and as many as received it became in authority sons of God; to them was given power to become God’s sons.”

God has no image or form but the Word. Only when one sees or realises that the “darkness gazes back” can he really know that the Word is spoken in his soul. The longer a person, in silence, watches the old night sky, the clearer he can hear the voice of God, the Word. Understanding in this way, I would say that it is God who makes the gesture of “gazing back”. Only when He is “gazing back” and looking at “us”, can our tie (the tie between the soul and body) become agreeable and compatible. Therefore, both of “us” can have a splendid match, stay together harmoniously, and do things in a coordinated way. Finally, the person, both the soul and body, follows the Son’s example and ascends intellectually or spiritually to Paradise to become one with Him.

The journey of ascending to Paradise is metamorphosed into the spiderlings’ “flight” to the place to which they belong. On the journey, some of the “spiderlings” succeed in their flight – “A few may reach the other shore” – and others fail – “A few may wither in the sac”. Some people, like the spiderlings, succeed in their spiritual journey or pilgrimage to Paradise and achieve the eternal reward or redemption; while others fail to “reach the other shore”, for they cannot get rid of their physical appetites and desires. That is, their souls are not clean or pure enough for God to dwell in, and therefore they cannot make their souls in be silent or at peace, and cannot transform themselves by having the likeness of Christ.

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To avoid the unfortunate end of “wither[ing] in the sac”, the soul makes the suggestion:

Now let us go
Now you have felt the darkness gazing back [151]

to hear the Word in silence, to know that “we” (the soul and body) can become purified, “our” mind can be at peace, and finally “we” can experience the divine essence and become One with God. “Silence” is vital in the mysterious transformation from a mortal person to one who has attained the divine essence.

Another time or state where one cannot find “silence” is when one cannot fall asleep and suffers insomnia. In silence, one can “hear him (God) though he does not speak a word” [84], and experience the presence of the divine, as demonstrated in the poem “The Bird Is Close” [182–183]. What kind of bird is Hart’s “bird”? In the Bible, there is a paragraph under the title “The Baptism of Jesus” relating a story: “And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him.” Similarly for Hart, the bird is the holy bird – the dove – symbolising the divine. The dramatic experience of the divine essence – the bird – is interestingly described in the poem.

The mystical state of half-sleeping and half-dreaming gives the speaker the privilege of transgressing a line or point, and triggers his inner experiences of the divine essence – the holy bird. It is said that when devout believers gather under the roof of a church for ceremonies or rituals, they obtain the divine essence and achieve union with God. By eating bread and drinking wine, the people transcend themselves to such a degree that they become one with the Word by transgressing the demarcating line between this world and the other world. The half-sleeping and half-dreaming state has the same effect as religious ritual, in which transcendence and transgression can occur in a similar way.

The opening lines introduce us to a scene which is dominated by quietness or silence: the speaker is “half-dreaming and naked” with “dresses over my left arm”; in the meantime, we are shown there are three mysterious points: the first one is “our bedroom window” connecting two different worlds – the outside, the dark night, and the inside, the bedroom; the second is that between the outside of a wardrobe and the inside of it; and the last is an invisible point or line within “the wardrobe near the open window”, linking this world and the other world. The silence resulting from the state dissolves the demarcating lines between the three worlds. Due to the silence, the speaker is able to perceive something beyond his self of here and now, and beyond this world, and thereby something buried deeply in his unconscious emerges – “florals”, “a velvet gown”, and “silk and tulle” – for which the poet has strong feelings. This is not without reasons. Hart hates the heat of the summer in Brisbane, and admires the “florals” for their being able to enjoy the cool of the “night”. He loves the “silk and tulle” which the “gown” is made of, for the poet, as the child of a tailor, must have been imbued with the clothing materials that he saw and heard of during his childhood. When these things emerge from his subconscious, the times overlap – things in 1963 and in 1989 appear together. These things are transformed and focused into a sound – “a flutter of a bird’s wings” – which is only “half-heard”.

The half-dreaming state also dissolves the demarcating line, represented by the wardrobe, separating the other pair of worlds. The wardrobe, like the window connecting the outside world and inside world, links the Harts’ family history – the past and the present, or the past and the future. On the one hand, the “final box” inside the wardrobe represents the past, as it contains the “faded maps” and the “notebook brimming with sweet days”. The new member of the family – Sarah, Hart’s child – indicates the present or future. So the history of the Harts’ past and present or future is condensed and encapsulated. In other words, together with the present family members, his wife and their newborn baby, all the things from the past or late family members appear in the poet’s mind.

The function of the wardrobe is far from that, for there is an invisible line separating this world and the other world, represented by the outer part and the inner part of the wardrobe respectively. Within the wardrobe, the speaker was so nervous that “I am shivering” although it is “now in the warm summer night”, for he knows that he is about to experience the presence of the divine – “the bird”. Once the invisible line inside the wardrobe has been crossed, something mysterious takes place in the darkness:

I cannot see my hands
But they are holding the bird, tightly and tenderly,
Before I touch the bird [183].

The poet has “crossed a line” that he did not “know was there”, and he has experienced the divine essence or the sacred symbolised by “the bird”. The process, indeed, is just like the religious ritual held in church: the speaker crosses a certain line between this world and the other world, and consequently he obtains union with the deity. So the transgression of a demarcating line in darkness and silence is a significant prerequisite for the subject to enter a state of transcendence, in which the subject and the object, the secular and the sacred, would have been dissolved.

Another ideal place for the dissolution of subject and object is “inside the winter woods”. This is described in the poem ‘The River’ [153–154] in which the speaker transcends himself to reach the stage of the union with the deity. Imageless and formless, God appears with “light” or “radiance” before the speaker, communicating with Him through the soul, orientating him in his discovery of the “silence” that is “older than the sky”, providing the basic condition for him to start his spiritual journey to attain God. For the poet, the desire of attaining God has a new meaning, which includes his successes in his literary creations, writing his academic works, and performing well his job as a teacher in this world. From this poem, we see the poet owes these successes to God.

The speaker’s transformation is demonstrated through an analogy. The mysterious experiences “inside the winter woods”, like seeing the “radiance” flashing, and hearing “the soul” being called, make the speaker start off on his spiritual journey. Once a person is on the journey, it is promised that his situation will be changed or improved significantly by the extended metaphor that “thick coats of snow” are shaken off the “young boughs”. This would attract a person like the poet, who “find(s) a silence older than the sky” and “That makes me walk along the river”.
By walking along the river “inside the winter woods”, the speaker’s mind enters a state of ecstasy, in which he himself becomes transcended, and subject and object turn out to be identical, indistinguishable and interchangeable – “each I and it dissolved”. In this state, “the soul sees nothing by means of the senses; it is totally intent on either imaginative or intellectual seeing within.” Indeed, the “radiance” “inside the winter woods” is seen intellectually or through the speaker’s inner eye. Augustine made a similar statement on mysterious consciousness or vision: “‘There the brightness of the Lord is seen, not through a symbolic … but through a direct vision … as far as the human mind elevated by the grace of God can receive it.’” As a devout believer, the speaker is entitled to such a privilege, as he is “elevated” by the grace of God, and he finds “a calm beyond the calm”, through which he hears “someone” and “someone else” or God speak in his soul, though He does “not appear”:

And someone deep inside me wants to say
I am not lost but there are many paths!

While someone else will whisper back,
So you are on the longest quest of all,
The quest for home … [153]

This “home” is where God dwells, and is what the speaker longs for. “Each I” and the river are “dissolved”, and the dissolution culminates when the speaker reaches “a truth”:

A cold truth but a truth indeed
Held tight on the way back [154].

More importantly, the speaker enters a particular state in which he becomes One with God, for there is

A strange light all the way
That falls between the words that I would use

so that he can speak “In words that stick to skin” to express himself in concise and appropriate words via the poetic medium. On the journey to attain God, it is the ‘wind’ or God that gives him some “help” by “pushing me a little way”, choosing his way among “many paths”, “letting thoughts grow slow and weak before I feed them words”, just as the “wind” does to the “young branches” and “trees” by shaking off the “thick coats of snow” from them. In brief, the poet owes his successes to God who transforms him by giving him the power to compose his poetry, to write his books, and to teach well even though his circumstance is full of “curves and forks”.

A desert is another place for one to find silence, as described in ‘Wimmera Songs’ [163–165]. The desert was one of the favourite places for devout anchorites and hermits in the early Middle Ages, and they went there to meditate and contemplate so that the Trinity could be born in their souls. This process is described by Isaac of Stella: the desert is a kind of place where

… by seeing nothing we behold invisible darkness, and by hearing nothing we hearken to inaudible silence, so, by neither seeing nor enduring the Light that is more than superabounding and cannot be borne, we do see the Invisible, not as blind men, but as those conquered by the Light.

Staying in the desert – the isolated place – one achieves the peace of the soul by leading an ascetic life and having the soul purified, as the desert is strikingly different from the blatant mortal world in which it is hard for the soul to find spiritual calm and peace. Not unlike the theologian, Hart expresses, in his poems, a similar longing to go into the desert where one can find solitude and “silence as the ultimate but never sufficient or final goal in attempting to understand the experience of the presence of God.”

We see the negative nature of the desert, in the opening line of the poem – “Late in the night up north, in that hard land past Nhill”, there is darkness, silence, nothingness, and solitude. The time, the name of the place, “Nhill”, a homophone of the word “nil”, highlight the silence of the desert: coldness, darkness, isolation, and solitude which are further suggested through an image: “cold (that) comes through your boots” and the personification of “the last stars” which “wave ‘Farewell, farewell’”. The desert’s silence is vividly described and emphasised through the singing of the bird, the “mallee fowl”, which serves as a foil to the quietness and silence of the night. The singing of a bird in the dead of night makes a quiet night even more quiet and silent. The quietness and solitude are further strengthened by the evidence of “tracks (that) no one has used for many years”, suggesting that the silence here is immemorial. In such a desert it is easy for one to enter the self, and to pass through oneself into the interior depths – the inner experience – and finally to ascend to the deity. As the speaker in ‘The River’ does, the speaker

… see[s] a radiance
Before the sun begins to climb a wide gray sky
And spill across the wilderness [163].

This radiance, as mentioned above, is not the common light but the divine light – the presence of God. To meet the “radiance” in the desert and then transform oneself are the goal of the journey taken by “you”, for one can purify oneself by going “… beyond, beyond what he desires, what he knows, what he is – that is what he finds at the bottom of every desire, of every knowing, and of his own being.” It is in the desert that “you” achieve the inner silence and solitude, and “your soul rejoices”. This happiness is just like a Bride (one’s soul) that unites with the Bridegroom (the Word). So the soul delights in marrying God who appears in the form of “light over burnt grass” and over the unwatered soul symbolised by the desert. One cannot hear Him speak exteriorly but one can hear or perceive Him interiorly or in the deep self.

In spite of the dark or negative side of the desert, it has some positive qualities, such as many beautiful and appealing flowers, which are either yellow or red, “Up in the Little Desert” or the deepest part of the desert. The lovely flowers are a redemption given by God, representing the

501 M. Blanchot, quoted by Hart, The Dark Gaze, p. 28.
presence of the divine. In the meantime, it is a mysterious place. It is just as mysterious as the Aboriginal names like the “Tatyara and Tallagiera”, which are difficult to understand. In addition, it is also a dangerous place, as the journey to the deepest part is full of dangers:

Whipsticks
And snakes that scribble on sand, [163]

The redemption and danger coexist, but the redemption is not available to all those who want it, and only to those who have a strong determination to go to the deepest part of the desert, and to those who are not afraid of taking the risk of being bitten by the “whipsticks” or “snakes”. In other words, only those who have a strong will to resist temptations from devils can hope to reach the deepest part of the desert.

Having reached the deepest part of the desert, “you” have been so transformed that “you” become an outstanding poet. Like the speaker in ‘The River’, when he speaks “light … falls between the words I use”, and he can speak “in words that stick to skin” – “you” can

… learn just how to peel your words
And need to drink their juice [164].

The poet learns to express his deep meaning with concise words with deeper meanings, and thereby to find ecstasy in the composition of his poems and to enjoy the pleasure of his success. As a poet, the speaker “one day” “will live there”, to embrace the Word and God by living inside the sun or the Son; to embrace the divine “silence” by making friends with it. Only in this way can “I make my peace with time” to sing “my” melodious songs. Here, the poet manifests his standpoint about his poetic creations – to embrace silence, the sacred, the impossible, and God.

While stating the importance of the desert in his literary creations, the poet emphasises its significance in another way – criticising some other literary schools, which merely pay attention to one side of the dual reality, the physical world, and forget the spiritual world represented by “the desert’s lenten homilies”. It is true that not all poets are interested in the isolated desert as Hart himself is. For this, the personified desert expresses its sadness by “shaping dunes like tears”, which can even form a river. Seeing the desert’s sadness, nature itself is moved by giving up its beauty or shaking off the flowers from the trees and letting them flow on the river formed with “tears” shed by the desert.

The beauty and glamour of the desert are further set off by “Murrayville”, which is a place that the poet hates. One feature of the place is highlighted: the heat, because of which the “Sky quivers with its weight of sun”. Everything here is so scorched and withered that there are no such things as peace, darkness, silence, and solitude, and therefore it is impossible for one to have a spiritual or inner experience. With the features of “Murrayville” serving as a foil, the virtues of the desert become salient: “you” can experience the presence of the divine, for “You walk with clouds caught in your hair” when “you” are walking in the “Grampians, at dusk”. As above, the “cloud” is a symbol of the Holy Spirit, as “cloud indicates the presence of the Holy Spirit”, which appears in “the shining cloud.”

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No wonder the speaker exclaims: “O Desert” – how great it is! To have only “One vision of the wildflowers in five years / Is not enough”, the poet might someday come and live here forever, for “the Big Desert” is very hospitable – “a silence that welcomes you” or entertains “you” as the “streets” do in the poem ‘The Streets of Brisbane’. How kind and amiable the personified desert is! What is more,

...if you stay
You find the other silence that fits your head inside a vice. [165]

Here, silence is doubled as the poet suggests. One is the physical or circumstantial silence while the other is the inner or spiritual silence. The circumstantial silence can lead to inward or spiritual silence, and help a person to achieve “the integrity of the soul”, for in the desert a person can think and meditate and contemplate so that he can “discover”, “collect” the divine essence, “melt[ing] action into the die of the divine likeness in order to be reformed through the fire of divine love.” Here the “die” signifies the same thing as the “vice”, which is a pun. Polysemous as it is, the “vice” may indicate not only the tool but also sins committed by fallen human beings. As every person has this kind or that kind of sin, how can one get rid of it and transform oneself into a sinless person or God-man like Jesus Christ? The speaker recommends a way – going to the desert to experience “silence”, as the anchorites and hermits did in mediaeval times.

To find silence and solitude in the desert has a theoretical basis, which is seen from the “excellence” of a journey to Minyip. During the journey, he is

... gazing at a field of sunflowers one afternoon
While reading the Parmenides [165].

Plato’s Parmenides is about “the unknowable, transcendent ground of reality,” that is, “if there is a one, then it must be defined as absolutely one, and it is from this primary definition that the now famous negations are derived.” “If it is read with the eye of faith, then we find a ‘lucid exposition of the famous negative theology’, as Plotinus, after reading the Parmenides, believed that “The One is primarily simple, it is the ‘simply one’ who is the same time the cause of all multiplicity.” From the “excellence” of the walk – “gazing” at all the creations represented by “a field of sunflowers” while reading the book – we see that the poet’s understanding is in accordance with Plato’s and Plotinus’s idea that the One is absent and transcendent, and that the One is the multiplicity’s cause or that the One is the highest being which produces all other beings which long to return to the One. This is further demonstrated in the last part of the poem in which God, as the highest Being, is absent and transcendent from this world, or in the poet’s words:

... the radiance

505 Ibid., p. 23.
506 Ibid., p. 22.
507 Ibid., p. 111.
Slips back into the other world, leaving a frail light
Around young redgums by the river.

Although God is absent from this world, He is the source of all beings, and He leaves traces on all beings or His creations in this world. Although the beings in this world cannot have the full presence of Him in this world, the other world or Paradise in which God now stays is linked to this world. In order to see the coming of the “frail light” or obtain the presence of God, one needs to go to the desert to meditate and contemplate and experience the coming of the divine in inner silence and solitude. In order to have the presence of the “light” or “radiance” or “cloud(s)” one can “Stretch out upon this yellow grass” and concentrate by listening to a “blue wren” and follow its example:

Think like a cloud
Go where clouds go.

As said above, “cloud” or “clouds” symbolise God. So one should think like God, and go wherever God goes and do whatever God asks one to do, and there will be no problem for one to have the full presence of God and finally possess the likeness of God and become the Son of God himself in this world rather than in the other world.

The process of transformation testifies to the dual realities: the circumstantial silence found in the following situations: late at night when the speaker goes into the open air to gaze at the stars in the dark sky; at night when the speaker is in his half-sleeping and half-dreaming state; inside the winter woods; and in the desert, which helps a devout believer find his/her inner silence and purify the soul so that God can come and live within. Methods like walking along the river inside the forest and making a journey in the desert demonstrate the poet’s inner experience of the divine essence of God, and exhibit that it is only when a person has silence, solitude or peace of mind that one can have the experience of the divine essence, and be transformed by becoming united to God in this world rather in the other. But there are other methods for making the divine come, and these can be seen in the following subsection.

5. Some Other Methods for Making the Divine Present
The above demonstration shows that through finding silence in one’s half-waking state, in a forest, and in a desert, one can obtain the presence of God. In addition, we find, from Hart’s poems, other methods of making the divine present to oneself, among which two are worthy of mention: making a light in the dark and praying to God humbly in solitude.

One method used, in the poem ‘To the Spirit’ [71], to make God present to the speaker is by “strik[ing]/ A match”. God is invisible, ineffable, and unknowable, but He appears in or through light in darkness. So “whenever I strike a match”, “I remember you”, and “I find you” from the light or flame. The speaker’s soul is lifted to union with God. The closeness or God’s coming is explained in the following lines: I

… find myself somewhere on the outskirts
Of the milky way, but close to you; …
…
You come so suddenly … [71].
“Your” sudden coming to the speaker or the speaker’s closeness to “you” is intensified with a metaphor:

… as something long forgotten,

Taking me over completely, a grain of salt in water [71].

We have known that not everybody deserves to have the presence of God; only those who love Him with a clean soul can enjoy the privilege of having His coming or presence. Before God, the speaker is “like the sea trying to straighten myself out on a beach”, with everything exposed to Him, his soul is “clean and pure” and he divests and discards his physical appetites and mortal desires. Some people are different from him – they don’t believe in God; and they endure disasters represented by “ships [that] are sinking elsewhere”. So it is natural for the speaker to seek the presence of God, and his strong love for Him and His presence to him are compared to the relation between a small brook and a vast ocean: a brook always finds its home in an ocean; and to the relation between rainwater and sea: all water runs towards “the sea”. So natural is the speaker’s love for God that it becomes as beautiful as such things as “the beaten foam” and “a plunging undertow”.

The coming of God can happen in another way: at night or in the early morning the speaker sees “the star’s last breath of light … cross[es] space”. His overwhelmingly coming to the speaker is likened to the meanings contained in a language – “within the whole of language”. Finally, God’s presence is in the form of ‘wind that shakes its fruits’ to let “man taste[s] its flesh” and give him redemption. God will come to those who sincerely desire His presence and He will reveal Himself to those who love Him through His mysterious deeds and words.

Another method for making God come is through praying to Him in a humble way, which is found in the last poem in Flame Tree. In ‘Prayer’ [205], the speaker’s praying for God’s coming is presented through cause-and-effect analysis. He prays to God – “you”, begging Him to “come” and reveal His presence in whatever way He likes, and this shows the poet’s belief in God’s immanence and transcendence: God reveals His presence although He is transcendent: “in morning sunlight”, “in thick bouts of rain”, “with wind”, “winter light”, “in raw and ragged smells of gumleaves”, “in the undertow of love”, and “in deep calm of an autumn morning”. He is the Unity and Trinity but also has many other names: he can be “rain”, “wind”, “winter light”, and “smells of gumleaves”.

The five italicised lines in each stanza are of importance in understanding the process of the dual realities: to reach the divine essence through negation and transcendence of the self. The first italicised line is “Because of what the darkness said”. The “darkness” involves negation and transcendence. As Carabine says,

When the soul has become free from all and released from all, it is then in a worthy state to enter into the divine darkness and to be raised into union with the divine: “by an undivided and absolute abandonment of yourself and everything, shedding
all and freed from all, you will be lifted up to the ray of divine shadow, which is above everything that is.”

So, it is through “darkness” or “shadow” that one can be lifted to God, as “… into the darkness which God has made his hiding place.”

God has many names, and the “beast” in the line “Because the beast is stirring in its cage” is one of them. This reminds us of the relationship between the soul and physical body: only when the soul and body become harmonious can one have the inner peace and silence in which God comes to live in the soul; only through denying and negating one’s physical appetites and desires can the “cage” or physical body join the soul that is clean and pure enough for the divine to live in.

The line “Because a night creeps through the day” is reminiscent of the process or procedure that the soul undergoes when it has love and union with her Bridegroom, the Word: firstly awakening, including the suffering of waiting, seeking and calling, then union or the soul’s ascension, and lastly transformation. This process of the love and union is metamorphosed into the coming of the “night creep[ing] through the day”. The speaker’s eagerness for “your” coming is like the soul or the Bride who desires to have union with her Bridegroom, or the Word.

The line “Because of love, the lightest love” tells us that God is love, and He loves his creations so much that he sent his only Son to the mortal world to grant salvation to human beings. The speaker is eager to attain the presence of God so that he can be saved by Him, and so that he can have the likeness of the Word. Clearly, the “cooing of a dove” is a metaphor, referring to the presence of God.

The speaker’s eagerness for “your” coming also recalls St John’s mode whereby the “death” of the physical self results in the “rebirth” of the spiritual self, and also Moses’ way of union to “the unknown”: “Moses first purifies himself and having separated himself from the unpurified, moves upwards towards the highest ascent, and finally enters alone into the darkness of unknowing through which he is eventually united to the unknown.” To purify oneself or negate oneself involves the death of the physical self or “something dead in me”. The speaker longs for “your” coming so that “my gut” can be cut with “your” “jagged knife” and he can become united to the divine. Through negating one side of the dual realities, the other side comes into being, which is the desirable state in which one has union with the divine essence.

The five lines in italics have condensed the methods in negative theology promoted by the Christian mystics – St. Augustine, St John, St. Bernard, Eckhart, Pseudo-Dionysius, and others. To some degree, the poem is not only a summary of the negative thinking contained in the other poems collected in Flame Tree, but also a summary of the section on negative theology in this dissertation. This leads to the conclusion of the fourth part of the dissertation.

We have seen that theology is divided into two branches: one is positive and the other negative. Positive theology is concerned with God’s preeminence, His highest being, and the attributes of

508 Quoted by D. Carabine, The Unknown God. Louvain: Peeters Press, 1995, p.295. Also see note 80 on the page.
509 Ibid., p. 296. Also see note 87 on the page.
omnipresence, omniscience, omnipotence, and the fact that He loves his creations and gave them 
salvation by sending His Son down to the fallen world, teaching them how to rid themselves of 
their sins. We have seen the attributes of the Unity and the Trinity in the poems discussed, as it 
has been argued that Hart expresses his religious beliefs in those poems, which show his affinity 
to mediaeval poems on such themes as “The divine traces”, “God goes in search of us”, “On the 
topic of death”, and “On praise of Mary”.

Negative theology deals with the other side of the theological tradition. God has many names and 
appears in manifold forms, and He exists everywhere and nowhere, and He is beyond the 
linguistic realm, as He is immanently transcendent. Due to the divine nature, the soul needs to be 
lifted up to have ascension to God, and union with Him. As argued and demonstrated, devout 
believers need certain strategies: through self-denial or self-purification, through love or “two 
forces” clasping, and through darkness, silence, and solitude. Self-denial or negation involves the 
“death” of physical life and the “rebirth” of spiritual life, as the death of one’s natural self results 
in a new self or spiritual self in which the soul is so clean and pure that the divine comes to live 
in it. Sleeping in the Bridegroom’s or Christ’s embrace the soul becomes so purified that death is 
driven away and eternal life can be achieved. Silence in darkness is an effective means to obtain 
the divine essence, for circumstantial silence helps devout believers find their inner silence, 
through which the soul becomes purified enough for the divine being to come to dwell in it. To 
make God come to the soul, praying in solitude gives one the chance to communicate with God 
in a private way. Accordingly, in the section on negative theology it was demonstrated that 
Hart’s poems are proximate to the poems of Herbert, Hopkins, Solomon, and some anonymous 
mediaeval lyricists, discussed above, and that Hart is very close to the theories of certain 
Christian mystics, such as those of St. Augustine, St. Bernard, St. John, Eckhart, Pseudo- 
Dionysius, and others.

Positive theology and negative theology, as a binary pair of theological traditions, are completely 
harmonious instead of being contradictory. They are complementary to each other, affirming 
God as the highest being. It is the highest being that sends its rays down to all other beings, and 
to which all other beings are eager to ascend. As shown, this is decided by the divine nature of 
immanence (causality) and transcendence, or presence and absence, and by the two modes of the 
divine being’s movement: the vertical and circular or spiral. We have seen that the movement of 
the divine essence forms a circle from the vertical movement downward to the circular or spiral 
movement upward. Put in simply, God descends to this world in search of sinners and grants 
them redemption and salvation so that the soul can follow the Word and ascend to God and find 
union with Him. The cycle from God’s descending to the soul’s ascension testifies to the duality 
of theological tradition reflected in Hart’s faith and his philosophical understanding, which are 
found in his poetical creations. Hart’s faith and religious thinking on positive and negative 
theologies have a great impact on his writings, which are very close to the theories of post-
phenomenological writers like Levinas, Blanchot, and Derrida, as will be demonstrated in the 
following part.
Part V
Religion without Religion
The duality of theology has had a great impact on French post-phenomenological writers such as Levinas, Blanchot, and Derrida, whose ideas also resemble those of Bataille are also related to Bataille. The impact of this duality of theology can also be found in Hart’s poetry, from which we see that he is very close to the ideas of these thinkers. Hart acknowledges that “I do find the philosophy of the neutral troubling and think that Levinas was entirely correct to name his friend (Bataille) as one of the people who identified it in western thought.”

As a strong inheritor of Western thought and tradition, and as an academic, Hart’s interest in French writers has not been merely temporary. In addition to his statements on his interest in Derrida’s works, his extensive and intensive understanding of both Derrida’s and Blanchot’s works is found in his articles and two books The Trespass of the Sign: Deconstruction, Theology and Philosophy and The Dark Gaze: Maurice Blanchot and the Sacred.

In The Dark Gaze, Hart quotes Henri de Lubac’s standpoint by stating that traditional concepts of God are being replaced by revised theological thinking, as it is believed that overemphasis on the doctrine of God’s transcendence by “the average Catholic theology … from the seventeenth to the early twentieth century in effect removed the deity from the daily lives of men and women.” Hart further illustrates the proposition and says: “We do not have desire for God” any more in the way that traditional Catholic teaching tells devout believers to do, for “we are that desire: it is imprinted on our created nature.” Although this is so, the religious structure, rather than the thematics of religion, still plays a key role in post-phenomenological thinking. In other words, the desire for God is replaced with that for “the other” or “wholly other”, which is different from “the same” or “identity” when they are regarded as a binary pair; and the understanding of God and related tenets is substituted by something other than the deity. A brief introduction to the theories of Bataille, Levinas, Blanchot, and Derrida will make the substitution much clearer.

The theological cycle of Christ’s coming down to this world and then going up to Paradise is the central Christian model. St John has a similar one: the death of the physical self can lead to rebirth of the spiritual self in which the soul is cleansed for the divine being or the Word to live in. In a quite similar way, Bataille believes that the deity or “continuity of being” can be obtained through desire and death. According to him, erotic desire opens to death, which leads to transgression of taboos, rules, and conventions, and the deity or the “continuous being” can thus be reached by the “discontinuous being” or mortal being. Levinas’s “phenomenology of the other” is different from Bataille’s idea, as he thinks the divine “exteriority” can be reached through “fecundity” and “futurity”. For Levinas, one’s death can be transcended with the continuous coming of “the other” and the deity can be reached through the process of “being-for-
the-other”. Levinas’s “phenomenology of the other” sounds more like “religion without religion”, as Hart observes:

In its general and modern form, religion without religion is an endorsement of the primacy of ethics, now widely understood as hyper-obligation, with a corresponding devaluation of ritual and sacrament. The transcendence conventionally accorded to the deity is reset at the level of the other person and is thereby assimilated to a reinvigorated biblical humanism, a “humanism of the other man.”

“Religion without religion” culminates in both Derrida’s and Blanchot’s work. Derrida’s différance has two stages: endless deferral or delay; and the promise of the coming of “the other”. These stages are related to death and dying. I will argue that the first stage belongs to deconstruction through the death and absence of God, whereas the second resembles construction through the promise of the coming of “the other”, which keeps “dying” within the self for the sake of the construction of the selfhood. Due to the death or absence of God, Adam failed to abide by the rules or limits assigned by God, and this resulted in his Fall, which led to other falls, including the linguistic fall. In the second stage the meaning of “death” is changed subtly: “death” is not related as much to the self as it is in Bataille’s and Levinas’s theories, since it is about “the other”, and even the word “death” can refer to “the other”, the sacred, imaginary, the original, or the Messiah. “Death” keeps coming to visit the self at a particular time or “messianic time” which is different from “ordinary time”. The coming of “death” is called “dying” which happens within “me”, “self”, and interiority. This is similar to Blanchot’s “the step not beyond” or “A Primal Scene?” The other’s coming is related to “the Outside”, “the neuter”, “the messianic time” or “the other time”, which decide the structural openness and undecidability. The structure of the other’s coming promised by différance is similar to that of negative theology. But différance, unlike God in negative theology, cannot form a transcendental ground. Différance is closely related to negative theology: in Hart’s words, “negative theology is a form of deconstruction.”

Having said this, I wish to divide this part into three sections, namely, ‘Questing for “Continuity of Being” through Desire and Death’, ‘Seeking for “Exteriority” through Transcendence’, and “Religion without Religion” to demonstrate that Hart is congenial to the four French writers when the religious structure(s) is/are used in his poems.

518 K. Hart, ‘The Profound Reserve’ (Unpublished), p. 23. [The material was provided by Kevin Hart.]
520 Ibid., p. 186.
Section I. Questing for “Continuity of Being” through Desire and Death

Henri de Lubac has espoused a doctrine concerning people’s dual attitude towards God. To him, “it is one thing to honor the transcendence of God, quite another to remove God from the world”, and “transcendence is a movement within immanence; it marks human affect as well as intellect, it orients action in the social and political sphere as well as at the prie-dieu and before the altar”. The new doctrine has a certain influence on Hart, which he acknowledges in The Dark Gaze: “I am indebted to de Lubac’s brief history of the progress of this doctrine.” To Hart and to de Lubac, “this God is no more than the confusion of reason and the sacred”. The “confusion”, Hart thinks, has some similarity to Bataille’s standpoint – “for Bataille religion is nothing less than a quest for a lost intimacy with the continuous”. How to recover the “lost intimacy” with “the continuous” or “continuity”? To answer this question, I shall briefly explain Bataille’s theory of eroticism, and explore how some of Hart’s poems are related to the theory, and demonstrate how Hart puts the theory into his literary practice, mainly through a reading of his two longer poems ‘The Hall’ [192–4] and ‘Madonna’ [195–200].

If we say the dual reality also exists in Bataille’s work, we can find the evidence from his statement on the religious cycle. Basically, Bataille says, there are two modes of transition concerning the continuity and discontinuity of beings: one is “from continuous to discontinuous”, the other “from discontinuous to continuous”. The Christian God, on the one hand, is “a discontinuous being”, for He had a physical body and became “discontinuous” as a result of a physical death. On the other hand, “God is a composite being possessed of the continuity”, for He is a self-dependent being. Jesus Christ exemplifies the two modes: He descended from Heaven and was incarnated as a human being or discontinuous being, and then ascended to Heaven and returned to the condition of “continuous” being. So Jesus Christ, from kenosis to transcendence, sets an example for mortal beings or discontinuous beings to follow. From Jesus’ example, we see that the death of the God-man is the key step in his recovering “continuous being”. But it is not necessary for mortal beings or discontinuous beings to perish physically to obtain “our lost continuity” which “we yearn for”. Eroticism belongs to the category of death, for it “is assenting to life up to the point of death”, which opens a way to beings’ continuity. To understand the relation between desire or eroticism and death, let us consider Bataille:

The whole business of eroticism is to strike to the inmost core of the living being, so that the heart stands still. The transition from the normal state to that of erotic desire presupposes a partial dissolution of the person as he exists in the realm of discontinuity. Dissolution – this expression corresponds with disolute life, the

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521 Hart, The Dark Gaze, p. 41.
522 Ibid., note 70, p. 247.
523 Ibid., p. 41.
524 Ibid., p. 42.
525 Bataille, Eroticism Death and Sensuality, p. 15.
526 Hart, The Dark Gaze, P. 42.
527 Bataille, Eroticism Death and Sensuality, p. 22.
528 Ibid., p. 15.
529 Ibid., p. 11.
familiar phrase linked with erotic activity. In the process of dissolution, the male partner has generally an active role, while the female partner is passive. The passive, female side is essentially the one that is dissolved as a separate entity. But for the male partner the dissolution of the passive partner means one thing only: it is paving the way for a fusion where both are mingled, attaining at length the same degree of dissolution. The whole business of eroticism is to destroy the self-contained character of the participators as they are in their normal lives.  

The destruction of “the self-contained character” is transgression, for taboos, conventions, and rules are broken or transgressed with an erotic activity. It is also dissolution, as, in the process of an erotic activity, the fusion and coalescence between the participants have reached a culmination, in which the self has lost self-control. This dispossession of the self is a kind of ecstasy or inner experience in which the participants, especially the male, “link[s] the ideal with his death”, just like the speaker in Mallarmé’s poem who cries out: “‘Je me mire et me vois ange! et je meurs, et j’aime / – Que la vitre soit l’art, soit la mysticité - / A renaître’” (I see myself and see an angel! and I die, and long / – Whether the window be art or the mystical – / To be reborn).” Mallarmé’s poem presents a typical example to show how the self is dissolved through desire and death, and thereby rebirth is achieved. Similarly, in the process of an erotic activity “the self” loses its self-possession, for the self “will hide”. That is, self-consciousness disappears and is replaced by the unconscious or death. When the self is dispossessed, the participants “encounter with a hole within and a joy beyond itself”. This “joy” is ecstasy and vertigo, through which the ideal, the infinite, and the “continuity of being” are obtained.

To Bataille, women are objects of erotic desire. In an erotic activity, “it is woman that occupies the place where the object of desire exceeds both objectivity and subjectivity with a glimpse of unknown infinity”. Woman is believed to assume “the intermediary function of a discredited priesthood, the impossible object between finite being and infinity that guarantees sacred excess”. Hart affirms Bataille’s standpoint on “woman’s proximity to the divine” by citing an example in The Dark Gaze, Madame Edwarda, a character in Bataille’s Inner Experience, who shows her vagina to Pierre, another character in the work, and says, “‘I am God.’” In short, the encounter with woman is said to be an “encounter with the divine totality, the eruptive, exuberant continuity of things”, for “woman embodies the very totality and surplus of existence”. It is through women – the object of desire – that one can reach death, which opens to the “continuity of being”. Understanding death and desire in this way, we find that Bataille’s theory of eroticism is brilliantly manifested in some of Hart’s poems, especially in ‘The Hall’, and ‘Madonna’.

530 Ibid., p. 17.
531 S. Mallarmé, quoted by Hart, The Dark Gaze, p. 22.
532 Bataille, Eroticism Death and Sensuality, p. 18.
535 Ibid., p. 12.
536 Ibid.
537 Ibid.
538 Ibid., p. 42. Also see note 83 on p. 247 of the book.
The poem ‘The Hall’ [192] gives an account of several kinds of death related to “the hall”. The first is the act which caused the death of the “coloured boy” near the hall. The next results from the speaker’s erotic behaviour with the girl waiting for her train. Following that is the one caused by the ecstatic state that the sinners reach when they are saved in the liturgy or mass held in the hall. The last is the result of the erotic activity through which the participants reach a state similar to death or ecstasy in which they are saved by God. This poem shows that, to attain the divine or the “continuity of being”, one has to transgress certain limits such as taboos, conventions and rules, which regulate the profane or secular world, through faith and also through sex.

The relationship between taboo and desire is paradoxical. To explain the paradox, Bataille illustrates the phenomenon by an analogy – “Religious cannibalism”. It is taboo that “arouses the desire”, although “taboo does not create the flavour and taste of the flesh”.540 Taboo creates desire, or taboo results in desire: the more strictly forbidden something is by law or rules, the stronger one’s desire becomes to obtain or possess it. In the first part of the poem, an example is given: a murder has happened

Near Oxley Station:  
    those Inala boys  
    Gave a new coloured kid what for …  
    While he was waiting for the late train home.

That was in January ’69,  
    And when, come light, they found him in long grass  
    Around the back, ‘he was set neat and still’ [192].

Without doubt, the murder itself is “criminal”, and should be condemned. Here, it is not necessary for the poet to say how bad or criminal “those boys” were, or to point out the quality of this incident from a political point of view, he simply uses the incident as an analogy to demonstrate that “[t]he desire to kill relates to the taboo on murder in just the same way as does the desire for sexual activity”.541 Killing or murder is forbidden in certain cases, so is sexual activity. In killing there is a kind of horror of the dead, which lures the killer. Those “Inala boys” violated a taboo or law, and hence death occurred. As the killers of the “coloured kid”, they enjoyed a kind of intensity, horror, and sacredness when the murder happened, for they might regard the killing as a sacramental act just as primitives did. The killers longed to lose themselves and to look in the face of the dead “kid”. The note for Bataille’s “Plate III”, “Sacrifice of a ram, voodoo cult” is worth quoting here: “A violent death disrupts the creature’s discontinuity; what remains, what the tense onlookers experience in the ensuing silence, is the continuity of all existence with which the victim is now one.”542

As far as transgression is concerned, the same can be said of the speaker whose erotic activity or gestures to the “warm girl” open the way to death, the “continuity of being”. The “I” would

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540 Bataille, Eroticism Death and Sensuality, p. 72.  
541 Ibid.  
542 Ibid., Plate III between pages 96 and 97. Also see page 22 of the book.
… take her round the back, in a wild patch

Of shade, and we’d sit there a quarter hour,
And I would run a finger up her leg
Until I touched her knee, …
…
right up from her white sock
So very slowly till I reached her knee,
And sometimes higher if her train was late … [192–193]

The speaker exceeded a certain limit, which is similar to that set by Bataille who even sees “marriage” as a kind of “transgression”. 543 Although the poet does not give a detailed description of the activity or gestures, the ellipsis suggests the process of the achievement. He experiences the erotic “delight” in which his personality is “dead” 544 and the “continuity” of his being is obtained outside the hall.

The stronger the intensity of desire is, the more exciting is the scene of ecstasy or death. Through intensity and excitement in both liturgical ceremony and eroticism, the being’s continuity is achieved, and this is what the poet conveys in the poem’s second part. It is noted that this proposition is foreshadowed or symbolised with the two colours of “the hall” in the previous part:

A narrow building, made of great long planks
All painted pink: it stood on short, thick stumps,
CWA in ragged loops of white [192].

The two colours “pink” and “white” foretell the juxtaposition of two different things in the second part: the speaker’s erotic activity with a girl and the people’s strong pious devotion to God, and erotic desire and spiritual faith draw from the same set of human emotions. The proposition that “Continuity is reached through experience of the divine”, “the essence of continuity” 545 finds attestation in two respects. On the one hand, the people in “the hall” become extremely emotional and even hysterically excited:

…. a business man of forty-odd,

…
… let thick tears pour slowly down his cheeks

When the conversion hymn, ‘Just as I am’,
Was struck up
…
… the big red man would break

And stumble up the front, without one plea,
And say, “I’m saved! Praise thee, Lord Jesus Christ!” [193]

543 Ibid., p. 109.
544 Ibid., p. 106.
545 Ibid., p. 118.
“Even that woman” confessed by screeching: “I’ve sinned against the Holy Ghost!” After her acknowledgement, the Holy Spirit – “the essence of continuity” – entered into her soul, and thereby she was transfigured:

She walked, less shaken than we were, straight back,

And placed her Bible firmly on her lap [194].

The examples show the ecstatic state through which the sinners have found their lost continuity of the divine being. The sinners killed their past selves, which were replaced by their new ones. That is to say, it is death that annihilated the old and made the new come into being. The killing or annihilation and the achievement of the “continuity” happened inside the hall.

Those who attained the divine “continuity of being” and were “transfigured”, “exalted in God to the love of his fellow”, for they never gave up “the hope of finally reducing this world of selfish discontinuity to the realm of continuity afire with love”.

The preacher showed his love to the people by giving “a crowd a lift”, taking “that woman” into her house, where he

… turned on lights,

And checked her cupboard slowly, dress by dress [194]

It is not difficult to see that the preacher, when he was out of the hall, which is a symbol of the sacred world, entered the profane or secular world – the woman’s house. He seemed interested in doing two things in the secular world: checking the cupboard for her and, in the meantime, touching her clothes slowly with the intention to seduce love to her, as subtly suggested. Like “the Christian God” who is “a highly organised … entity”, the preacher helped the woman in an “organising” way. Here we see the preacher’s “determined desire to centre everything on continuity” through his doing things in an “organising” way and through showing his sexual desire for the woman. The preacher’s ways of doing things can be said to be another kind of transgression. The transgression from the secular world to the sacred world is a process of death, which is “the primal disaster” of the discontinuous world. Continuity is reached when the disorganised becomes the organised, and when erotic idea is shown in the secular world. Clearly, what the preacher did in the woman’s house is another way of achieve the continuity of being.

At another place, inside the car, the young speaker and the “girl who used lipstick” also entered the “continuity of being”, although he and she were doing something different from what the preacher and the woman were doing: the speaker did something naughty by touching the private parts of the girl – “Our fingers meeting somewhere near her leg”. The intensity of the erotic scene is conveyed through the last two lines:

The V8 grumbling underneath us both,
The air on fire, lights clicking off and on [194].

546 Ibid., p. 118.
547 Ibid., p. 119.
548 Ibid.
Their religious experiences call forth the desire for sex. Once they have transgressed a certain line, the self-consciousness of the two youths is “dead”, and their personalities disappear, displaced by their coalescence and dissolution. If we say that in “the hall” people attained the divine “continuity of being” through faith and love for God, we can say that the preacher and the woman attained the “continuity of being” by doing things in an “organising way”, and the young man and girl reach the divine or the “continuity of being” through erotic activities. There is one thing in common, that is, all of them transgress a certain limit or taboo through desire and death. The sacred world or “continuity of being” can be achieved through desire, either for God or for sexual love. Through love for both the divine being and secular beings, and through death, annihilation, and negation in this discontinuous world, the kingdom of continuity will come to this world of discontinuous beings. The theme of the achievement of the continuity of being through desire and death is developed and deepened in ‘Madonna’ [195–200].

Desire may be aroused by “taboo”, and it may also be called forth by horror of beauty, by eroticism. Woman, as “the object of desire”, possesses “a glimpse of unknown infinity.” With the object in embrace, one’s self is lost or destroyed, and the person reaches death in the ecstatic stage. This kind of death is well exemplified in the first part of the poem ‘Madonna’. In the poem we see that woman’s proximity to the divine is manifested through the speaker’s relationships with several young women, for whom he shows his fervent love and sweet affection.

It was mentioned earlier that the human is the embodiment of desire, the divine is absent and transcendent, and replaced by humanity proper, and young women are the objects of desire and substitutes for the divine. This can be seen in the description of the painting by Munch:

Some rich black hair hangs idly over her left breast
And as her head lolls back
…
And when she turns
Onto her side, beside the open window,
her longest tress plays lightly on the small
Of her long back. [195].

So sexually attractive, so beautiful and, so inviting is the painting of Madonna sitting or standing before the speaker, that her beauty is the incarnation of desire. She is a human being with desires. The speaker imagines the Madonna to be his girlfriend, whose desire for love is aroused by his sweet words when a piece of music or “a wild old blues” is played. The music and his words function as a kind of ferment which

… begins to slip
between the little bones inside her neck
And work its slow way down o down her spine [195],

and reaches her whole body. Due to the mixture of the soft music and the speaker’s sweet words, the girl’s instinct for love or affection is aroused. So the speaker’s imagination goes on – she

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starts “sobbing”, one the original ways in which humans express either sadness or happiness. Here she is so happy that she sobs to convey a human’s congenital pleasure, a kind of longing or desire which is buried at the bottom of her heart, “where I can never go” or which the “I” couldn’t touch physically. The Madonna in the painting, facing such a sweet lover, would be reveling in happiness with “her eyes” “softly closed”. The description and the speaker’s mental image of the Madonna forestall his exciting relationships with several girls described in the poem.

Two things are worth mentioning here. On the one hand, the Madonna described by Munch is the embodiment of her own desire. She longs to be loved or kissed. On the other, she, to the speaker, is “the object of desire”, the universe and totality of the young speaker. Her radiance reduces him to being one with “the infinite movement of desire itself.” To the speaker and to his girlfriend, kissing is “the taste of moonlight, salt and oil” when their “lips” meet. Through kissing, the “two desires fully respond to one another” and are “perceived in the transparency of an intimate comprehension”; and when “the two desires meet, intermingle and merge into one”, “everything is revealed anew, everything appears in a new way”. That is, when the desires join together they enter a kind of self-forgetful state that is death or ecstasy. In this state their experiences undergo the process of sublimation in which their pasts are negated and the “continuity” is attained.

Desire leads to death, which opens to the “continuity of being”. This pattern is found in the speaker’s relationship with the first girl, with whom he visited Edvard Munch’s exhibition entitled “Death and Desire”. The poet purposely uses this title to heighten the importance of death and desire in the process of transgression or the achievement of continuity. “Death” involves the dispossession of the self or the destruction of “the self-contained character”, and thereby one enters a state of ecstasy or death with which “continuity of being” is identified. It is this state that the poet wants to exhibit to us.

In the girl’s company, the speaker reached the state of death in which he became dissolved; or both of them became dissolved. To say the speaker is dissolved means that he reversed or negated his normal attitude towards the “wicked heat” of tropical Brisbane which he hates so much. Now the scorching heat of January has turned into the “honey heat” or love, which is sweet and lovely to him. To him, everything becomes so beautiful that “I loved worlds more”. To say the girl is dissolved indicates that the speaker could not distinguish who was the girl and who was the Madonna, God’s Mother. In fact, the speaker’s sacred love for the Virgin Mary and his secular love for the girl became one. The licentious image of their kissing before the Madonna is a way to know “death”. Indeed, the girl is proximate to the sacred – the Virgin Mary. When the speaker and girl kissed each other, the speaker was in such a state of “vertigo” that he was not sure whether he was kissing Madonna or the girl. When “they walked out”, they “let the heat rise up and carry us away”. Their love becomes both as eternal and erotic as that expressed in the painting.

552 Ibid., p. 266.
The speaker’s relation with the second girl is an imaginary one, for his love for her is merely one-sided, although the one-sided love made the speaker enter an ecstatic state through his erotic or licentious imagination. Because of his desire or longing for the girl’s love, the speaker, a thirteen-year-old boy, transfigured himself by negating his former appearance, and would pay particular attention to his dressing:

… every summer night that year
   I’d shower, put on icy jeans,
…
   Spend an aeon cruising California [196]

hanging around the place where the girl’s house was located. However, the girl was ignorant of all this. He kept his desire to himself, for the reason that the girl had someone else in her heart. What “I” could do was spying on “her once a week” and imagining some particulars about her: her “hosing geraniums” – “barefoot, in short cotton dress”; her way of casting “her long dark hair … back”; her “talking of that new LP”; how she spent the whole day at the coast and so on. Hart’s description of the girl through an erotic imagination – “little fish flicked right between her legs” – gives an inflection to a comment in the ‘Introduction’ of The Bataille Reader: “Eroticism describes the joys, anguish and pain of an encounter with divine totality, the eruptive, exuberant continuity of things.” It also recalls Sade’s well-known saying: “‘There is no better way to know death than to link it with some licentious image.’” Accordingly, what the speaker suffers is lovesickness, anguish that is death, which negates him and transforms him.

The licentious image of the third girl imagined by him reminds the speaker of the Norwegian painter, Edvard Munch, for the theme of “death and desire” is embodied both in his painting and also in him as a person. The painting Madonna is extremely erotic and sacrilegious, as it is described in the poem: “sperm” is “flying around the frame”. The erotic painting is a transgression: Munch transgressed a certain limit or taboo and brought the divine “continuity of being” down to the secular world of discontinuous beings. As a person, he declared that “I was born dying”. Here, it is not inappropriate to use Bataille’s words to comment on Munch’s transgression: “He lives as though he were dying, but in order to achieve eternal life!”, which is the “continuity of being”. The intention to achieve the sanctity or the “continuity of being” is well expressed, both in the licentious painting and the person of Munch.

Munch, as a painter and thinker, has adherents, and one of them is the third girl with whom the speaker had a relationship. It was this girl whom the speaker accompanied to a “dark party”. As a faithful follower of Munch, she had something in common with the painter. She studied painting or “art at some weird place in town”. And very importantly, she believed Munch’s doctrine, “I was born dying”, and put it into practice. When she was at the “dark party”, the girl brushed aside all rules or bonds and turned everything upside down:

She drank neat gin and ice, then passed out very cold
   Before the dancing and the smoking and the rest … [199]

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554 De Sade, quoted by Bataille, Eroticism Death and Sensuality, p. 11.
555 Ibid., p. 263.
From the two lines we can imagine that to the girl, all the rules, orders and conventions disappeared, when she was drinking, dancing wildly, smoking heavily, and perhaps doing something erotic as suggested. This phenomenon recalls the scene earlier in the poem in which the people were saved. “The total personality is involved, reeling blindly towards annihilation, and this is the decisive moment of religious feeling.” As to the consequence, Bataille comments: “all this occurs within the framework of man’s secondary assent in the measureless proliferation of life”, and “the suspension of taboos sets free the exuberant surge of life and favours the unbounded orgiastic fusion of those individuals.” In the ecstatic state, the self and consciousness are negated by death, and thus “the power of nature” will result.

The fourth girl whom the speaker talks about is the one he had kissed at the party and met again. After the meeting, the fire of love between them was rekindled, and they lived in a motel as husband and wife – “Mr. and Mrs. Bakerman”. The love between them is so fabulous that the room in which they lived is metamorphosed into a gift which is wrapped in colourful “cellophane”. Inside the room the two were holding each other without words:

… gently swaying back and forth
Inside a truth in bud
…
… rocking in each other’s arms,

O back and forth there, back and forth [200].

Indeed, in their erotic love “the poles of life and death, being and nothingness, fullness and emptiness are one, dissolved like subject and object in the insensible totality of things.” The dissolution is death, which leads them to achieve the essence of the divine.

The speaker’s relationships with the four girls show his experiences of the joys, anguish and pain of encountering the divine totality, which are promoted by Bataille. This experience of woman’s proximity to the divine finds its best expression or description in Hart’s longest poem, ‘Nineteen Songs’, which is to be discussed in the next section.

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556 Ibid., p. 113.
557 Ibid., p. 113.
Section II. Seeking for ‘Exteriority’ through Transcendence

A testimony to the dual realities is found in the two poems of Hart’s discussed above when Bataille’s erotic theory is applied to them. The dual realities embodied in some other poems by Hart can also be elucidated through Levinas’s theory of “the phenomenology of the other”. Following Christ’s model of descending from Heaven and then ascending to it, Bataille is fascinated with death and desire through which certain limits are transgressed and the self is dispossessed, whereby the “continuity of being” is achieved. Jesus’ model also has an attraction to Levinas, who utilises it in his theory on “the phenomenology of the other”, as he is interested in the movement of ecstatic experience and transcendence that open to “exteriority”, the essence of being, which is the “’curvature of space’” – “the very presence of God.” Therefore, I would say that the two writers’ ways of searching for being belong to a kind of metaphysical desire for the divine being, similar to that of theology.

Their ways of searching for the divine being, however, are fundamentally different. Bataille, in Hart’s words, “advocates a temporary overcoming of the self through transgression, an event marked by the dark pleasures of violating a taboo”, whereas Levinas is interested in “otherness” or alterity, as John Wild states in the ‘Introduction’ of Totality and Infinity: “I find myself existing in a world of alien things and elements which are other than, but not negations of myself.” Bataille’s transgression is related to Breton’s surrealist “point” to which he added: “Good and Evil, pain and joy”. As Bataille explains: “This point is indicated both by violent literature and by the violence of a mystical experience: only the point matters.” What matters to Levinas is “futurity” “fecundity”, and “otherness” from which “transcendence” happens, and through which “exteriority” appears. That is, the difference between Bataille and Levinas lies in the following: Bataille pays more attention to the process of the “temporary overcoming of the self”, self-annihilation and negation through transgression to enter the ecstatic state to achieve union with the divine essence, while Levinas aims at the future and “otherness” through “transcendence”, as the I’s being is not to “surmount so as to return from the multiple to the One, from the finite to the Infinite”, but “remain[ing] in his own being, maintaining himself there, acting here below”. Bataille’s time duration for identification of the “continuity” is very short while Levinas opens his sight not only to temporality or momentariness but also mainly to the infinite “futurity” in which both “the self … of an other” and “the self of himself” of “the subject in voluptuosity” are recovered rather than lost. In this section I would therefore like to utilise Levinas’s theory of phenomenology on “the other” to analyse Hart’s poems ‘Nineteen Songs’ and ‘Amo Te Solo’ to demonstrate that Hart is congenial to Levinas’s thinking, and that dual reality is achieved through transcendence instead of transgression.

562 Hart, The Dark Gaze , p. 43.
565 Levinas, Totality and Infinity, p. 292.
566 Ibid., p. 270.
First of all, let us examine the concepts of “the other” or “wholly other” and “otherness” in Levinas’s sense. “Being is not only itself, it escapes itself.”\(^{567}\) When Levinas illustrates this proposition, he takes “a person”, for example, by analysing the two aspects of a “person” or “being”:

> Here is a person who is what he is; but he does not make us forget, does not absorb, cover over entirely the objects he holds and the way he holds them, his gestures, limbs, gaze, thought, skin, which escape from under the identity of his substance, which like a torn sack is unable to contain them.\(^{568}\)

From this explanation, we see that while escaping itself, the person’s being becomes split and doubled, and thereby his being consists of two parts: the person proper or “what he is” – something that can be seen easily; and his ways of doing things, or his inner thinking, which are not as noticeable as “what he is”. Accordingly, an “I” has “the self of himself” and “the self as an other”\(^{569}\); a woman as an I’s other has her otherness. In Levinas’s phenomenology of “the other”, including the phenomena of “eros” and “fecundity”, it is “the other” and “otherness” that are emphasised and paid more attention to. That is, Levinas’s other-oriented mode of thinking emphasises the search for what things are “in themselves, in their radical otherness”\(^{570}\) in the form of traces of the infinite.

The metaphysical desire for the “otherness” of “the other” in Levinas’s phenomenology takes the form of searching for “eros”, for “Love aims at the Other”\(^{571}\) who is one’s beloved. This kind of desire or searching for the “otherness” of “the other” as one’s beloved is not difficult for an Eastern person like me to understand. As early as 2,500 years ago, a poem entitled ‘Wooing and Wedding’ in a Chinese *Book of Poetry* has the following lines:

> By riverside a pair
> Of turtledoves are cooing;
> There is a good maiden fair
> Whom a young man is wooing.\(^{572}\)

The “good maiden” here does not indicate an actual lady but an emperor and the “young man” does not refer to a love-seeker but an official. Some officials in ancient time, when they had been out of the emperor’s favour, would use the “good maiden” as a metaphor to refer to the emperor, hoping some day to earn the favour of an emperor again. So the “young man” is seeking not a “good maiden” or an emperor, but the “otherness” of “the other”, or the favour of an emperor. The “young man” or rather the official, in order to satisfy his desire and constitute himself with the other self, wants to have the “otherness” of “the other”. The same can be said of a female who is the other of an I, and what the I seeks for is the “otherness” of “the other” or the female.


\(^{568}\) Ibid., p. 6.

\(^{569}\) Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 270.


\(^{571}\) Ibid., p. 256.

With Levinas’s theory of “the other” and “otherness” and the Chinese story in mind, I would like to find how the being of the I, or the speaker, and the being of the female in Hart’s long erotic poem become doubled and split, and how they, especially the male speaker, attain the divine essence through a succession of erotic gestures, fantasies and meditations, and thereby complete his integrity – the whole self – and reach the divine “exteriority”.

1 Double-sided Happiness

Another way the dual realities are expressed in Hart’s poetry is in the happiness of erotic love. That is, to be with one’s beloved is a kind of happiness, but desiring an absent lover is also a kind of happiness. This subsection deals with this double-sided happiness.

A. Loving her otherness and enjoying her enjoyment

Unlike Bataille who regards woman as the representation of totality and truth that metaphysical desire seeks, Levinas thinks that woman, as a being, is split, for she consists of herself as her lover’s “other” and the “otherness of the other” of herself. When Adriaan Peperzak illustrates “otherness”, he asserts that: ‘The otherness of the other reveals the dimension of “height”: he / she comes “from on high”’\(^573\) as the divine trace, the presence of God. So, if the I loves a woman as “the other” or becomes concerned with her, “it is not because of the other’s beauty, talents, performances, roles, or functions but only by the other’s (human) otherness.”\(^574\) That is to say, a lover loves his beloved not because she is beautiful or has some other talents as said above, but because of her otherness or “the other’s otherness”.

Then, what precisely is “otherness”? Levinas, in *Totality and Infinity*, maintains that “Love aims at the Other; it aims at him in his frailty [faiblesses].”\(^575\) Here, “frailty” does not indicate a personal weakness or something similar but the “otherness” or “alterity” itself, which is a kind of “tenderness” and attraction, since “the epiphany of the Beloved is but one with her regime of tenderness”, setting forth “as a soft warmth where being dissipates into radiance”.\(^576\) Embodied in Hart’s ‘Nineteen Songs’, feminine “tenderness”, or “warmth”, or “radiance” is a kind of attraction and enjoyment. To the male speaker in the poem, the “otherness” [the tenderness, warmth, and radiance] of the other is a great attraction. It is just as Peperzak observes: “To love someone is to enjoy the other’s enjoyment … it is the enjoyment of someone who speaks (although in the act of loving she might be silent or laugh or play).”\(^577\) Now let us see how she behaves in the poem, exhibiting feminine otherness.

We see in the first part of the poem her tenderness, warmth and enjoyment are embodied in a detailed gesture: to

\[
\ldots \text{select some fruit} \\
\text{And quickly pierce its skin} \\
\text{With a fine fingernail [171]}
\]

\(^{573}\) A. Peperzak, *To the Other*. Indiana: Purdue University Press, 1993, p. 20.
\(^{574}\) Ibid., p. 20.
\(^{575}\) Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 256.
\(^{576}\) Ibid., p. 256.
\(^{577}\) A. Peperzak, *To the Other*. Indiana: Purdue University Press, 1993, p. 194.
and peel the skin of the “mandarin” so that they two can share it. The speaker loves this gesture so much that he believes that he “would feel desire / For fingers sprayed with juice” and thinks that “(… two entire lives / Turned on her fingertips)” [171].

In the second part, the speaker’s beloved has a special way to show her otherness: consideration and thoughtfulness by covering “my clock” with her “blouse” so that the noise from the clock would not disturb them when they make love. To show his great enjoyment of her considerateness, the speaker naturally wants to do something in return:

    I want to love you all the day
    With the lightness of blossom,

    I want to love you all the night
    With the density of hammers [172].

Another aspect of her “otherness” demonstrated in the third part is her way of eating and talking:

    … she speaks
    Across the table
    Content with claret, ham and cheese
    Her voice goes deep
    …

    … she tears
    A hunk of bread
    And soaks it in the olive oil
    She does not speak
    … [172]

Although her way of eating is not very pleasant to look at, and her way of speaking is not very well-mannered, the speaker loves her so much that “she could take my soul”.

Since the speaker loves his beloved so much, he is sure to understand her “feelings”, even although they are “without names”: a touch of her hand tells him how strong her feelings (as an aspect of her otherness) are, which “pulls my mouth to hers”. So, in returning her love, he would

    … listen for the laugh
    That falls between her words
    And live there all the week [173],

just like “a lazy animal”; he would “kiss her neck / And hear her saying Yes” [173]. And consequently, “the bee will dance”, “the lion feeds”, “the truth is told”, and “the ocean lives”, showing the happiness of their union. In brief, the speaker enjoys her enjoyment and her “otherness” [174]. The speaker enjoys her “otherness” so much that he becomes jealous, and afraid that someone might take her away from him. So

    I only want the world to turn
    A little faster now so they fall off the globe
And a great turtle eats them up [172].

Besides, the speaker, for the sake of love, would give up everything including “lunch” and his job to make love with his beloved:

What’s wrong with coffee, very strong and black,  
Then squandering the whole damn day at lunch?

Let others teach and fill in all the forms  
While we dip sugar cubes into champagne [178].

Indeed, the speaker loves his beloved so much “Even the oldest graves will stir a bit” “When we wander through the cemetery” [178]. From the above, we see that the “otherness” of the speaker’s beloved lies in her “frailty”, namely “tenderness”, “warmth”, and whatever attracts the speaker; and that the speaker enjoys the enjoyment and happiness of his beloved, and thereby his own other self, to some degree, has been achieved. This is only one side of the speaker’s happiness, and the other side of happiness becomes the next topic.

B. Enjoying another side of happiness – longing and suffering for the Invisible

In the first part of *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas declares that metaphysical desire is for “the Other” or “the Invisible”. 578 This desire for “the Other” has no satisfaction, but in the meantime, the more distant and separated that “the desiring being” is from “the Desired invisible”, 579 the stronger and more intense the desire becomes. The intensity of the desire increases in a direct ratio with the distance. The desire for one’s beloved is like that for the absent or invisible God, as Levinas proclaims:

… the absence of God is better than his presence; and the anguish of man’s concern and searching for God is better than consummation or comfort. As Kierkegaard put it: ‘The need for God is a sublime happiness.’ 580

A common saying in China has a similar meaning: Missing an absent friend is a kind of happiness unknown to common people. Indeed, the speaker’s desire and longing for his absent beloved are a kind of happy suffering. By this reasoning, it is tenable to say the absence of the beloved is sometimes better than her presence, and the desire or need for the beloved is also a sublime happiness.

To show the intensity of the love between the speaker and his beloved, the poet devotes much space to demonstrating fantasies caused by the dialectical relationship between distance and proximity. The time for kissing and making love with his beloved is the happiest time for the speaker, for it gives him a great enjoyment and happiness – the “continuity of being”. However, an encounter with a woman can sometimes make the desire intense, which appears as a kind of anguish, pain and worry. Such experiences as her brief absence, her unpleasant mood, and the

578 Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 33.
579 Ibid., p. 34.
loss of her love can make the speaker enter a kind of delusion or vertigo, which leads to his erotic fantasies and dreams. This is seen in several parts of the poem.

In part twelve, the speaker’s suffering is caused by the possible loss of the person he loves. The speaker, knowing that she might leave him, is jealous of “the lucky wind” that

… lifts her gown
With wicked little claw;

…
Perhaps it reaches high
Along each pretty thigh,
Perhaps … [177].

The speaker’s obsessive love for his beloved is so deep that a brief separation can make him suffer. In part ten, when he is left alone, he misses her so much that he thinks of a way to find relief by rubbing and stroking the mirror, imagining that his beloved appears inside the mirror before him. Through the erotic fantasy, the speaker seems to have transgressed the spatial limit set up by her absence, and hence the distance between them is shortened or made to disappear, and she appears before his eyes so that he can make love with her again in his imagination.

In part eleven, the speaker is so upset by her absence that he suffers insomnia:

… you wake me up
When you are days away
In Tübingen or Bath

By entering my dream [176].

His beloved is so important to him that he misses her even in his subconscious. What does she look like in his dream? She has “very little on” or simply wears nothing but “just a smile”. Being sleepless and “with nothing to do”, the speaker gradually enters his delusion or paranoia, urging her to come back “today” by flying “straight home”, and by the time she reaches home he himself may be waiting for her or welcoming her by having nothing on but “a smile”.

The speaker’s suffering or the feeling of missing his beloved caused by his absence from her is also attested to in part thirteen. When he is absent from her or their home, the speaker misses her so much that her name is more important than any food that he eats with friends. The activities he performs with the different fruits symbolise his eagerness to make love with her. Even when he does these, he still wants to

… fill my mouth
With your sweet name [177]
“all night”; and wants to
… roll my tongue
Around your name; [177]
and feels that
… nothing feeds me half so well
As your sweet name [178].
It is evident that what is most important to the speaker is, of course, not the name but the person with the name – his beloved.

Although the absence of his lover causes pain to the speaker, that absence makes him think of the secret signal known exclusively by them. In part fifteen, when his lover is sometimes away from him, the speaker would use his own hands to touch his own cheeks, and then he would indulge in fantasies about his lover’s touching his cheek tenderly or lightly with her hand. When it happens

… at night,
And then I am in bed with you [178].

The act of self-touching on his cheeks, as a kind of self-comforting, makes the speaker think more of her.

From the above, we see the speaker’s desire and longing for his beloved causes a kind of happy suffering, which is not available to ordinary people, except those deeply in love. The suffering that results from the feeling of missing his beloved is, in fact, the desire and longing for “the Other” or other self. The theme of achieving the other self of the speaker will be the major concern in the following subsection.

3. Achieving a New Self or “the Other” of the Self through Temporality and “Futurity”

In the previous subsection, we saw that the male speaker “I” in ‘Nineteen Songs’ enjoys the enjoyment of the other – his beloved. In fact, the speaker’s enjoyment of the other’s enjoyment is a necessary step for him to attain his other self. Peperzak states that “enjoyment is necessary for the constitution of the subject as an independent ego that can have a relationship with alterity – the fundamental structure can be characterized as eros.” 581 This is in accordance with what Levinas maintains: “Voluptuosity transfigures the subject himself, who henceforth owes his identity not to his initiative of power, but to the passivity of the love received.” 582 Indeed, the subject in an erotic performance finds his other self or new self, which keeps arising when the performance of erotic love continues, as he cannot control himself as the original self. From Levinas’s statement, we see that the passivity of the female provides a basic condition for the male lover to achieve his new self.

Compared with the “passivity” of the female, the male lover appears active and filled with initiative. In an important sense, feminine “passivity” in love is set off through the male lover’s strong will and determination. In other words, the male lover in the poem overshadows the female with his demanding tone and domineering attitude, as seen in the following lines:

I only want to lay my head upon your lap
And I let my hands round your waist
I only want to rest and hear you talk awhile

582 Levinas, Totality and Infinity, p. 270.
And breathe the perfume of your words [172].

A similar sentence structure, beginning with “I only want …”, with a strong sense of action and determination, appears five times in the three stanzas of the fourth part of the poem and shows the active and ambitious “I” getting his love from or performing his love with his passive beloved. The syntax in the fifth part is similar: expressions beginning with “I like …” and “I love …” dominate the two stanzas, showing the speaker’s “initiative of power”. The same can be said of the sentence structures in the eighth part: the three main stanzas beginning “My gladness is to …”, “My pleasure is to …”, and “My joy is just to …” followed by a sequence of actions such as “to fall asleep with”, “run a finger down”, and “kiss”, show not only the “passivity” of the female but also the speaker’s new identity or self attained through making love to his beloved. Through these demanding tones and dominating attitudes and the similar sentence structures, we see that the achievement of the speaker’s other self or new self is based on the “passivity” of the female – the speaker’s Other. In the meantime, we also see that this achievement is gained through temporality – here and now.

Temporality, or “here and now”, is also open to the future, “futurity”, and “fecundity”. That is, “Eros … goes toward a future which is not yet”.583 The demanding presence of the other’s face is the presence of the third. “The third regards me in the eyes of the other.”584 In the poem, the speaker’s infinite future can be found from the face or eyes of his beloved. This can be seen from the dialectical changes of space and time when the speaker thinks about his beloved in part eighteen. Sometimes his beloved is in a bad mood, and sometimes in a good mood. When she is in a bad mood, the speaker feels that she is so far away from him both in space and time that she seems to be “in Germany last century”, as if “both time and space” had been stretched by “one of the bad angels”. When she is in a good mood, “there is no space or time at all” between them. The finite and discontinuous speaker sees the infinite and continuity in his beloved’s eyes in which he or “the third” is “shining, whole” [180].

A similar idea is expressed in the following lines in part five:

I like to laze an hour
Just gazing in your eyes
And see my future there [173].

Both the “I” who is “shining” and the “future” “in your eyes”, no doubt, are the “fecundity” and “transcendence” in Levinas’s sense, for the “I” or “the third” and the “future” are a kind of “the other” which is “the name for everybody who is not I”.585 In loving, the speaker enjoys his beloved in reaching beyond her toward a future that is “not yet” or never future enough. This “I” or “futurity” refers to the speaker’s “Other” who is his future child/children in which the speaker as the father, who is the origin, has his own new beginning. In this way, the “I” transcends his death or discontinuity by restarting in infinity, thereby reaching the divine “exteriority”.

583 Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 271.
585 Ibid., p. 167.
Further evidence of the transcendence through “the Other” is found in the last lines of part fourteen:

Tonight I want your tongue inside my mouth
My semen hot and wild inside your cunt [178].

It was mentioned in the introduction to this section that being is split and doubled. Accordingly, the “I”, as being, is not excepted. The “semen” can surely be said to be “my” “Other” which is the essential part of the “I”, generating the future “I” – a child or children. Or at least we can say that the “semen” gives promises of “my” “futurity”, transcending “my” death and reaching “the infinite” or “exteriority”. In this sense, the “semen” or “the Other” is a kind of trace after trace without ending, and this trace will appear successively. To borrow Levinas’s words, “In the I being can be produced as infinitely recommencing, that is, properly speaking, as infinite.”

The speaker transcends his life and death through “fecundity” – his future children or his “Other(s)” or “otherness”. It is his future children who give him a new self which transcends his death to achieve the divine essence. Love is a form of a being’s existence, and “fecundity” belongs to the essence of this existence, through which one moves towards the “futurity”, “exteriority” or “curvature of space” where God is present. Hence, the speaker, through the metaphysical movement, seems to have entered Paradise or the “curvature of space”, in which he has the presence of the Word and God “with whom we become intimate.” This is the topic of the next subsection.

4. Erotic Love and God

For Levinas, to exist is to love, and to love is to transcend “here and now” to reach “exteriority” or the “’curvature of space’”, and “the very presence of God.” The same can be said of the poet, for through transcendence of death or discontinuity, the speaker in the poem can reach beyond his beloved to the “exteriority” and “curvature”. Like Bernard and St John, both Levinas and Hart believe that erotic love for one’s beloved cannot be separated from love for God, as one’s desire for a union with his beloved suggests the desire for the union with God.

As for the relation between the other and God, Levinas has the following statement:

… it is only in the infinite relation with the other that God passes (se passe), the traces of God are to be found. God thus reveals himself as a trace … to identify the particular interhuman events which open towards transcendence and reveal the traces where God has passed.

In Hart’s poem, the speaker’s beloved is his “Other” who possesses the “otherness” from which he can transcend his death to reach beyond to “exteriority”, the divine essence. In this sense, the speaker’s beloved is the direct medium between the speaker and the divine essence. By this way

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of understanding, we see that the speaker’s beloved is close to the divine essence. According to Levinas, “Love is the society of God and man.” Therefore, I would demonstrate that the erotic love between the speaker and his beloved is the love between the speaker and God, in spite of the fact that the “otherness” of his beloved and “the Other” of the “I” are revealed as divine traces through “fecundity” which happens in the future that is never quite future enough.

In the poem the closeness of the speaker’s beloved as “the other” to God can be seen from the fact that the speaker in part eight finds his “gladness”, “pleasure”, and “joy” through erotic acts with his beloved, and the happiness is directly related to God. So “I” “pray a little bit on each” of her “ridge[s]” when “I” “run a finger down / Your spine” [174]. When the speaker does so, he prays to God to bless them with happiness which will last for a long time. Here, the speaker regards love as a kind of redemption and blessing from God. Another thought-provoking image in the brackets of the following lines discloses more about the relation of the other and the divine essence:

(I wake up with a gray hair on my cheek
Or a dark curly one upon my tongue) [175].

These two lines recall St John’s well known statement on hair which is believed to be a symbol of one’s love for the incarnated Word. The hair’s religious meaning, to show the speaker’s love for God, is very obvious in the fifth part of the poem. In this part the speaker’s desires for God and for woman are mixed, or rather his desire for God is shown through the description of his desire for woman. Thereby, when the speaker makes the following gestures:

… to drench my face
In your thick hair, and lick
Where neck and shoulder meet

and finds that

There is a fine gray hair
I love, near your left lobe [173]

he seems to have heard a saint’s saying: ‘God’s captured with a hair!’ When

I … laze an hour
Just gazing in your eyes [173]

the speaker seems to have seen his infinite “future” and to have become one of the “creatures” “who are free to engage in knowing God.” For the functions of the “hair” and “eye”, St John gives an explanation: “The eye refers to faith. … it is only one eye that wounds Him (God), just as it is only one hair that captivates the Beloved.” In this sense, the speaker’s beloved is close to the divine essence, as it is his beloved who has such “a fine gray hair”, and it is his beloved

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590 Ibid., p. 68.
592 Ibid., p. 439.
593 Ibid., p. 534.
who has such an “eye”. So it is true that the speaker’s beloved serves as a direct medium between him and God. Through her, the speaker can reach “exteriority”, the divine essence. In part seventeen, the speaker affirms that “truth is always clothed in love”, from which “I feel the infinite” [179], which is the trace of a trace, between which goes God. The process of making love with his beloved is transcendence and transfiguration, as the speaker says:

… when I enter you, and your warm mouth
Absorbs me in a night without a day [179],

and it is “just then” “the truth is told”. This “truth” is the speaker’s happiness, his “continuity of being”, “exteriority” and “curvature of space” with the divine presence.

Woman, as “the Other” of the “I”, functioning as the medium between the divine and humanity, is much clearer in part nineteen. It is his sweetheart who makes the speaker gain a new life. Although the “I” is a discontinuous being, “I” can gain the “continuity of being” through “you” – “your touch gives life” and energy; and it is “your caress” or love that transforms the “I”: getting rid of the wrinkles on “my arms and face”. With “your touch” or “your caress”, our “shortest time” or kingdom will come, where “God will look at us” and “you will kiss his lips” to express your gratitude to Him. Here is the “exteriority” or “curvature of space” that is advocated by Levinas, as they – the speaker and his beloved – have direct contact with God and the full presence of Him.

We see that the speaker’s beloved has closeness to the divine being, for he can see or perceive the presence of the divine trace. The speaker, from her, finds three transcendental channels and one weapon to reach “exteriority”. These channels and weapon are the eye, mouth, vagina, and the hair. The eye reflects the speaker’s “infinite”, and the mouth “absorbs” him or rather his “Other”, and her vagina, which the speaker “enter[s]”, generates his “fecundity”. The “infinite”, “Other” and “fecundity” are the intermediate consequences of the speaker’s love with his beloved. From these consequences and the divine traces, the speaker, armed with the weapon of the “hair” of his beloved, is sure to “catch” God.

Since woman is so close to God, true love will be rewarded or redeemed from God:

The sun comes closer by a mile:
It is enough to make you sweat
It is enough to make you strip [175].

If “you strip”, there will be love, erotic, and licentious acts and images, and transformation will occur:

So that the bees will dance
So that the lion feeds
So that the truth is told
So that the ocean lives [174].
This is the kingdom in this world, that is, the sacred world being brought down to the secular world, in which everything is ideal and perfect. When this happens, “morality” plays an important function, which is seen in the following subsection.

5. “Morality” and “Exteriority”
An extrapolation of the relationship between “exteriority” and “morality” is worth undertaking here. For the relationship, Levinas has deduced the following: to have the full presence of God is “to be in truth of being” in “exteriority”, and “to be in truth of being” is “to encounter the Other”. The deduction goes on – “truth” is “a respect of being”, and it may be equated with the “exteriority of being”, which is “morality itself”. Therefore, “[m]orality … presides over the work of truth,” and thereby “truth” is “morality” which “is not a branch of philosophy, but first philosophy”. From this deduction, we see it is vital to understand that Levinas’s phenomenology of “love” and “fecundity” contains the idea of treating “the other” as the divine and with “morality”. So it is tenable to say that “morality” “aims at the Other; it aims at him in his frailty”, and to be moral to “the Other” is “to fear for another, to come to the assistance of his frailty.”

Hart, commenting on Levinas’s ethics, observes that “[e]thics is not the corollary of the religious but is its medium; the sacred must be thoroughly secularized in order for us to have a proper relation with God.” The statement on secularisation is Levinas’s idea of “love” or “morality” reflected in the speaker’s way of treating woman with “morality”. This draws Hart closer to Levinas, as Hart bears out what Levinas proposes from the attitude of the speakers towards their lovers as “the other” in several poems.

In the seventh part of ‘Nineteen Songs’, the sight of familiar time, places, and things, as in

When evening stills the birds
I listen to the trees
…
At night there are few words;
…
My pillow stole one hair;
I feel the warmth she left
…  [174]

revives the speaker’s memory of his lover who has left him, stirring up or striking a chord in his heart. So he infuses the lines with his sense of ethics and gives his best wishes for the woman whom he loved:

Whenever you fall in love
It is for the first time  [174]

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594 Levinas, Totality and Infinity, p. 303.
595 Ibid., p. 302.
596 Ibid.
597 Ibid., p. 304.
598 Ibid.
599 Ibid., p. 256.
600 K. Hart, ‘The Profound Reverse’, [The material was provided by Kevin Hart.]
This “morality” is shown not only to his girlfriends but also to his family members as “the other”, and this is found in the poem ‘Amo Te Solo’ [202–204]. The poem seems to be a description of a slice of the speaker’s life or family life – a kind of contentment, satisfaction in his conjugal life or connubial bliss – but it contains profound moral feelings and consideration for his family, especially for his wife. For the speaker, being absent from home or leaving his beloved alone at home is a mistake:

\[
\text{Sometimes a life goes wrong} \\
\text{Without an evil deed:} \\
\text{... [202]}
\]

When the speaker is in Europe for a meeting or conference, he misses his wife so much that he becomes sleepless and wakes up “in the wee hours”, “waiting for time to pass” so that he can “call home” to get in touch with her, to express his tender feelings for her, as

\[
\text{For when I am away} \\
\text{Each hour leaves its bruise} \ [202].
\]

The speaker understands that the sufferings are on two sides – both for him and his wife. They love each other so deeply and devotedly that even one hour’s absence from each other can cause much pain and suffering to each of them.

His absence from home makes his love for her so strong that he even loves the names of the streets where his home is located, when he comes back late at night. The speaker imagines a sex scene suggested through the metaphor:

\[
\text{An outside light shines round} \\
\text{And tightly holds the house}
\]

and the imagination makes him determined:

\[
\text{There is no life on earth} \\
\text{I would not spend with you} \ [202].
\]

For the speaker, love is not a children’s game or trifling thing but a serious matter needing one’s “standing to attention”, as

\[
\text{No man can argue long against a truth} \\
\text{That smashes hard into his deepest life} \ [203].
\]

Hence, the speaker becomes mad with love for his wife: he compares her red “lips” to “the maple tree” and he even loves “the curve around her bottom”. To him, she is transparent, and she makes it possible that he can move towards “exteriority” and the divine essence:

\[
\text{... this little world} \\
\text{Is bigger now only because of her,}
\]
... this massive universe makes sense

... this ordinary room is love
And truth because she walks through it all day [203].

Obviously, it is “she” that serves as a medium between the dual reality of two different worlds. She makes the room “bigger”, and fills the “ordinary room” with “love”. This is reminiscent of Hart’s other poem entitled “You” [146]. In the poem, it is “you” or “your” love that creates a completely different world for the speaker, which is more attractive and desirable. In other words, “you” stand on the boundary connecting the two different worlds and function as a transcendental point through which the speaker’s “soul must pass” “When you are lying in my arms” [146]. So, the speaker, with “your” presence, feels from the bottom of his heart a new and different world:

... a strange and nameless world,
This one which you have made for me,

A world created by your touch [146].

The poet further describes the specific reason why “you” can create this world. For there is a

... valve you hide so well, the one
That keeps this world brimful of time [146].

Since the speaker has “your” presence, he feels that the world now before him is different from that of the past, and he becomes a completely different person – fresh and in high spirits. Hence, it is self-evident that “she” in ‘Amo Te Solo’ is like the “you”, serving as a medium between the dual reality of the two worlds of the speaker.

In the third part of ‘Amo Te Solo’, another scene suggesting sex is described:

It is a dark green ivy afternoon
In Prince Hill as rain falls through vast trees
Into the little garden … [204].

The image symbolises and foreshadows the excitement of an erotic scene in which “the clocks” are believed to “have stopped”:

While people watch their windows come alive
And old tin roofs out back get hopping mad
And gutters booze [204].

The speaker loses full possession of himself, and both he and the “people” are gripped in a state of fascination. The scene of having sex is modestly but elegantly suggested with rhetorical devices, mainly metaphors –

Last week we burned our flesh, but now we baste
While smoky jazz just cruises down the lane
And makes out with our cat beneath a car
While we’re in bed [204].
Here, the poet does not describe the sexual scene in a revealing way, but through indications and suggestions: the “smoky jazz” is mating with “our cat beneath a car”. The details of making love are further suggested: “The sheets all trampled under our feet”. In the other lines of the poem, the poet compares his connubial love to “lyrics touching” the couple “as night comes on”, when they seem to have drunk some wine during the daytime. Indeed, their connubial life is so happy and so sweet that it can be compared to the most fragrant and honeyed wine in the world – just having a smell of it will make you drunk.

The bliss or happiness described in Hart’s poems is “the earthly paradise” described by Levinas. Indeed, to love or to enjoy by eating, drinking, or being at home, is paradise for Levinas as well as for Hart. From the perspective described in the poems the “I” finds a kind of bliss or happiness which gives “being in the world”, in an earthly paradise or “exteriority”. This is a paradise which is no different from Plato’s “over-there” or “up-there”,601 where “the good” exists and the speaker is eager to seek ascension to it, as described in Phaedo and also indicated by Levinas.602 Indeed, “philosophy is presented as a meditation on death and a journey that leads from here below toward another land over there, which is the land of the living gods” 603. And on this journey one needs to have “morality” and ethics to treat “the other” as the divine or sacred, as “God appears within the horizon of ethics, not religion or metaphysics.”

The poet’s affinity to the post-phenomenological school is testified to in his closeness to Levinas’s theory of “the other”, “otherness”, “fecundity”, “futurity”, and “morality”. Through analysis of the poems ‘Nineteen Songs’ and ‘Amo Te Solo’, we have seen the dual realities exhibited in the speakers themselves and their beloved as well. From their beloved and their otherness, the speakers find the other self, happiness, “futurity”, “fecundity”, and “morality” through which they transcend their death and “discontinuous being”, reach beyond “the other” and “otherness” to “exteriority” and the “curvature of space”. This further testifies to Levinas’s statement: “It is a desire that cannot be satisfied. For we speak lightly of desires satisfied, or of sexual needs, or even of moral and religious needs.”605 We have noted that Levinas’s or Hart’s sense of “religion without religion” lies in two respects: the utilisation of Christ’s model of descending to the secular world and ascending to Heaven through “futurity”, “fecundity”, “the other” and “morality”; and the sense of “the other” and “otherness” appearing in the form of the trace after a trace, which is close to Derrida’s notion of “trace” or “différence” in which “religion without religion” reaches its climax.

601 A. Peperzak, To the Other. Indiana: Purdue University Press, 1993, p. 43.
603 A. Peperzak, To the Other. Indiana: Purdue University Press, 1993, p. 43.
605 Levinas, Totality and Infinity. p. 34.
Section III. Religion without Religion

1. Theoretical Bases
From the above section, we have seen that Hart is close to Levinas. For Hart as well as for Levinas, the death of the self can be transcended through “futurity”, “fecundity”, and “otherness”, so that finally comes “exteriority” and the “curvature of space”, where the divine being can be reached beyond “the other”. The “futurity”, “fecundity”, and “the other”, to which Levinas is committed, appear in the form of the trace after a trace. The theory has no doubt had a significant influence on Derrida’s différance and dissemination with the original meaning replaced by traces, as a result of the materiality of words. Levinas’s and Derrida’s theories, in a similar way, have had a significant influence on Hart. This can be seen from the fact that Derrida and Hart were very congenial and proximate to each other, as the former expressed himself through his profound theory “religion without religion”, while the latter did so through his philosophical writings and poems. In other words, Hart illustrates and embodies Derrida’s deconstruction theory through his philosophical articles, books, and poems to exemplify how it is applied to literature. Therefore, we find that the dual realities in Hart’s poetic space culminate in his closeness to Derrida’s “religion without religion”.

Deconstructive writing has “two stages”, as Derrida himself observes, “… one day I would have to stop deferring … and at last speak of ‘negative theology’ itself.” Caputo has commented correspondingly:

\[ \ldots \text{différance does not mean only deferral, delay, and procrastination, but the spacing out, the extension between memory and promise or à-venir, which opens up the here-now in all of its urgency and absolute singularity, in the imminence of the instant.} \]

Hart observes echoingly: Derrida’s “project is both like and unlike those of the Pseudo-Dionysius and Meister Eckhart”. To say that Derrida’s project is unlike the theologians’ negative theology means that deconstruction’s différance is committed to an endless play and dissemination of traces, with the original presence or meaning being deferred and delayed ceaselessly; and to say that deconstruction is like the mystics’ negative theology means that ‘Derrida takes the act of promising as his guiding thread through that labyrinth of problems we call “negative theology” which “promises to lead one beyond being to the immediacy of a presence, to God”’. So the “two stages” in deconstruction are clear: deferring or delaying ceaselessly; and promising the coming of “the other” while the “ruses and deferrals” are still

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610 Ibid.
611 Ibid.
612 Ibid.
involved. If I am correct, the two stages of deconstruction, indeed, belong to the category of “the
dual reality”.

From the expression “religion without religion”, we see that the dual reality has simultaneously a
kind of relation to religion and no relation to religion. To say that deconstruction is related to
“religion” means that it uses the myth of Adam’s Fall to explain other falls, as Hart does in The
Trespass of the Sign. In other words, in the book we see that deconstruction is closely related to
theology – not in the theematics of religion but in the structure of religion.

To testify further to the proposition, I would emphasise the dual sense of God in that the phrase
“God’s death” refers not to the God of one’s faith but to the God of philosophy in the
metaphysical sense. So the phrase “God is dead” should be explained in two ways. On the one
hand, according to Hart, Derrida uses “the phrase ‘God is dead’ in his own way, to mean that
‘God’ cannot function as an agent of totalisation.”613 In other words, if it is impossible for one to
locate “a transcendent point which can serve as a ground for discourse, then deconstruction is
indeed a discourse on God’s death.”614 On the other hand, we see that although it is certain that
Derrida’s “différance … is not God”,615 and it “has no theological dimension”,616 Derrida does
believe that there are “original, heterogeneous elements of Judaism and Christianity” that “were
never completely eradicated by Western metaphysics. They perdure throughout the centuries,
threatening and unsettling the assured ‘identities’ of Western philosophy.”617 The “original” and
“heterogeneous elements” are just what engage both negative theology and deconstruction, and
Derrida acknowledges that “the detours, locutions, and syntax in which I will often have to take
recourse will resemble those of negative theology, occasionally even to the point of being
indistinguishable from negative theology.”618

If there are two kinds of God for Derrida – one the God of philosophy and the other the God of
faith – Derrida, then, does endorse the philosophy of the “God is dead” movement in which God
cannot function as “a means of totalisation”, but not the theology of the “God is dead” movement
related to one’s faith. In other words, Derrida explores and uncovers the relationship between
deconstruction and theology from the structure of theology instead of its theematics. This is what
Hart brilliantly demonstrates in The Trespass of the Sign, in which it is the absence of God,
rather than the “Death of God”, that is highlighted. Since Derrida does not refer to God’s death
as the death of the God of faith, he is certainly not against the saying that “God is absent”, as it is
understood that Jesus’ death on the Cross led Him to Paradise to become united with His Father.
In this sense, God’s death, indeed, means God’s absence. Indeed, “‘God is dead’ is not a formula
of unbelief … not a critique of faith”619 but a critique of God’s function as the metaphysical

614 Ibid., p. 39.
615 J. D. Caputo and Scanlon, M. J. Eds. God, the Gift, and Postmodernism. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana
617 R. Kearney, Dialogues with Contemporary Continental Thinkers. Manchester: Manchester University Press,
ground. Therefore, the notion of “religion without religion” is inextricably linked with religion or theology, not in thematics but in structure.

When the “religion without religion” lies in the first stage of deconstruction, we see that the notion is embodied through the structure of Adam’s Fall. Due to God’s absence, the forefather of humanity, Adam, committed the Fall, “the original sin” for his failing “to observe the proper limits assigned to man by God”, and Hart calls this “the trespass of sign” or “a trespass of the linguistic sign”. Adam’s Fall gives rise to a conspicuous consequence for human beings in this world, that is, the Fall in moral character leads to the Fall in linguistic sign. We, therefore, have Derrida’s statement: “Sign is always a sign of the Fall.” The sign’s Fall results in certain other falls. For example, language falls as well “from the proper to figural – with the consequence that intention and interpretation will often fail to connect” and “the sign fails to represent the concept purely and simply.” In other words, language is transformed from the proper and literal to the improper, metaphorical, and symbolic, and we often get lost in the labyrinth of this world, and the original meaning of God is in exile. Hart assigns the sign’s failure to express its meaning to its tricky structure, because the sign contains “the complicating elements of materiality and difference which serve to delay and defer the expected recovery of the concept.” Namely, the sign’s meaning becomes indefinite and unclear in “a maze of signs”, resulting from the sign’s fall or its structure.

The sign’s detailed expression of the fall, or its structure, is seen in the sign’s “two modes of repetition”, “in a phenomenal and in a transcendent sense”. The first is to “repeat its originating presence” so that “the intelligible [may] be repeated in the sensible” or the intelligible signified can be expressed in the sensible signifier; the second is that “the sensible mark can always be repeated outside its original context”, and this “puts the identity of that intelligible content in jeopardy”. Hence, Hart states that “pure presence has never been given to consciousness: all we can say is that it is a trace of a presence” that is used to repeat the dual reality – the phenomenal and transcendental. This reminds us of the simple patterns summarised by Llewelyn: “not-this-but-that”, and “both-this-and-that-and-neither-this-nor-that”. So différance, absence, and death are prior to presence and life; “the other” is privileged to “the same” or “identity”; the improper is more popular than the proper; and the sensible is more favourable than the intelligible. The list of binary pairs can be expanded endlessly. Hart calls this “trespass of the sign” “one instance of the general mode of critique known today as ‘deconstruction’.” Having known the relationship between deconstruction and theology, which is “religion without religion”, I would use the structure of the sign in the second subsection of

620 Ibid., p. 3.
623 Ibid., p. 12.
624 Ibid.
625 Ibid., pp. 24-25.
626 Ibid., p. 12.
this section to deconstruct binary pairs in some of Hart’s poems to show how the poet is indebted to Derrida, the forerunner and pillar of the movement of deconstruction, and how his poems are proximate to deconstruction or “religion without religion” in its first stage.

In the second stage of deconstruction, “religion without religion” is embodied in the structure of coming, through the promise “‘within the promise’”, which has similarities to the projects of some other thinkers, in addition to those of Pseudo-Dionysius and Meister Eckhart. This is seen in two ways. On the one hand, we have seen that St John teaches the devout to attain their “rebirth and sonship” through denuding the self’s appetites. Bataille emphasises the importance of the self’s death and desire through which one can gain “continuity of being”; Levinas aims at “being-for-the-other” substitution or transcendence of the self’s own death to reach “exteriority”; and Derrida is also interested in both the “death” and “absence” of “the other”, which is fundamentally different from the “deaths” that these writers maintain, for theirs substantially involve the death of the self, as it involves the construction of selfhood. The death that Derrida holds is not the death of the self or death happening in “ordinary time”, but rather in “messianic time” or “neutral time”. When “death” happens in “messianic time” it becomes “dying”, for it is ‘Not I die, but it dies, le “il” in me is dying’, and “the other’s dying”, which is “the anonymous rumbling of the neuter within me”. When Derrida calls viens, oui, oui, he calls for the “other” or “the impossible” to come. Thereby, “a text is always ‘open’, its sense always both in arrival, to come (à venir) and in a process of retroactive constitution by the accidents of its ‘future’.”

Unlike Bataille, who said that [he] lives as though he were dying,” or Edvard Munch’s words “‘I was born dying’” [199], Derrida is sure to agree with Blanchot’s slogan: “‘I’ [‘je’] die before being born” which shows that “selfhood” is insubstantial and “divided from itself”; since Derrida’s sense of “death”, “dying”, and “coming” inextricably involves Blanchot’s “the step not beyond (le pas au-delà)” and “A Primal Scene?” as “Blanchot is a crucial source, particularly inasmuch as he is a secular and not a biblical source, of Derrida’s viens (as also of the logic of the sans and of the pas)”, and as “[m]uch of Derrida’s ‘originality’ in relation to the literary lies in readings of ... Blanchot which can have the result of making his ‘own’ work seem derivative”.

To come to the point, “dying”, for Blanchot, as for Derrida, “is what precisely bears the structure of le pas au-delà”: “Dying’ is le pas au-delà in the double sense of pas”: “(1) the step beyond, the transgression or transcendence, exposing the present to what is coming; (2) the not beyond, no beyond, the prohibition of transgression: no going beyond, pas au-delà, for dying can never mean being actually, decidedly dead.” When the step or pas is taken, “the

631 K. Hart. ‘Introduction’. [The material was provided by Kevin Hart.] / Caputo, The Tears and Prayers. p. 84.
633 Ibid., p. 84.
635 Ibid., p. 134.
636 Bataille, Eroticism Death and Sensuality, p. 263.
639 Caputo, The Prayers and Tears, p. 77.
641 Caputo, The Prayers and Tears, p. 82.
other” or the “otherness” of “the other” is sure to come, as is explained by Blanchot in ‘A Primal Scene?:

(A Primal Scene?) … this child – is he seven years old, or eight perhaps? – standing by the window, drawing the curtain and, through the pane, looking. What he sees: the garden, the wintry trees, the wall of a house. Thought he sees, no doubt in a child’s way, his play space, he grows weary and slowly looks up toward the ordinary sky, with clouds, grey light – pallid daylight without depth.

What happens then: the sky, the same sky, suddenly open [sic], absolutely black and absolutely empty, revealing (as though the pane had broken) such an absence that all has since always and forever more been lost therein – so lost that therein is affirmed and dissolved the vertiginous knowledge that nothing is what there is, and first of all nothing beyond. The unexpected aspect of this scene (its interminable feature) is the feeling of happiness that straightway submerges the child, the ravaging joy to which he can bear witness only by tears, an endless flood of tears. He is though to suffer a childish sorrow; attempts are made to console him. He says nothing. He will live in the secret. He will weep no more.

In Blanchot’s “A Primal Scene?” the child exists in “messianic time” from which he enters the neutral space or “the Outside”. Here, I would further explain the word “messianic”. It is derived from “the Messiah”, 643 or “messianism”, 644 and two other important expressions related to them are “messianic time” and “messianic structure”. In “messianic time” time is different from “present time” or “living time”. So “messianic time” has its synonyms “other time”, “neutral time” through which one enters “neutral space” or “the Outside”. As a result of the entrance, the conscious subject or selfhood becomes hollowed out or insubstantial in “messianic time”, which also involves the process or structure of the Messiah’s coming. This structure is called the “messianic structure”. I shall give further explanations of these terms at their proper places in the following subsections.

In this “messianic time” the child

does not experience a sudden loss of self in ecstatic union with the deity but rather realizes that selfhood (and the identity, presence and unity it assumes as form, ground or horizon) has been immemorially lost, forever divided from itself …

Always and already fissured, the self has never been substantial.

Here the meaning of “death” has completely changed, as it becomes a pronoun rather than a noun with the function of an action. It may indicate “the other”, or whatever is the sacred or imaginary, is what interrupts “ordinary time”, and impinges on the consciousness as “a mode of presence” which is “always already past” and “yet to come”, 646 and the process of the coming of “death” is called “dying”. In other words, the child experiences the other’s “dying” which is “the

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incessant imminence whereby life lasts, desiring. The imminence of what has always already come to pass. When the child communicates with “the neuter” or “the Outside”, what he perceives is some kind of image or resemblance, which is being without being, experience without experience, as everything that happens is within the self and interiority.

Derrida’s sense of “death” and “dying” is similar to Maurice Blanchot’s “the step not beyond”, as Caputo observes:

The arrival of what is to come (the coming of the Messiah) is nothing we can control or master, nothing over which the self has any authority or powers of disposition, nothing the self can actively bring about but something summoning our deepest passivity. The step beyond, le pas au-delà, the pas-sage, the transcendence, or the “transgression,” is not a step the self takes; transgression is not aggression. The step beyond is not an action and not an ordinary passion but … a passivity more passive than passivity.

Take the “presence” of meaning in a text for example. The meaning decoded by a reader often falls from or disconnects with the original meaning that an author wants to convey, but it still comes – not within “the horizon of expectation”. Hart, in his new edition of The Trespass of the Sign, comments vividly on the coming of “the other” or the meaning or “death” in texts: “It is as though each text has a tiny hammer, hidden deep inside, that can hit the author’s intention, bend it a little, and send his or her text astray.” Thereby, there is no definite meaning for a text, no final meaning can be reached until the Apocalypse or “death” comes in “messianic time”. Even when “death” comes, what it opens onto is “impossibility” or “the impossible” which is called “dying”. In this transcendental structure, an assured or “singular destination” is disturbed, and one lacks a definite vision of what comes, and the future or “messianic time” can be only achieved “through a time of hope and faith and blindness, of the passion of a blind faith.” Even if it arrives in “messianic time” and “a neutral space”, it comes with an image of “an empty repetition, the eternal return of what never truly begins and never remains itself”, and it is the image that “fascinates us with the absence of being, and because it offers us no end it can be regarded as the very space of dying”. However, it is prohibited or blocked from coming and turning into the order of identity and presence. Alternatively, the messiah would lose its significance and the idea of the messianic would be ruined and destroyed.

Again, the structure of coming is related to theology, but it is fundamentally different from that of negative theology. Like negative theology, which has its “promise”, deconstruction is a kind of promise, promising something like différance or “wholly other”, and anything other than “the same” or “identity” to come. Unlike negative theology that only gives a definite promise that is “to lead one beyond being to the immediacy of a presence, to God”, the promise given by

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648 Caputo, The Prayers and Tears, pp. 81-82.
652 Caputo, The Prayers and Tears, P. 92.
654 Ibid., p. 67.
Derrida’s *différance* is “within the promise”\(^{655}\) or a “step not beyond”, for it is not the self but “the other” that transcends and transgresses the living identity and present and comes to my door through “messianic time” and the “neutral space”. In addition, the coming of “the other” promised by deconstruction may indicate anything other than “the same” – “The other is God or no matter whom, more precisely, no matter what singularity, as soon as any other is totally other [*tout autre est tout autre*].”\(^{656}\) But negative theology is committed to “the higher affirmation of God or Godhead beyond God” while deconstruction is a different case, no matter how “highly Derrida esteems it (God)”\(^{657}\). Hart has a similar statement: “God” in negative theology “is understood to constitute a transcendental ground because he is pure self-presence; but *différance* is transcendental yet cannot constitute a ground because it must always differ from itself.”\(^{658}\)

Hence, there is, without such a “ground”, “no self-presentation nor assured destination” and “[t]he step beyond is not beyond; the step beyond is never complete; the step that is completed is never beyond”.\(^{659}\) Deconstruction repeats the structure of the divine’s coming in negative theology without reference to religion as institutional dogma, without God as its transcendental ground. Everything happens inside and within itself. This is why deconstruction can be called the “religion without religion”.

Deconstruction is a passion for the impossible, the “wholly other”, the original, the sacred, or whatever can be named as “the other”. When Derrida calls “the other” to come, we do not know when the other comes and in what manner it comes, for “the incoming of the other, the coming of something we did not see coming, … takes us by surprise and tears up our horizon of expectation.”\(^{660}\) The coming of “the other” is just like what comes or opens to the child in Blanchot’s “A Primal Scene?” which “determines and overdetermines a narrative space: between the dead and the living, writer and reader, child and adult, inner and outer, this world and a possible beyond”.\(^{661}\) Therefore, in the third and fourth subsections, I shall demonstrate, through reading some of Hart’s poems, how the “otherness” of “the other”, “the impossible”, “the imaginary”, and “the sacred” continually come in “messianic time”, in “the neuter”, “the Outside”, in some “chance” contexts in a surprising and unusual way. My immediate concern is how the structure of the sign functions in deconstructing binary pairs.

### 2. Application of the Structure of the Sign in Deconstructing Binary Pairs

**a. Two strategic methods**

We have seen that the relationship between deconstruction and theology lies not in thematics but largely in the structure, that the absence or the death of God leads to a chain of consequences, and that Adam’s Fall from innocence to experience leads to the fall of the sign, and then the fall

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\(^{659}\) Caputo, *The Prayers and Tears*, p. 96.


\(^{661}\) Hart, *The Dark Gaze*, p. 52.
of language, and further to many other falls. As for the impact of the Fall, Hart has summarised it as follows:

... we fall from an undifferentiated knowledge of good to a differentiated and fatal knowledge of good and evil. From God’s presence we pass to His absence; from immediacy to mediation; from the perfect congruence of sign and referent to the gap between word and object; from fullness of being to a lack of being; from ease and play to strain and labour; from purity to impurity; from life to death.  

The impact of the Adamic Fall is far from being over, as “the list could be extended indefinitely”. Due to the Fall, the sign cannot represent the original meaning or concept purely and simply, and the sign’s original meaning becomes ambiguous and indefinite. The ambiguity and indefiniteness result from two modes of repetition: the repetition of the sign’s originating presence and the repetition of the sensible signifier out of contexts.

The two modes of repetition are riveted on two strategic methods when a binary opposition is deconstructed: “reversal and displacement”. Deconstructing a violent hierarchy in traditional philosophical oppositions is not to neutralise the binary oppositions of metaphysics but to reverse the order of the two items. As the “reversal and displacement” happen in the opposing binary pair of “the conscious” and “the unconscious” in which the priority goes to the second item, “the unconscious”, the positions of the two items in other pairs are changed or subverted. In other words, Derrida’s deconstructing of a binary opposition involves two phases. The first phase, in Derrida’s words, is “‘[t]o deconstruct the opposition ... is to overturn the hierarchy at a given moment’” and to “‘bring[s] low what was high’”, as quoted by Hart. As a result, the positions in such binary pairs or oppositions as good / bad, man / woman, speech / writing, mind / body, nature / culture, presence / absence, the same or identity / the other, central / peripheral, and so on, have been reversed. In this phase, the primacy of the first items no longer exists and they do not hold the superior position, for the primacy goes to the second items: “bad”, “woman”, “writing”, “body”, “culture”, “absence”, “the other”, “peripheral”. In this way the traditional hierarchy is overthrown. So the “not-this-but-that” pattern in the first phase leads to the second phase of “both-this-and-that-and-neither-this-nor-that”. The second phase involves différance and “dissemination”. In other words, “the winning term is put ‘under erasure’”. Différance between the two items “is shown as difference within” them. Dissemination makes the second item propagate and become traces. Therefore, through différance, dissemination, and trace, the text is loosened; the “undecidable moment” of it is disclosed; “the resident hierarchy” in the binary oppositions of metaphysics is reversed and displaced; and a new constitution of

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663 Ibid., p. 5.
opposition is established. The strategic way of deconstructive reading becomes an efficient method in deconstructing the binary oppositions in some of Hart’s poems.

b. The application of the strategic methods
‘Beneath the Ode’ [160] is a typical poem exemplifying the structure of signs, for the two kinds of repetition with a dual reality are well demonstrated in the poem. Firstly, we see the description of the phenomenon: “Just there, beneath the ode, a speck of dust”, a simple line showing a common phenomenon, which is the original presence in its original context. The “ode” and the “speck” form a binary opposition within the hierarchical order of metaphysics. Traditionally, the first item of the binary opposition between the “ode” and the “speck” is “privileged” and the second item is regarded as less important. Something “beneath the ode” seems to be rather minor and insignificant when it is compared to the “Ode” or poem proper. The “speck” or “spot” appears to be incoherent or disunified, and has minor importance when compared to the main idea or content of an ode or poem. It is true that the speck or spot is so trivial that it hardly worth noticing or mentioning. The “Ode”, like Nature which is God’s book, “is totalised by a consciousness” 669 and it seems to have an organic whole, whereas the “speck of dust” or “spot” seems to challenge the metaphysical concept of the “ode”, for the “speck” is made by nobody, or is spilled like a drop of water by an accident or disseminated like a grain of sand or a seed in the wind.

The reader with the order of metaphysics in mind normally concentrates his or her attention on the “Ode” rather than on something “beneath the ode”. He is a passive receiver, accepting the content or idea conveyed by the author. In contrast, a postmodernist reader is now a creator, creating the meanings through the context and information in a text provided by the author. Due to the differences, the poet, like a postmodernist or deconstructionist dwells on such minor things as “a speck of dust” or “a spot of ink” and expands it by making it become an interesting topic, no matter how paltry or negligible it is. Indeed, the “thing” or “speck of dust” is a matter of interest to deconstructionists, as it belongs to things on an edge or margin, which has the characteristic of ambiguity and indefiniteness. The poet elaborates and expands minor and negligible things and makes a deconstructive reading of them, explores and foregrounds the multiplicities of their meanings and causes the prioritisation of the second item, the “speck”, as we see that the speaker in the poem is more interested in it:

Now that you look up close,
It is a word. Quick magnify the thing! [160]

Having completed the first phase of deconstruction, the poet moves to the second phase in which the “speck” is “under erasure” through “différance” and “dissemination”. Now the “speck” is put “under erasure” through repetition out of its original context. First, the “speck” appears to be “A spot of ink”, and then “It is a word”. When it is put under a magnifier, it tells him a different story, which turns out to be

… two words, no, three or more,
All blowing up like helium balloons [160].

Putting the speck in various contexts, the poet at first makes the paltry speck become prominent, and then inflated and swollen, likening it to “balloons”. Further, the poet personifies the thing through the description of an accident: when you are eagerly and anxiously jotting down the word or words, “your hand” becomes so unsteady and shaky that “you” drop the “glass”, resulting in another interesting phenomenon:

The words all shrivel to a dot again

As though graffitied on a baby’s eye [160].

After that, the poet emphasises its importance by giving a negative answer to the humorous question – a naughty “angel pausing from the dance?” – and making it clear that the “speck” or “spot” is everywhere – it is not limited to one or two books. The “speck” is further multiplied through the following two rhetorical questions:

… was it always there but never seen,

Or has it come on just this summer day

Along with letters, clouds, a line of ants [160]?

Consequently, the true meaning of the “speck” is further deferred or delayed. Just like the linguistic Fall of the sign, the literal or original meaning of the “speck” becomes ambiguous and indefinite. Further then, the poet “displaces” or transfers his focus on to something else in this world by stating that

It is a strange strange world,

This one in which we live [160].

The repetition of the word “strange” shows the emphasis that the poet places on the unique or extraordinary feature of this world, which has been ignored or neglected by such institutions as the police and the church. The poet does not just end his poem here, and he extends his explanation of the “strange” features by grouping together such paltry things as the “speck of dust” or “spot” with insignificant but indispensable things, as asked in the questions:

Do state police answer the phone these days?
Is there a prefix for the Vatican? [160]

In spite of the insignificance of these questions or things, they can “multiply” and may cause effects that are beyond our expectations.

The two phases of deconstructing a binary opposition are also shown in other poems. ‘The Lines of the Hand’ [13] is one of them. As the opening poem of both New and Selected Poems and Flame Tree, ‘The Lines of the Hand’ is worth our particular attention. The reason for saying so is not merely because there is a binary pair in it: the present “me” and older “me”, or rather the presence and the absence, but because the poem reads like a manifesto rather than a descriptive poem, interrogating and negating the Western traditional metaphysics of presence, arguing that
there is no presence, no definite “me”; what is left is only the traces of “me”, declaring the poet’s argument through a first-person speaker:

It is foolish to look at the lines of my hand
And think that they reveal my future [13].

As we know, it is a kind of illusion of “presence” to rely on something fixed, such as the “lines of my hand” or a pattern or a system. According to the structure of sign, there is no definite meaning for “my future”, because the presence as a “sign” keeps falling – from the present “me” to the future “me” and this falling will not stop until the speaker’s death, just as the poem says:

That older man
Always turning round a corner just ahead [13].

Therefore, the first phase of deconstructing the binary opposition is completed: what is more important to the speaker is “that older man” or the older “me” or the absent “me” rather than the present “me”.

If the definite meaning of “my future” as the intelligible signified or *Logos* does exist, it can only appear in the form of *différance* and traces in which the definite meaning of “my future” is always deferred and delayed. So the speaker enumerates the traces in various contexts, or various aspects and phenomena at different stages of life, to see how the true meaning of “my future” is repeated and delayed endlessly. The speaker tries to do something to find the true meaning of “my future” as he says in the poem:

I have followed him for years,
Always trying to glimpse his face, trying to catch
Any word he has to spare, trying
To judge him from his taste in clothes [13].

But he cannot find it. Instead, he finds only traces of “that older man”:

… the room is full of him, mirrors stop me
And I see him: when I look outside
I see what he would see [13].

Although the speaker cannot find the intelligible signified from the phenomenal, and the present “me” is deferred and delayed continuously and endlessly, he believes that the transcendental or older me is closely related to the phenomenal or present me, for the “older me” does not exist without the present me. In fact, their relationship is so close that it just like “his hands clasped around my heart” shown in an “X-ray”; or one is “the sun” and the other is “the moon” and from them “two shadows” are cast simultaneously. Indeed, the true meaning of “my future” is so full of the complicated elements of materiality and difference that it is hard to make clear which is which. If he wants to make a choice between them, he always chooses “the wrong one to follow home”. Even at home, he can merely find “Blank paper, a pen, and the lines of my face” with many other traces, instead of the definite meaning of “my future”.
On the deconstruction of the presence and absence of certain things, such as the speaker’s future, Jonathan Culler presents an interesting analysis:

A deconstruction would involve the demonstration that for presence to function as it is said to, it must have the qualities that supposedly belong to its opposite, absence. Thus, instead of defining absence in terms of presence, as its negation, we can treat “presence” as the effect of a generalized absence or … of différance.\(^{670}\)

The presence of “my future” can only appear as traces through an “older man”. An important term used in deconstruction is “dissemination”. The meaning is just like seeds spreading in the wind; it is not known exactly where the seeds land. The meaning of “my future” cannot, therefore, be found in set places. It is like a farmer randomly spreading or “disseminating” seeds while “walking along” and “scattering seeds” with “broad sweeps of his arm”, many of them landing unpredictably or drifting in the wind, in Peter Barry’s words.\(^{671}\) The meaning of “my future” or “that older man” cannot be controlled, just as the seeds cannot be controlled in the wind, as it seems that “I” “can gain identity” of “my future” “though never self-identity”, in Hart’s words.\(^{672}\) The “I” never stops becoming old and is never old enough until death. In short, there is no full presence of “my future” and what is left is merely the traces cast in the process of the speaker’s becoming older and older.

The binary pair deconstructed is something about “me” or within “me”. Next we shall see how the poet memorialises his friendship with David Campbell through the deconstruction of the binary pair of “angels” and “cicadas”. Normally, “angels” have nothing to do with “cicadas”, but the poet, through his creative imagination, establishes a binary opposition through common attitudes towards them. In the poem ‘Thinking of David Campbell’ [139] “angels”, as God’s messengers, are traditionally highly respected, while insects like “cicadas” appear to be unattractive and repellent. Therefore, the “angels” become the first item and the “cicadas” the second item in the binary pair. To deconstruct the relation between “angels” and “cicadas”, the poet reverses the normal order between them. At first, we see that the “small bright angels” are lazing there, asleep high up in the trees whereas the “cicadas” are “still intoning”. The “angels” stay there, without a word to say. In contrast, the “cicadas” agitate and make their sounds as loud as they can. What is more, although the “angels have nothing much to say”, they still show their contempt for the “cicadas” by saying “‘Exceed the picayune’” (with the meaning “Let warm summer light flow through the soul for hours on end”) rather than listen to the cicadas’ “intoning”. In contrast with the “angels”, the “old cicadas drone their mass”, and keep singing their praise of God’s love and doing something that angels should do.

The “cicadas” become so important to the poet that he categorises himself and his friend Campbell with the creatures. The poet recalls an occasion when he and Campbell, another poet, on a hot day at a place with a pleasant view, were enjoying lunch while composing poems. Like the cicadas’ vigorous “intoning” in the hot weather, the two poets composed their “long fantasia” with “impromptu love”. Unlike the “angels” who would not open their “gold mouth(s)”, the two poets were eulogising common things in daily life with their poems or “long fantasia”. When they were doing so, the cicadas seemed to be accompanying them with their melodious and

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rhythmic tunes, which sounded just like Christians attending a religious service on Sunday in church, where people sing holy songs and have communion with God. The poet compares his meeting with his poet friend to Sunday’s religious service in church. Indeed, as he and Campbell had bread, drank wine and sang the songs or hymns they were composing, the “cicadas”, in contrast to the angels who were “listening” to them, were playing tunes to accompany the poets.

There is certainly more worth commenting on in the poem, but what interests me most is how the poet deconstructs the binary opposition between the “angels” and “cicadas”. The angels, or the first item, are not regarded as privileged – the primacy goes to the “cicadas”. The cicadas leave traces of their existence by continuously intoning, playing roles in the two poets’ composition of their poems. The poet identifies himself and his friend with the “cicadas”, thereby raising the importance of the “cicadas” to a new level.

It is noticeable that in Hart’s poems there are many other binary pairs or oppositions. Take those appearing in the ‘Dark Angel’ [138], for example. Before we enumerate the binary pairs in the poem, let us recall Bloom’s comments on this poem: “A lyric like ‘Dark Angel’, which has haunted me from the initial reading, has very few rivals in work by even the best contemporary American poets.”

The reason why the poem made such a deep impression on Bloom may, to a great degree, go to Hart’s expertly utilising the technique of deconstruction of the binary oppositions. In the poem the poet employs images to sing his praise for the second items rather than the first ones in the binary oppositions. For example, “the sound” is of “darkness” instead of brightness; “I heard you calling in the night” rather than in the day; “our” “poinciana” is not young but “old”, and it is not from heaven but “straight from hell” that “our old poinciana” grows; the water is “black” rather than pure and clean; the animals are not beautiful ones such as butterflies or birds but “mosquitoes” and “snakes” which are normally regarded as unwelcome and harmful. It is those things regarded as less important in the implied binary oppositions that stimulate the poet’s fascination and imagination, and hence he spends much space describing them.

In the third stanza, we are given a more detailed description of the second items in several pairs. Firstly, the time is “at night”, when the persona is in his half-sleeping and half-waking state, instead of in the daytime, when one is fully conscious. Secondly, it is “my” unconscious, or “something of me” in “my sleep” that “walked round and round and round” in an abnormal way “near that black water with its snags and snakes” rather than a complete or whole “me” that “walked” in some place in which everything is bright and clear. In the third place, we are told of the value of the “long low sounds”, which can “keep the grass alive”. If we compare this scene with that described by Shelley in ‘Ode to the West Wind’ it will be much clearer that the poet is describing things in negative or deconstructive ways. In Shelley’s poem, we read

\[
\text{Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow}
\]

\[
\text{Her clarion o’er the dreaming earth, and fill}
\]

\[
\text{(Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)}
\]

\[
\text{With living hues and odours plain and hill}^{674}
\]

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Shelley, filled with a kind of excitement, expects or predicts that a bright future for human beings will come, by presenting such attractive or colourful images as the “sweet buds” and “living hues” and so on. Hart, in contrast, describes things from a negative and mysterious, rather than from positive, point of view. More evidence can be found from Hart’s description of “you”. Although “you” cannot be seen physically, “you” can be perceived from some of the effects caused:

… you were there … a touch away,
Always about to pull the darkness back,
And there were always branches rustling hard
And tall reeds bending. Never any wind [138].

When “you” – the “Dark Angel” or, rather, a white angel, are under erasure – the traces of “you” appear to be abundant: “the sound of darkness”, “your calling in the night”, “perfume”, the sound of “fine mosquitoes” and “sound of water and the trees”, and “long low sounds”. The changes or transformations of “you” show the mysteriousness of “you” and “your” function, which take the reader to a new world, a kind of “wholly other” rather than this one.

c. Author, reader; book and text
The strategic way of deconstructive reading is also important in poems with implied binary oppositions, such as author and reader; book and reader; and centre and edge. Hart’s way of composing the poems is deeply resonant with Derrida’s exposition on these subjects. A brief discussion of the poems will further show Hart’s affinity and proximity to Derrida’s deconstruction.

It is traditional thinking that heroes make history, and historians write history, and what historians normally pay attention to is what is done by heroes, not the trivial things done by common people or the great majority. According to this, heroes and what they do belong to the category of the certain centre; whereas the great majority of people and what they do relate to things on the edge or border. In contrast, deconstruction believes that it is the great majority who deserve more attention from the historians rather than the so-called “hero”. As a deconstructionist represented by “the historian of silence”, the poet (or Derrida or Foucault) shows interest in things on the edge or border, and in the majority instead of the centre or the “hero”. This can be seen from Hart’s poem ‘The Historian of Silence’ [117].

Before we present an analysis of the poem, let us examine Hart’s explanation regarding the sense in which Derrida uses and analyses the word “Kant”:

Derrida uses the terms of Kant’s discourse on the frame to analyse how Kant frames the nature of judgment … Derrida fastens upon Kant’s discussion of borders and frames because the German word Kant means ‘edge’ or ‘border’ … [675]

Hart further explains: “The point of Derrida’s analysis, here as elsewhere, is to show that textual meaning cannot be delimited wholly and homogeneously – that is, cannot be totalised – from

within or without.”676 In other words, the “edge”, “border”, and the great majority are more privileged than the centre or the “hero” in the binary opposition.

The first few lines seem to tell us about a series of causal relations: the historian would rather “pay a fine” than “cast” his “vote”. The reason for his inability to cast his vote is that “he finds” “the polling booth” “always closed” to him and “His name is not on the roll”. Since he has to “pay a fine”, he notices both the feeling and the importance of money. What should be noted here is that “the historian of silence” may be willing to pay a fine for two reasons. On the one hand, according to the regulations he has to do so. On the other hand, he does not want to take part in casting a vote for a certain candidate. For once elected, the candidate is to hold an important position and he will be a “hero”. The historian would rather remain silent and let others cast their votes to select the “hero”. He would rather concentrate on trivial things that usually attract less attention. As it says in the poem, “he … likes the feel of bank notes in his hands”. In other words, “the historian of silence” is interested in how to write well “about big money”, and how it is important to those who are short of money, and how teenage prostitutes need money to buy the drugs or “smack” that keeps them alive. It is true that “no one bothers about those things”. Neither do writers or reporters want to write about them; they want to write about or report on great persons or heroes who have stronger appeal for the media. So no one cares about: “tart, thin smells / Of boiling overalls on Sunday walks”, which “never hit the papers”. No one shows interest in how the French country girls made food to feed hungry soldiers fighting on battlefields during the Second World War. Only those who were generals and marshals and what they did could attract attention.

The “historian” is different from those who pay more attention to greater persons, as it is just those inconspicuous things that attract him. The way a historian pays attention to things that are not eye-catching is illustrated by an algebraic equation in which the “x” can be any number, no matter how small or large it may be, and every number has its function and its value. As to this equation, no one has a better understanding than does “the historian of silence”, for “He sees the grand equation’s heart” – “x” allows “everything to show itself”. He wants to enhance, “amplify its beat”, heighten its importance, and let everything have its own say and play. His way of doing so is writing his “lucid prose” and arguing with friends on any topic. Nowadays, everything deserves being paid attention to, for “Nothing goes right for years” – a “marriage” cannot last long, and valuable traditions are easily neglected and forgotten. So all the things on the edge or border should have people’s attention too, and something should be done to make them better. Because of this, he writes that “bold, divisive opening paragraph” to make more people realise the importance of things on the edge or border instead of those at the centre.

“This historian of silence”, is none other than Derrida or Foucault,677 the forerunner of the theory of deconstruction. As a follower or supporter of Derrida, the poet also believes that deconstruction is just a beginning, for what he has written is only an “opening paragraph” and the main body of the long article is still in the process of being written. Although it is just a beginning, Derrida’s ideas have caused such a great sensation throughout the world that he has many followers and supporters. As it says in the poem, “his favoured students quote too much”.

676 Ibid.
677 K. Hart told me that he had M. Foucault in mind when he was composing this poem. September 2003.
This movement is continuing through the efforts of its supporters – “his pen moves silently across the page”.

The most conspicuous trait of deconstruction is seen in Derrida’s deconstructing the binary pair between book and text. The book is metaphysical and theological, as it is believed to be the “‘message’ of the Author-God”. The book is an organic and unified whole – it has its definite meaning, and it is totalised by the author’s intention or by the reader’s consciousness, as it is grounded in a pure self-preservation. The text is different from the book, and it is a Fall from the book, if it is applied in the structure of the sign. Firstly, the deconstruction is “aligned with the slogan – ‘God is dead’”. “A text is ‘a differential network, a fabric of traces referring endlessly to something other than itself, to other differential traces’.” So there is no book, and all writing is textual and resists totalisation. “All texts, accordingly, are composed of traces of moments of presence which can never be said to have presented themselves: Derrida’s point thus concerns phenomenal texts, but also the transcendental underpinnings of textuality.”

Derrida’s deconstruction of the binary pair is exemplified in the second part of the poem ‘The Sea’. Here there are two kinds of readers: one is “you”, a novel-reader, and the other a group of “children”, nature-readers. Although “you” are reading the novel, you are now and then attracted to the “book” of nature – the sea. When the “small boat sets off from the dock toward the open sea”, what “you” “read” or see is: the “blue of smoke in the distance”, a trace of nature. However, when “you” lower your head to read “the novel on your lap”, someone draws your attention back to the book of nature with an exclamation “whoosh”. And now what “you” see is: “The boat has finally cut the horizon and water is fountaining up …”, and the content is disclosed by children shouting: “A whale! A whale!”

The word “whale” can be regarded as a near homonym of the word “well”, for there is a vague similarity between the two words in regard to pronunciation. Clearly, a “well” means a spring or fountain. In fact, when “water is fountaining up” from a whale’s blowhole, it, indeed, is a kind of “endless” “play”. The traces of nature are just like water in a well or from a spring: they will never be exhausted or used up. So we can draw a conclusion that the text of nature is more readable than the book or novel, as the text is full of the traces of a trace.

Derrida’s deconstructing of binary opposition and the endless play of signs are found in another of Hart’s poems, ‘Reading at Evening’. There are two kinds of writing in the poem: book and text. From the title of the poem – ‘Reading at Evening’ – we can figure out the main elements forming the activity of the reading: the reader and the book or writing. In the poem we can find two kinds of reader, the “you” and the “cat”, and accordingly two kinds of writing: book and text. Through the description of the activity – reading at evening – the poet shows how congenial he is with Derrida’s standpoint on the author, reader and the book and text.

678 Hart, The Trespass, 1989, p. 34.
679 Ibid., p. 39.
There is a doctrine in deconstruction: “There is nothing outside of the text.” Upon Hart’s understanding, Derrida means that a text has nothing to do with “the reader’s or writer’s life” and “social and political concerns” as “all texts” are composed of traces of moments of presence. When the poet says in the poem that “… inside proofs that books do not exist”, he echoes Derrida through a pun, for the word “proofs” can either indicate part of the process of printing a book, or the factual evidence of the author’s background reflected in the book. If we understand it in the first way, we may change the line a little by saying that from the very beginning there is no book but the “text”; if in the second way, it is also tenable to say “There is nothing outside of a text”, for the “book” is regarded as a “text”, and the author’s background does not exist inside the “books”, or rather “texts”. Understanding it in this way, we can safely say that the Author-God is dead. So to “you”, who aim at finding the definite meaning, the book is difficult, as the “knowledge” of it is “difficult to grasp” – “as though” “its argument” “rested just behind the page”: it is not a traditional book but a text composed by a trace of a trace rather than a trace of presence.

However, the “cat”, as the other of “you”, is good at reading, for it has “thin eyes that pierce the liquid night”. In other words, the “cat” knows how to “play” with the traces or signs in the writing. The “cat”, unlike “you”, can obtain some traces from a momentary presence as if they were seen by the light of “a full moon” when it “looks down”, even if it “is sleeping on the cool verandah”: no difficulty at all for it to read the writing. For the cat, “the other”, is reading according to the way or “the standard metre” regulated by those theorists “In Paris” or in France like Derrida, Blanchot, and others who developed or “bath[ed]” “the standard metre” “in blue light, immaculate in glass” on the basis of forerunners. The “you”, as a traditional book reader, reads the book to the end, as a book has its beginning and ending. But the “cat”, as a representative of deconstructive readers, knows how to read a text, and how to “play” with the traces endlessly – “Outside, the cat is chasing its own tail”.

Through the above examples, we see that Hart, like Derrida, is a deconstructionist who pays more attention to the other side of reality which is presented through différance, dissemination, and trace rather than this side which belongs to the category of the same, identity, and the like. The deconstructive method embodied through the two phases of deconstruction applied in Hart’s work show that Hart participates in the school of deconstruction. Like a deconstructionist, the poet pays particular attention to something that is regarded as ‘less important’, and doubts and negates such things as the centre, definite meaning, truth and logos. But what concerns me most now is this question: Will Hart, like Derrida, keep deferring, delaying or playing in the way the “cat” “chas[es] its own tail”? The answer is both yes and no, because, as was mentioned earlier, the second stage of deconstruction is about promising the coming of “the other”, which also involves the strategy used in the first stage. This will be the topic in the following subsection in which the movement of “religion without religion” reaches its climax.

684 Ibid., p. 164.
3. “Messianic time” and the Structure of Coming

We have seen that Hart uses Adam’s Fall to illustrate the fall of the linguistic sign, which further results in a series of binary oppositions, and the deconstruction of these binary oppositions is divided into two steps: reversion and displacement. The traditional hierarchical order is reversed, and priority goes to the second item in a binary pair. It is evident that this traditionally less important item is “the other”, and when “the other” is under erasure, it appears to be the trace following a trace. Hence, the meaning of a sign, as an effect of \textit{différance}, is deferred and delayed ceaselessly. But in deconstruction, \textit{différance} does not merely mean endless deferral or delay, as it is also a kind of promise, promising the coming of “the other”; it is a kind of “passivity”, waiting for something to come passively; it is a kind of “passion”, being impassioned for and by the coming of “the other”. The promise given by deconstruction is similar to that given by negative theology, which promises ascension and union with God at some particular time, as the promise is related to certain special terms like messianicity, a general messianic structure or the structure of messianic time. The messianic structure has a desert-like feature of messianism: “without content and without identifiable Messiah”.\textsuperscript{685} The messianic idea testifies to “a certain structural openness, undecidability, unaccomplishment, non-occurrence, noneventuality”.\textsuperscript{686} Such a promise contained in the structure arrives at the heart of Derrida’s “religion without religion”.

The promise of the messianic structure cannot be given determinate and specific content; and the promise is not restrained to a particular area within the horizon of expectation. Otherwise, it would go against deconstruction’s idea of messianicity that is “to shatter horizons, to let the promise of something \textit{tout autre} shock the horizon of the same and the foreseeable”, because “messianicity is not a horizon but the disruption or opening up of the horizon.”\textsuperscript{687} Deconstruction and theology share this structure, and both are impassioned with the hope of having the full presence of the “wholly other” or the messiah, which never comes fully and definitely, and therefore what is left to do is to wait with “passivity”, “patience”, and “passion”, which lead and open to “the other”. The features of the structure of coming are of great assistance in understanding many of Hart’s poems.

In literary practice, Derrida’s or Blanchot’s structure of coming is deeply implicated with “messianic time”, which is “‘the other time’ of the impossible”.\textsuperscript{688} It is the time that disturbs and interrupts the living present with the presence of “death” or “wholly other”, “it interrupts the present and contests all its confidence in possibility. The secure foundations of the present are thoroughly shaken, and an “other time,” that of the impossible or the Outside, is announced.”\textsuperscript{689} During this time, we “find ourselves transfixed by the dark gaze of being transmuting itself into nothingness,” and “A catastrophe occurred in the very moment of creation: not a fall from an original fullness in which the pneum\textit{a} is nevertheless preserved but rather a fall from being into image”, as “the sheer presence of being is incarnated and turned into a hollow image of itself”.\textsuperscript{690} It reminds us of the story in Greek mythology in which Orpheus goes down to Hades to

\textsuperscript{686} Caputo, \textit{The Prayers and Tears}, p. 78.
\textsuperscript{687} Ibid., p. 118.
\textsuperscript{688} Hart, \textit{The Dark Gaze}, p. 102.
\textsuperscript{689} Ibid., pp. 98-99.
\textsuperscript{690} Ibid., p. 102.
save his beloved wife Eurydice after she died on their wedding day, bitten on the heel by a snake. Pluto agrees to release Eurydice on the condition that Orpheus is not to look back at her, when he leads her up to the upper world. On the way to the upper world, he does look at her, and therefore loses her again. Hart calls this Orpheus’ gaze, “the dark gaze”, which “brings death” – Eurydice – the image without being. It should be noted that Eurydice is not Breton’s “transcendental point”, but “quasi-transcendental” or “the profound dark point towards which art, desire, death, and the night all seem to lead”.

In some of Hart’s poems, the death is that “of another person, a friend – one’s own death is not one’s ‘own’, since it is not an experience, there is no self to experience it”, and his or her coming can only be perceived internally as images without being; and “death” can also be the impossible, the imaginary, and the sacred that keep coming or “dying” within the selfhood which needs the coming for its construction.

**a. The coming of the other as ghosts**

The messiah, wholly other, the imaginary, the impossible, and the sacred are something that both Derrida and Hart pray to come, but in their different ways – Derrida does this in theory while Hart does it in his poetry. As stated earlier, deconstruction’s messiah or tout autre does not indicate only God, and it may refer to anything that is wholly other or sacred or imaginary. For instance, the wholly other may appear to be the ghost or spectre of deceased people, with which both Derrida and Hart are fascinated. The spectre or ghost is neither present nor absent, but it disturbs or interrupts the identity of the living present, and tears open the circle of the present by haunting the living identity and presence. For Derrida, to treat or write well of them is a kind of “justice”, a “respect for those others who are no longer or for those others who are not yet there, presently living, whether they are already dead or not yet born”.

Caputo has the following explanation for justice: it means responsibility and we are responsible to the dead, to their dying and the heritage they have handed down though their death, as well as to the not yet born. The spirits of the dead constitute a flood of revenants, a revisitation of the so-called living present by the spirits of the past. But the present is disturbed no less by arrivants, by all those who are to come, and indeed by the revenant as arrivant, by what is to come as what is coming to us from the past, as repeatable.

To Derrida, “the other” has “the specific sense of the non-living”, that is, it may indicate the past or deceased people and the future generation to come or the younger generation: friends and family members. To Hart, “the other” means almost the same, as he expresses his “justice” by inheriting their legacy, and showing his feelings for them. And still, Hart passes the legacy to future generations through his poetry. There are quite a few poems showing how the poet gives “justice” to his late friends or past family members through mourning and interiorisation.

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695 Caputo, *The Prayers and Tears*, p.121.
696 Ibid., p. 123.
A typical poem about the spectre is the poem ‘Winter Rain’ (in memory of Vincent Buckley) [113]. The italicised words in the brackets below the title tell us that the poet, through this poem, commemorates his late friend. In the poem the speaker experiences “messianic time”, which is “the time that is out of joint”, “structurally ex-posed [sic] to an outside that prevents closure”. 697 In other words, the circle of the living present is broken open, and thereby the things within it become dislodged and open-ended, and the singularity of the other can come through the disjuncture. Here the messianic time appears in which the conscious subject encounters his late friend in a subconscious way:

Two weeks after the funeral, and yet  
I catch myself reaching for the phone  
About to dial your number [113].

Picking up “the phone” to “dial” his late friend’s number, the speaker experiences time that is “out of joint” or messianic time, which is different from “ordinary time” or “present time”. When time is “out of joint” or “unhinged from the gathering unity of the living present, disjointed and opened up to the specter of what is not there, … justice is possible”. 698 The speaker, in the disjuncture between the “ordinary time” and the “other time”, is controlled by his subconscious, and his self-possession or conscious self is dispossessed, as he completely forgets the fact that “you” have already left this world and repeats his habitual deed of dialling “your” number. At this “other time” of the impossible, the speaker finds himself “transfixed by the dark gaze” 699 in a space or extension between a memory and promise. In this space, the speaker perceives “the fall from being to images” 700: “a plural, mobile, dispersed way of being in relation”. 701 The poem tells us the “memory” and the “promise” of the coming of the late friend.

If there is something present, it is “Your photographs” on “the kitchen cupboard”, but they were “stuck on” it “several years ago”. Then, it is a memory or a legacy the speaker inherits from his late friend:

I used to think that death was some dark thing  
That followed people round. You taught me this,  
In dying, that it’s human, almost shy [113].

Further, it is the speaker’s tender feelings toward “this fraying collar, that hair upon my sleeve”. The reason he has such tender feelings “toward” them is because they are related to “you” or they were touched by “you”, and there still exist some invisible traces of “your” hands or finger on them. The poet cherishes or loves these precious traces, for they were left on the “collar” and “sleeve” when “you took me by the hand / And turned me to a larger, calmer world”. This world is a mysterious or ideal one, in which “everything is loved for what it is”. The poet, in fact, loves this world so much that

I want to stay here, in this other world,

697 Ibid.  
698 Ibid., p. 123.  
700 Ibid.  
701 Ibid., p. 103.
A moment longer – caught in a ray of light
With only dustmotes floating up and down [113].

“In this other world” the poet feels “at peace”, for there is no ugliness, no disturbance from the mortal world. The poet owes this to his friend who ushered him to “this other world”. The poet’s feeling for his late friend culminates in a description of “the winter rain” – the coming – which is just like the rain that “falls all day upon the mountain stream”, through which the poet seems to have seen the presence or coming of his friend – “everywhere and nowhere” like negative theology’s promise. The rain also reminds him of an old poem written by Tu Fu (Du Fu) about his (Tu Fu’s) feelings for his friend Li Po (Li Bai). (The friendship between the two greatest ancient Chinese poets is a favourite and popular tale in China.) The speaker, like Tu Fu, can do nothing but regret, wonder and dream:

Regretting the distance that separates them,
And wondering when they will meet again
And argue verse over a cask of wine [113].

The presence of Vincent Buckley as “wholly other” can only be found in the space opened up by “messianic time”, which is other than the living presence or “ordinary time” but the time “out of joint” which opens to the spectre that is not there and the images without being.

The coming of the spectre of Vincent Buckley is reminiscent of another ghost’s presence in ‘The Fragrance of Summer Grass’ [140]. The poem testifies to “messianic time” or the “other time” of “the impossible”, in which “A Primal Scene?” opens to the child who experiences “the sacred” or tout autre in “the Outside” or “the neuter”. In the poem the “messianic time” has the following description:

After being silent for the best part of a long hot day
The quiet will sometimes deepen
And the dog hours will slowly stretch themselves

And something inside relaxes too
As evening enters in its own sweet, fine and bluesy way,
And so it happens, once or twice [140].

From these lines we see that the messianic time described resembles Blanchot’s “A Primal Scene?” when it is opened to the child who experiences “the sacred”. So from the scene comes the “wholly other”, an old friend who died some fifteen years ago. The speaker, at this particular time, begins his communication with “the Outside”, believing that it is not right to say that the friend has already left him, for his friend approaches him like the fragrance or scent of the summer grass, which “touches me the moment it withdraws”. Here, we see that a definition of literature is testified to in the statement: “literature is a quest for a point, an obscure origin that comes into being only once the quest has commenced and that withdraws when approached”,702 Indeed, being exists in the image, but it is withdrawn or becomes absent, and it has no relation to

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truth or an actual event. In Hart’s words, although the image is “neither being or nonbeing”\(^{703}\), it never comes “in fullness” and always remains “completely without power”.\(^{704}\)

This is reminiscent of some other poems: ‘Winter Rain’, in which the poet compares the presence of his late friend Vincent Buckley to “the winter rain that falls all day upon its mountain stream” [113]; ‘Thinking of David Campbell’, in which the poet believes that the friendship between him and his late friend “will take strange freight on summer days … [and] Has entered my body”; the fourth part of the poem ‘Membranes’ [147–150], in which we see the coming of “G.H.” with her “dark face” through the train window – “It’s you … almost …” [150]. The ghosts’ coming is similar to God’s coming in negative theology – they are everywhere and nowhere. Their coming leads to internal changes or transformations, as it is promised that “it is a great calm that deepens in his name” [140]; G.H.’s “dying enters into you” [150], and it becomes a “gift” given by his late friends, and the gift or legacy is internalised and inherited by the speakers.

In the section on surrealism I mentioned that there are some mediums, such as a kind of scent, sound, mood, and atmosphere, which can serve as certain points separating the two dimensions of certain entities. These mediums appear in “messianic time” through which the speakers can perceive dual realities related to the poet’s late family members – his late mother and grandfather in ‘The Dressmaker’ [123] and ‘The Carpenter’ [124] – who become present to the speaker as a kind of scent or sound which cannot be touched but is perceived through smelling and hearing. The coming of the ghosts is through images without being – they are everywhere and nowhere. The presence of another late family member – Marion, his sister – also testifies to this proposition. From ‘For Marion, My Sister’ [56], we see how, “wholly other”, his late sister intervenes in or interrupts the speaker’s identity in the living present. In the poem, the presence of his sister is “from the faces older than the houses” – she is everywhere. When the speaker is “thumbing through” the “album” “to find the page before the cover”; or “say[ing] your name”; or seeing into “the mirror” – she is nowhere. All the gestures cannot make her present, but

    Tonight I feel you
    As our mother once felt you,
    Trapped in a cage deep within me,
    Beating steadily
    With articulate, insistent fists [57].

Marion, as “wholly other” or spectre, transcends the speaker and becomes present merely in the form of traces, and she can never become fully present in this world. The alterity of her transcendence to the speaker is infinite and indefinite. The speaker’s eagerness to know what can bring his sister back from the other world makes him strongly feel her existence and presence today.

It is the poet’s passion and faith that make messianic time break open “ordinary time”, and it is his love that causes the “wholly other” to take the step to come. Impassioned with a strong feeling of love for those late friends and past family members, the poet experiences messianic time and the neutral space. Accordingly, the poet’s interiorisation or internalisation of the

\(^{703}\) Ibid., p. 57.
“wholly other” results in the coming of “death” which keeps “dying” in “me”. In passivity the poet dwells on the coming images of the sacred or wholly other in his imagination. Here the tout autre is the ghosts or spectres, but the other can be be other things, as will be seen in the following subsection.

b. Open-ended coming of “the other”
Derrida esteems God, but différance does not regard God as the constitution of its transcendental ground as theology does, as différance is committed to something groundless or an image without being. Hence, there is “no self-presentation nor assured destination” and a step beyond is not beyond, or never complete, or never beyond. This suggests the dialectical relationship between “death” and “dying”. To understand the relationship better, it is necessary for us to read the poem entitled ‘The Horizon’ [29]. As early as the 1970s, the young Hart had already composed the poem foretelling not only his poetic talent but also his perfect understanding of Derrida’s and Blanchot’s theory on “death” and “dying”. It was mentioned earlier that the dialectic relationship of “death” and “dying” concerns the construction of selfhood, as Blanchot insists – an event or a thing is “doubled” or “resembles itself”; “it is doubled in its appearing, being both itself and its image.”

Hart utilises an allegory to make the abstract and profound theory on “death” and “dying” accessible and understandable through the relationship between the “horizon” as “death” and its constantly moving as “dying”. In the poem we read:

Whenever you take a step
I am with you leading you meeting your eyes [29].

The reality of the “horizon” is dual: the “horizon” itself and its image within the space between the “you” and the correspondingly moving image before the “you”. The “horizon”, as it has always and already happened,

…was here
Before the stone received its hardness [29],

and the “horizon” does not reassure us with a meaning and a truth, either, as the poem says: “How easily I shed the clothing / You try to give me”. As an image of “death”, the horizon keeps changing or “dying” without stopping for a second, as long as “you” move forward, and that is the reason why

You say I am only a line never reached
That I do not exist as you do [29].

The image of the “horizon” and the distance between the viewer and it, however, are always within the space and within the viewer’s sight. Just like “the step not beyond”, the viewer never surpasses or transgresses the line or “horizon”. However, it keeps coming or appearing before the viewer when he keeps moving towards it within a certain space without being able to reach it. The arrival of “death” as such would “retain[s] an element or structure of ineffaceable delay or postponement. Its distance is a measure of its imminence, it retreats the more one comes near to

705 Hart, The Dark Gaze, p. 66.
If the “horizon” is understood as “death” or “the possible”, and the image of the “horizon” appearing before the viewer when he moves towards it is “dying” and becomes “the impossible”, we can say that Derrida’s, Blanchot’s, and Hart’s senses of “death” and “dying” are the same, and “dying” happens within the space between a viewer and the “horizon”, and the space is opened by “death” rather than by the viewer.

A simple explanation of a person’s life from birth to death will make the relationship between death and dying much clearer. When a person is born or before he is born, his death exists there waiting for him. But during his life, it seems that he does not realise that his death or the horizon of his life is approaching at every second. In fact, he is dying all the time – countless cells of his physical body die every second until his death comes. Like Derrida’s and Blanchot’s sense of death as “wholly other”, Hart’s sense of “death” does not mean a person’s physical death, does not merely indicate God either, but the construction of selfhood: it consists of both “death” and “dying”. If one has a strong passion for the “wholly other”, “death” will come to him by prying open “messianic time” and keeps dying within the self. So the poem has the following lines:

Whenever you think of death,
Whenever you enter the room of someone gone from you,
I will be peering through the window.
I will catch you
Even though my net has just one string [29].

As it happens to the child in Blanchot’s “A Primal Scene?”, “think[ing] of death” or “enter[ing] the room” of the “wholly other” does not mean that “you” have undergone “a sudden loss of self”, but that realising “your” selfhood needs construction for it is insubstantial and “divided from itself”, and the “wholly other” would visit the “you” in “messianic time” and keeps dying in the self of “yours”. Like Blanchot’s or Derrida’s, Hart’s concern is to disclose an aspect of death that opens into “the impossible” which is called “dying”, for “[i]n dying, the horizon of the future is given, but the future as a promise of a new present is refused; one is in the interval, forever an interval”, and it is “death” that opens a space of “dying” in which being is absent from the image.

“The step (not) beyond (le pas au-delà)” decides the features of the coming of “the other”: “undecidability”, “structural openness”, and “unaccomplishment”, which are testified to in “messianic time” or the “other time”, which is not experienced or lived when one is in a conscious state, but is a particular time which may be a fleeting moment that is enjoyable and different from “ordinary time”, which may be “the dog hours” or when approaching sleep, when one is in the half-waking state in which “the other” or “wholly other” does not pass through conscious life. When that time interrupts the living present, the “wholly other” can be something other than a person, and it may be anything with the feature of “the impossible” which may come in a reverted way or in an open-ended way. When Derrida says to the other: ““come–yes”” he does not indicate exactly what comes, just as he says: Who knows? “Je ne sais pas, Il faut croire

– before which we can only say viens, oui, oui.\textsuperscript{710} But how does the “wholly other” come and when does it come? The answers can be found in some of Hart’s poems when the structure of the coming is applied in the reading.

In the section on negative theology, we have seen, from three of Hart’s poems – ‘The Word’ [159], ‘The Gift’ [120] and ‘The Letter’[114] – the largeness of “the Word” which dominates a person’s whole life, the generosity of God – He keeps sending abundant “gifts” to this world – and the huge content of “the letter” He has written to His creations. I was arguing that the grandeur of the “Word”, the generous “gifts” and the huge “letter” with enormous contents are the origins of all other words, gifts and letters, and their contents keep coming all the time. Their ways of coming are just like the Word that Hopkins describes – making the world “charged with the grandeur of God” with rich content – and like the “gift” George Herbert describes in his poem ‘Gratefulness’\textsuperscript{711} which comes generously and abundantly – “Gift upon gift, much would have more, / And comes” – and that they are from the highest being – God. So the structure of the coming delineated by negative theology can also be applied to the “Word”, “gifts”, and “letter”, which represent God and “death”, and their coming or moving can be regarded as “dying”. The dual realities described in the poems ‘The Black Telephone’, ‘Approaching Sleep’, ’That Bad Summer’, ‘The Pleasure of Falling Out of Trees’, ‘Winter Rain’, and ’Reading at Evening’ have some similar features, and they can be regarded as “death” and their continuously coming as “dying”. The only difference is that the “word”, “gifts”, and “letter” are from the highest being of theology, while the things described in the poems are from the \textit{différence} of deconstruction.

Like the content of the “word”, “gifts”, and “letter” from God, what comes from deconstruction’s promise is indeterminable and open-ended when “messianic time” is broken open. The “messianic time” in ‘The Pleasure of Falling Out of Trees (for Emily Kratzmann)’ [112] is only “two seconds” – the duration of “falling out of trees” – promising “everything to come”:

The pavement crazy with the shadows of birds,  

A rush of blue, some goosebumps on your arm,  
The smell of lemons mingling with rich heat. [112]

The “two seconds” are short, but they pry open the ordinary or lived time of grown-ups, who have many things to worry about:

There are thick books just begging to be read,  
Conflicting views about the State to ponder,  

And endless fashions in clothes and French cuisine  
That must be taken seriously one day [112].

\textsuperscript{710} Caputo, \textit{The Prayers and Tears}, p. 74.  
On the contrary, the child enjoys boundless “pleasure” when she falls out of a tree, as the structural coming is open-ended: the pleasure keeps coming, which is likened to the “falling” of the “spring rain”. The traces of the “otherness” of “the other” are seen in the following lines: “… we would come close / To what it is”, “We could live quietly with one another”, and we would not worry that our civilisations might be destroyed from this world, if we could do that (falling out of trees). To the “grown ups”, what the “two seconds” promise to come belongs to the “wholly other”, “the impossible”, and the other truth. The serious things that they engage in are nothing when compared to a child’s “pleasure of falling out of trees”. So the importance of the “otherness” of “the other” – innocence and light-heartedness – is highlighted.

“The other” is also found in evidence in the poem ‘Peniel’ [115] in which Hart searches for somewhere that is “not here” through the state of an unborn child. Since the background of the poem is “not here” – not this world – it must be there – the other world:

… where moonlight chills the lemon tree
And makes a warmth out of the simplest touch [115].

The “obscure point” connecting here and “not here” is the sound from “a radio” that “sings Blues”. From this transcendental “point”, the speaker seems to enter a neutral space in which the original place or time seems to have returned to him. The transcendental “point” points him to “the impossible”: then and there the speaker seems to have become his mother’s child again:

She quietly sings to me all day all night,
A name I never heard till now, a name
She whispered months before I was born [115].

What his mother sings to him is a kind of love or a kind of nameless love – the sacred. The poet combines mother’s love with God’s love, for the “stories” from “Genesis” come to the speaker “like a rainbow at evening”. In Genesis, Jacob, who wrestled with God, was renamed by Him. Like Jacob, Hart “longs to take another name”. Like Derrida, “I don’t know” what “help” the names that he wishes for can give. In other words, the poet is not sure of what might come to him. But when he enters “messianic time” he does find something coming:

And doze again, as hearing my name sung,
A name no one has ever called me by,
Half me and half a child I never was –
My mother’s child [115].

It is not difficult to see that the dog hours belong to “messianic time”. In this passive state, “messianic time” opens to what is coming:

I wake sometime round four
And find the moonlight sleeping on my cheek [115].
With the passivity, the speaker experiences the coming of the Messiah or His blessing symbolised by “the moonlight” which is coming without cease. As for the answer to the question “when exactly does it come?” we may borrow Derrida’s answer: “I don’t know – I don’t see – one must believe (je ne sais pas – je ne vois pas – il faut croire).”  

A dual reality is found in the poem ‘Gypsophila’ [95], in which there are two parallel worlds. One is “the possible”, and the other “the impossible”. The picture presented in the first four lines is the possible world as such: the child is watching gypsophila in a pot, her own light breath is the only movement in the air. While watching the flowers, the child enters a space reminiscent of Blanchot’s “A Primal Scene?”, messianic time, and opens the structure of the impossible world’s coming. In other words, the lovely potted plant, “gypsophila”, with slender stems and branches dotted with many small white flowers, attracts the child, making her “see” the impossible world or “the strangest possible worlds” in which “Her shadow” is

… sleeping on the wall, the rain  
That pins fat clouds to earth all afternoon,  
A river playing down the piano’s scales [95].

The continuous coming or changing of the world is likened to “gypsy camps” or repeated “love”: “Like gypsy camps or love, it must be made, / Undone, then made again”. Then it is likened to the uncountable “chill rain”:

… like the chill rain  
That falls without hope of climbing back,  
Content to leave its mark, for what it is,  
Upon the window or in the child’s mind [95].

At this stage we can say that the “child”, like the “boy”, encounters “the ‘there is’, il y a, the eternal rustling of nothingness” with the incessant and interminable coming of death, or dying, or “infinite murmur” of being which is hollow and without power. The messianic promise of the Messiah’s coming is just like the exile of “gypsy camps” which cannot be fixed or settled down in one place. The same is true of “the world” which is so different and has so many phenomena that it is like the drops of “rain outside”.

Now the poet stops his imagination by describing the actual situation or “the possible”: the gypsophila sits on the table, and it rains outside while the child watches the potted plant, framing and dreaming a world according to her own likes or “desire” so that she can keep it in her mind. It is noted that the child’s breath promises more to come:

These breaths of air in which we softly wrap  
The rain’s glass stems to let them fall again  
In sunlight, or flower for ever in the mind [95].

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713 Hart, The Dark Gaze, p. 57. Also see note 24 on page 252 of the book.  
The two goals seem to be absurd and impossible, which are followed with more impossible phenomena:

The child must take the lightening from her eye

And place it in the sky, her shadow must
Be told to fall asleep … [95]

The poem begins from a child’s watching the potted plant – “gypsophila” – and ends up with her falling asleep. The duration of the time is not long, but the poet grasps the time to express his aspiration for the impossible world and make it come.

The same pattern of the messianic structure of the other’s coming exists in the poem ‘Approaching Sleep’ [98]. “Messianic time” is the time of approaching sleep. The dual reality is embodied through “the possible” and “the impossible”. “The possible” is exterior reality: the sleeper, “you”, who are lying in bed, in a half-waking state, suffering insomnia: different sounds are coming continuously to “you” and beating “upon your ear”. “Those crooked sounds” include “the footsteps in the attic”, “the train’s blind whistle” and others. The sounds come from the outside whereas another kind of sound comes from the inside of “your” body: “your” heart beating. The rhythmic beating of “your heart” makes “you” feel that the beating is like drops of “water from a tap”. In this half-waking state, “your” subconscious begins working and makes “the impossible” come. In “your” dream, “you write a letter of complaint to God” but “you” don’t know where to send the letter, for “you” have forgotten God’s address. What is complained about in the letter? It is exterior reality that is complained about, as it is “crooked”, “blind”, and “dead”. The repellent exterior reality is compared to “a winter lake / After the heavy rains”, which is cold, dark, wet, and slippery, and the “days” are likened to “a Chinese box” with one within another.

Since reality is distasteful and unpleasant, then what is real? And what is pleasant? The poet tells the reader:

If anything is real it is the mind
Approaching sleep, listing the tiny bones
Within the ear: anvil, stirrup, hammer …[98]

The image with “the tiny bones” does not have any particular meaning, and it is an image absent from being, or just “a murmur” or “a tremor”.715 What does make sense is the process of “listing” the “bones” in the half-waking state. During the process, the functions of these “tiny bones” listed are displaced, and they have become the small parts of “a lady's watch”, and the succession of sounds given off seems to have been transformed into several sorts of sound:

Within the ear, a fine Dutch miniature

…. 
A small boy playing on a smaller drum,
Old women who darn their shadows again each dusk [98].

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The coming of “the impossible” through displacement continues when the dream goes on: “a monster in the labyrinth” appears, which has some features of “shadow” – it is “behind you, when you walk” or “I follow you, you follow me” [78]. When “you” have heard the different sounds and experienced the visions, the dream seems to come to an end, as the displacement happens again. This time “That angry letter you wrote to God returns / Addressed to you, but now means something else” [98], and the original addressee of the letter becomes an addressee.

There is no poem that makes the concepts of “death” and “dying” so clear as ‘The Black Telephone’ [118]. When “dying” becomes a process of “the incessant and interminable approach of death”, the telephone turns into “the transcendental point”, from which the speaker enters the neutral space, and this point “inaugurates the artwork and renders it interminable” and “isolates” “a past unrepresentable to any consciousness.” It is through the “point” that the poet renders the unknown or unknowable origin accessible to the subconscious, making the impossible past come to the possible present, and making the “death” or the dead keep appearing or “dying”.

One of the dead from whom the speaker seems to hear a message is “the Duke of Cumberland”. “The Duke of Cumberland” was the person who provoked the great massacre at “Culloden Moor” in Scotland, where countless innocents were slaughtered in 1746. Another of the dead from whom the speaker gets the message is his late mother, who announces to him “the anniversary of her death”. There are still other images of the dead or past things flashing across his mind in the dream – “old relatives in the photo albums”, “the knotted streets of Leeds” where he “was lost” and so on. All these images are like bits and pieces or fragments gushed out freely and unconsciously into his memory. The night is a special “black night” – it is filled with mysterious and “secret truths” that are revealed through “the black telephone”. These messages from the dead or death want to be revealed urgently but they can only appear as hollow images without being. Although this is so, the “emptiness” “longs to” be talking or dying in “the Outside” that is negative, neutral, and mysterious.

The message from the black phone, or “there is (Il y a)”, continues all the time without cease:

An emptiness that longs to talk to you,
And say, ‘Well, first you must do this, then this …’

But still that telephone rings in the dark [118].

In the neutral space opened by “death”, “dying” continues, as more messages are coming from the phone, and the structure of coming is open-ended. Like the “Winter Rain”, the “moonlight”, the “pleasure” resulting from “falling out trees”, the messages from the phone have the features of “structural openness, undecidability”; like the “cat” that “is chasing its own tail”, “that little man” who is “still puffing door to door” and selling “jars of human breath”; the “map” is still spreading [107], and the “pen” of “the historian of silence” remains moving “silently across the page”. The messages from the phone continue pouring out with no ending. It is noted that all the messages are received with the passivity that deconstruction aims for. But deconstruction is also a kind of passion, and this will be dealt with in the following part.

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716 Hart, The Dark Gaze, p. 112.
717 Ibid., p. 64.
c. Making “the other” come

Deconstruction is both passivity and passion. The passion is for “the impossible” and transcendence, which open to “the other” and to what is coming. Derrida’s desire and passion for “the impossible” seem to have no fundamental difference from apophatic theology’s desire and passion for the Deity, as shown in Derrida’s adamant tone of “the possibility of the impossible, of the ‘most impossible,’ of the more impossible than the most impossible”.718 But when deconstruction groups God into the category of tout autre719, and when the event or the other in deconstruction comes in “messianic time”, neither the Deity nor the Messiah is its highest being, for deconstruction repeats the religious passion for God with difference, and it is an apocalypse without apocalypse, a “religion without religion”.

The passion for the coming of “the other” is shown in one’s efforts to make the other come, as “everything in deconstruction turns on the constellation of venir and à venir, viens and invention, l’avenir and événement.”720 The process of making “the other” come basically starts from one’s ignorance. Like Hart’s experience of “the word of God”, which “commences only when nothing is visible”,721 that is, in darkness or ignorance, deconstruction engages in the coming in of the other by “shut[ting] knowledge down in simple ignorance” “to keep the possibility of the impossible open, to keep the future open, to have a future, which means something to come”.722 Deconstruction’s ways to make “the other” come are seen from reading some of Hart’s poems, and the process of coming involves invention in several ways: by doing something impossible, like making a rat, selling, and buying something that does not exist.

We remember Abulafia’s instruction given to the Israelites on how they should be prepared for the coming of God: to be in solitude, with respect, “in joy of gladness of heart”, and how Hart treats “death” in a contemptuous way.723 Now, to prepare himself for the coming of “the other”, Hart does, according to Derrida’s teaching, “the impossible”724 with passion and desire. Namely, Hart experiences the coming in of the impossible by inventing or making a rat and selling and buying “the impossible”.

There is a binary pair related to “invention”: invention of “the same” and invention of “the other”. On the one hand, the invention of the former is something that is programmed, imagined, and foreseen, and some results can be brought about with a certain amount of work. On the other hand, the invention of “the other” or “wholly other” is a deconstructive invention, or “[t]his invention of the entirely other is beyond any possible status; I still call it invention because one gets ready for it, one makes this step destined to let other come, come in.”725 To prepare for “the invention of the other, incoming of the other”, one needs the deconstructive passion for the

719 Ibid., p. 74.
720 Ibid., p. 69.
722 Caputo, The Prayers and Tears, p. 56.
723 See Part IV of this dissertation, pp.199-207.
beyond, “the other”, “the impossible”, and “the unforeseeable”, which is different from the passion for the invention of “the same”. If we translate the two kinds of invention into the terms used in Hart’s *The Trespass of the Sign*: “the same” is the “proper” and “normal” invention whereas “the other” is “improper”, “abnormal”,\footnote{J. Derrida, *On the Name*. California: Stanford University Press, 1995, p. 16.} and “revolutionary”\footnote{Ibid., p. 153.} invention, but the “passion” for “the invention of the other” “would be non-pathological”.\footnote{J. Kristeva, *Black Sun*. Trans. L. S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia University Press, 1989, p. 38.}

Deconstructive invention is seen from the implied binary pair in the title of the poem ‘Making a Rat’ [116]. The ‘rat’ can be grouped with such creatures as the fly or cicada, which are traditionally unwelcome and repellent. The creatures form a striking contrast to such creatures as the nightingale, cuckoo, and the like. The traditionally unwelcome creatures are “the other”, and the singing birds are “the same”. In the monologue, the speaker shows his strong passion for making a rat rather than a traditionally preferred bird: to make “the rat”, “I forget everything”, just like a “bricoleur” or “an amateur” rather than an engineer, to make “a roof rat – grey, long tail, sharp ears”. In spite of the fact that a “rat” can produce many kinds of harmful bacteria or viruses such as “typhus, rabies, fever, plague”, the speaker remains obsessive and passionate in making it. He becomes so obsessive and maddened in making the rat that “I give up” everything including “dinners, seminars and sex”. The time that the speaker spends in making the rat is tremendous and countless – “For months I labour on those teeth”; “For years on end I fiddle with those ears”; “I give up sleep for weeks to make its eyes” and “all day the mind will multiply itself / Just dreaming of a whisker hanging right”. However, the speaker finds that “the rat won’t work”, although he has spent so much time on it. Regardless of being unsuccessful, he does not become disappointed, as he is determined to “try again” to make “a Norway rat” which is much bigger and more complicated than the “roof rat” he first tries to make.

There are several things in this poem that need to be clarified. First, we note that, besides the fact that there is no presence of “mother”, the speaker also lacks law, order and rationality, symbolised by the “father” and “church”, as shown in the poem:

… my father turns to drink
And churchbells grow threadbare warning me [116].

The mother’s death and the father’s addiction to drinking and the church’s loss of attraction contribute to the speaker’s despair about “the same” or “identity”. This echoes Blanchot’s statement concerning this sort of “despair”: “‘One is Nothingness’ – ‘the absence of God’ – ‘the poet enters that time of distress which is caused by the gods’ absence.’”\footnote{Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, quoted by Hart, *The Dark Gaze*, pp. 146-147.} To Julia Kristeva, “despair” or “depressions – whose origins can be traced to neurophysiological disturbances triggered by symbolic breakdowns remain set in registers”.\footnote{If Blanchot and Kristeva are right, we can safely say that the speaker’s interest is replaced or his focus is transferred to something unconventional – “the other” – by inventing or making the rat(s) in an illogical, irrational and revolutionary way, in order to be prepared for the arrival or incoming of “the other”. The

\begin{itemize}
\item Hart, *The Trespass*, p. 154.
\item Ibid., p. 153.
\end{itemize}
speaker’s rebellious spirit against “the same”, represented by the conventions or rules of the society, is seen from the last stanza.

… one day the postman brings a book
Wrapped in brown paper, without card or note:
One Hundred Reasons Not to Make a Rat [116].

Having received the “book”, the speaker still keeps on trying to make a rat. The priority of the two items in the binary pair – “not to make a rat” and to make a rat – is reversed, as we see that, for the speaker, the accepted conventions or rational rules for doing things, represented by the “book”, are no longer important, and the primacy is given to the second item – inventing or making “the other” represented by the “rat” in a persistent or even stubborn way. According to différance, the repeated invention or making of “the other”, or “rat”, does not go against convention or law, that is, deconstruction does not oppose the traditional convention or metaphysics but just “bend[s] these rules with respect for the rules themselves in order to allow the other to come or to announce its coming in the opening of this dehiscence. That is perhaps what we call deconstruction.”

As for the result of the deconstructive invention related to respect, Caputo explains: “By respectfully inventing, inventively respecting, respecting with a little bending or mimicking, we can twist free of the same, altering it just enough to let a little alterity loose.”

Indeed, the invention of “the other” is only a play within “the same” and a supplement of “the same”. In other words, this world is full of crimes and unjust things. The speaker, as an individual, has no ability to stop them from happening, and the only way he can do so is to have some conceptual ideas of making a “rat” through his fascination in the form of displacement occurring in dream or in vision and imagination. So he breeds

… the things it carries in its mouth –
Those strains of typhus, rabies, fever, plague [116]

to deconstruct (but not to destroy) this society or world for the sake of reconstructing it and making it better. Indeed, a similar reconstruction should be carried out, not only in “selfhood” but also in global situations.

Can the speaker succeed in making a rat? Can “justice” come to this world? The answer, of course, is no. Just like a devout believer in God, he or she would not be in this world if a person could really gain the full presence of God. It is equally true that, if the speaker could succeed in making the “rat”, eschatology would come and the Messiah would appear, and the Last Day of this world would arrive. From this, we see that, when Derrida or Hart twists the passion a little into a passion for inventing “the other” or a “rat”, deconstruction does not rule out the religious passion for the divine presence. Therefore the passion for “the other” is “more attuned to the anomaly of Abraham on Moriah than the scientific anomaly, more a prophetic call for a justice to come than a theory of scientific change, even a revolutionary one.”

732 Caputo, The Prayers and Tears, p. 75.
733 Caputo, The Prayers and Tears, pp. 74-75.
Although the speaker keeps on trying to invent a “rat”, it proves to be impossible. Although this is so, he does not feel disappointed, for he gets ready to build another “rat”, hoping that he can successfully make it, just as it is said: “viens, oui, oui.”\(^{734}\) But he is not sure whether he can finally make it. This is exactly what Derrida had been engaged in, throughout his life, “hoping sighing dreaming” over the arrival of something “wholly other,” tout autre, praying and weeping over waiting and longing for, calling upon and being called by something to come\(^{735}\). Derrida’s desiring and weeping for the impossible includes the invention of something impossible and unbelievable, as the invention “would then be to “know” how to say “come” of the other and to answer the “come” of the other.”\(^{736}\) However, “Does that ever come about? Of this event one is never sure.”\(^{737}\)

Derrida’s calling for “doing something impossible” finds more evidence in the poem ‘The Philosophy of Furniture’ \(^{110}\) which shows the poet’s aspiration for “the other” in another respect. All the things happening in the poem can be said to be abnormal or impossible. From the title of the poem we see that everything has its philosophy, and even “furniture” is no exception. But the proposition seems to have given its readers a great expectation that some profound thinking or learned and philosophical deductive reasoning may be contained in the poem. However, to some readers’ disappointment, it is found that the poem is full of something other than the normal.

The shop sells something impossible, as some pieces of the furniture are enumerated: “rawhide bookcase” with “Eskimo designs”, “caribou fur”, “walrus tusks”, “ivory headrests”, “Ashtray on giraffe legs”, “imitation of medieval thrones”, and “Iron maidens”. In fact, not one piece of the furniture is useful in a practical sense for a normal customer. The names enumerated are words or expressions which appear to be rather strange, and also sound rather grotesque, ludicrous, and unpleasant to the ear. Which shop sells these queer things instead of practical ones? Only an abnormal shop does.

While selling these “impossible” pieces of furniture, the salesperson introduces them to the only customer enthusiastically and considerately, with an endless stream of muttered excuses to make sure that the female customer will decide to buy some pieces of the “impossible” furniture. The sentences uttered by the salesperson are short and quick. Some sentences are comprise only a word or two; even if some sentences are a little longer, they are mixed with French and jargon, difficult to understand. And the linguistic phenomena of the poem testify that the language through which the salesperson communicates with his customer is the other language, or abnormal language, rather than the normal one. What is more, the salesperson is so careless that he lets “an axe” fall from his “hand” and causes “the barest graze” to his customer. Judging from all the improper behaviour of the salesperson, we can safely draw the conclusion that he is not a normal person. Thereby he belongs to “the other”. So does the woman customer, as she buys

\(^{734}\) Quoted by Caputo, \textit{The Prayers and Tears}, p. 69.

\(^{735}\) Caputo, \textit{The Prayers and Tears}, p. xviii.


\(^{737}\) Ibid.
furniture which is other than normal, and she makes no complaint against the salesman when the “axe” “fell” and cut her.

The abnormal salesperson in the abnormal shop giving abnormal service to the abnormal customer is a typical example of Hart’s answering Derrida’s call for doing something impossible to welcome “the other” or “wholly other”. Indeed, deconstruction is not only deferring and delaying but is also promising the coming of “the other”, waiting for, and making the other come with passivity and passion.

We have seen that Hart is close to Bataille. Hart is even closer to the post-phenomenological thinkers – Levinas, Blanchot, and Derrida. We have also seen that the word “death” is a key word for understanding these thinkers’ theories and Hart’s closeness to them. For Bataille, “death” means denial, negation, dissolution, and self-deprivation through which “continuous being” can be achieved. “Death”, for Levinas, means one’s own death, which can be transcended with the continuous coming of “the other”, and “exteriority” can be reached through the being-for-the-other process. “Death”, in Derrida’s and Blanchot’s sense, is the neutral “il”, indicating the divine, the imaginary, the sacred, and “the other” which keep coming or “dying” within the self. When “death” keeps coming or “dying” in “messianic time”, it appears to be a succession of hollow images without being, or murmuring of being. So “religion without religion”, as an important tenet of the post-phenomenological school, shares a similar structure with theology, and regards “the other” as the divine, and, above all, the structure of the coming of the promised “other” given by deconstruction is also similar to the coming of the divine essence, which is abundant and endless.

The movement of “religion without religion” begins with Bataille’s theory on eroticism, develops in Levinas’s works, and culminates in Blanchot’s and Derrida’s works. Accordingly, we see, from an analysis of the poems, the degree of the poet’s closeness to these thinkers gradually increases: Hart is close to Bataille, but he is closer to Levinas, Blanchot, and Derrida – the main figures of the post-phenomenological school. This now brings me to the final part of the dissertation – the conclusion.
Part VI
Conclusion
If the propositions – Hart’s poems represent “one pole of Australian poetry” with “international feeling”, and Hart is an “atypical Australian poet” or “cosmopolitan” – are correct, this dissertation supports them with detailed and specific evidence. It further develops these propositions by arguing that there are various dual realities in the space of Hart’s poetry, including classicism, romanticism, cubism, surrealism, the dual tradition of theology (positive theology and negative theology), and post-phenomenological thinking.

Hart’s poetry differs considerably from that of other major Australian poets. Judith Wright’s poetry shows “her anxiety about the environment”, “her struggle for the welfare of the aborigines”, and her “attacks” on “the evils of modern society”738. Vincent Buckley is a religious poet, but his poetry is a negotiation of “‘a shift from the transcendent to the immanent … in specifying the sacred’”739. Les Murray’s interest lies largely in Australian culture, as “many of his concerns” are “localised”740 and he has a great “reverence for the land and the landscape” and “belief in the bush and bush values”741. Robert Gray is an “original imagist”742 and he is “Australia’s finest poet of the physical world”743 and many of his best poems show his affinity to Chinese Zen and Daoism. A. D. Hope is regarded as “an Orphic poet”, as Hart has argued, but his poetry is also thought to be mainly “classic”, “academic” or “intellectual”744. No other poets in Australia are like Hart, whose poetic space has elements of classicism, romanticism, cubism, and surrealism; no other poets in Australia are like Hart, who is close to Pope, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, Shelley, Apollinaire, Jacob, and Breton; no other religious poets in Australia are like Hart, whose spiritual faith is reflected in his poems in a manner which resembles the Bible’s Solomon, the anonymous mediaeval religious poets, and Herbert and Hopkins; and no other poets in Australia are like Hart, who is close to such Christian mystics as St Augustine, St Bernard, Eckhart, St John, Gilbert, Isaac, and Pseudo-Dionysius, and even more proximate to thinkers like Bataille, Blanchot, Bloom, Derrida, and Levinas.

A mode or pattern runs through Hart’s poetry: there are some binary pairs – something concrete, conscious, definite, familiar, natural, phenomenal and physical standing side by side with other elements that are abstract, higher, ideal, indefinite, intellectual, metaphysical, philosophical, surreal, transcendental or unconscious. To reach the latter from the former is a process of transcending or going beyond. The medium between the dual realities is negation, or its synonyms, such as death, denial, idealisation, dying, rejection, transgression, transcendence, transfiguration, and transformation.

Classicism is a process of transcending and surpassing physical nature to reach the ideal, the intellectual, and inner Nature. The direct method of the process is *mimesis*, which does not simply mean imitation, but to a large degree it is the course of idealisation and transcendence, so that consequently nature becomes “less corrupt” and human beings become “most civilised”. Hart’s imitation lies in two respects: imitating the beauty of Greek mythological figures and objective nature. The former is seen in his description of human figures and his closeness to Michelangelo’s neoclassical sculpture *David*, while the latter is seen in Ovid’s and Pope’s influence on Hart, ranging from satire to phantasmagoria and transformation. It is through the imitation of Greek and Roman classical sculpture that Hart’s descriptions of human figures move from something familiar to something ideal, beautiful, intellectual, moral, and reasonable, and it is through idealisation that ugly things can be denied and rejected, and beauty, decorum and elegance promoted by classicism can triumph and become popular.

The romantic internalised quest has a similar situation, but with a different goal – seeking a return to the “Unity of Being”, and through a different method – imagination. The process of seeking and imagination involves two parts of the self in consciousness: one is the “antagonists” to the quest, which “are everything in the self that blocks imaginative work”\(^745\); the other is the poetic self that fulfils a poem through an “apocalypse of imagination.”\(^746\) In the course of the quest, death plays an important role in rejecting one part and making the other part come into being. So the quest is “recognized as a kind of death-in-life, as the product of a division in the self”\(^747\). From “solitude”, the “death instinct” and the “morass of inwardsness” the other part of oneself is reached and the “Unity of Being” comes into being. The objective nature in which a subject exists triggers the division of the self – the death of one part of the self resulting in the poetic self and imaginative work. The romantic elements in Hart’s poems are seen, in two aspects, from his closeness to the romantic theory expounded by the critics of romanticism. One aspect is that the romantic internalised quest is a process of the recovery of the other side of the duality – the “deeply buried experience”, including the “love of mankind”, while the other aspect is the death of one part of consciousness and the existence of the other, which gives romantic works their dual reality through a general pattern or structure: the repeated descriptive-meditative-descriptive or out-in-out structure, which is also called the romantic genre, and is characterised by the fragment. These two parts draw Hart much closer to theorists represented by Abram and Bloom, and to romantic poets like Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, and Shelley.

The way of the romantic internalised quest is inherited in the cubist movement. Nature in cubist art is believed to be “essentially formless” and what is seen in an artistic work is a “higher truth” or intellectual reality, which is not physical reality itself but the “effect” of rejecting and transcending “the phenomenal world”. In a similar way to the romantic quest, a cubist artist or poet, to achieve the higher reality, purifies the self by washing “every bit of dross” away. The consciousness of a perceiver is also intensified and strengthened. But cubist art involves no personal feelings or emotions as a romantic work does. The cubist element in Hart’s works is


\(^{746}\) Ibid., p. 8.

seen from his affinity to Apollinaire and Jacob in several respects: some images have cubist plastic shapes, his shadow poems can be understood in a cubist way, and two or more dimensions exist simultaneously as in a cubist work.

The discussion of the cubist elements in Hart’s poems is incomplete if elements of surrealism are not included, for cubism and surrealism are an inseparable entity consisting of a binary pair: the conscious and the unconscious. When I discussed the surrealist elements in Hart’s work, the importance of the binary pair goes to the other pole which is the unconscious. The process of reaching the unconscious is “death” or the “death of personality”. Time or “chance” allows a subject to eradicate “any specific preoccupation” from his mind, and to hold back “the involvement of conscious personality” so that he can jot down “whatever surges up from the depths of his subconsciousness”, by which “the promise of the self’s eventual unity” can be realised. The surrealist elements in Hart’s poems lie in his searching for Breton’s “certain point”, through which higher reality is achieved. In Hart’s poems, we see that the conscious “I” is denied through “the unconscious” and “chance”, in which the “I” functions as a “fragmented self”, that is, there is collaboration between the conscious and the unconscious, resulting in various forms of mediums existing within the two poles of binary pairs as entities.

The modes of death, negation and transcendence through the dual realities in Hart’s poems can be traced back to the dual tradition of theology, as his Catholic faith and philosophical understanding of God are embodied in many of his poems. Hart’s God is dual and doubled: one is related to his faith and the other to philosophy, or one is about positive theology and the other about negative theology. One is symbolic and the other is mystical. Positive theology and negative theology are complementary to each other. One studies the teachings of the Bible to learn the truth about God and knows that God loves his creations and descended to this world in human form, was put to death then resurrected, and then ascended to Paradise and sat by His Father, while the other makes an anabasis towards God through the darkness of unknowing by contemplation, meditation, silence, and praying in solitude as He becomes differential and transcendent. In other words, this process makes one reach the state of transcendence through which the divine essence is perceived and experienced.

When positive theology is exhibited in Hart’s poems, we see that God is believed to be the cause of all beings and the source of the “ray” or radiance. Through Him all beings come into existence, and from Him all beings accept the ray and grace, so in this world we see divine traces either in the form of nature or in the form of humanity. Hart’s Catholic faith brings him much closer to certain mediaeval poets, especially the mediaeval anonymous lyricists, on such topics as God’s descent to this world in search of fallen beings, death, and praising the Virgin Mary. On the other side, we see that Hart’s poems are similar to Hopkins’s and Herbert’s when showing the circular and revolving movement of the divine being, and this describes the ascension to and union with God through purification, love, contemplation, and silence, and praying to God in solitude. Hart’s affinity with Christian mystics such as St Augustine, St Bernard, St John, Pseudo-Dionysius, and Eckhart is seen from his congeniality to their theories, especially the mode of death and rebirth promoted by St John. Here “death” means renunciation, negation and purification of the soul, so that the spiritual self can be reborn and the divine being can dwell in it.
Hart’s religious faith has a great impact on his poetry, and this is seen from his closeness to French writers like Bataille, Levinas, Blanchot, and Derrida. The philosophical ideas embodied in Hart’s poems and in the works of these writers contribute to the proposition of “religion without religion”, as it is the religious structures, not the thematics, that are reflected more or less in their works, namely Christ’s descent to earth and ascension to Paradise and St John’s mode of “death” and “rebirth”. Bataille believes that the divinity, or “continuity of being”, can be obtained through death, desire, and transgression, and Levinas thinks the divinity can be reached through “fecundity”, “futurity” and the “otherness” of “the other”, in which one’s death can be transcended. Hart, in his erotic poems, depicts relationships with women to show that the self is dispossessed and the “continuity of being” is achieved, and he also shows that the speakers in some of his poems enjoy their lovers’ “otherness”, through which they reach beyond the self towards a future that is “not yet” or never future enough, whereby the “I” transcends its own death and reaches the divine “exteriority” where God may exist.

The dual realities are testified to in deconstruction which is believed to have two stages: deferral and delay and promise of the other’s coming, which are related to death and dying. The first stage belongs to deconstruction through the death and absence of God, whereas the second stage is represented by construction, with promises of the coming of “the other”. What is more, the dual realities are also witnessed in each of the two stages: they are shown, in the first stage, through the repetition of “the phenomenal” and “the transcendental”, while in the second stage the dual realities are exhibited through the description of “the possible” and “the impossible” in which “death” keeps “dying” in the self or interiority.

In the first stage of deconstruction we see that the absence of God resulted in Adam’s failure to abide by the rules or limits assigned by God, and that his Fall leads further to other falls, including the linguistic fall. When the Fall is reflected in Hart’s poems, we see that Hart, like Derrida, pays more attention to “the other” or the traditionally less important or privileged item in a binary pair. It is différence, dissemination, and trace, rather than the identity and similarity, that become more important. Therefore, when Hart deconstructs such binary pairs as “ode” and “speck”, the present “me” and older “me”, “presence” and “absence”, “angels” and “cicadas”, and “book” and “text”, it is through the negation of the traditional important items in the binary pairs that the second items are emphasised and highlighted.

The second stage of deconstruction is not much concerned with the death or absence of God or “the other”, but is mainly concerned with “dying”, since the “dying” is related to the construction of “the self” and the “dying” happens within “me” and interiority. Derrida’s, or rather Blanchot’s, “the step (not) beyond” or “Primal Scene” underlines that the coming of “the other” is related to “the Outside”, “the neuter”, “the messianic time” or “the other time”, which decide the features of the structure of the other’s coming: “openness, undecidability, unaccomplishment, non-occurrence, noneventuality”. In Hart’s poems, we see the promise, the passivity, and the passion for the other’s coming, which is seen from topics such as “the coming of the other as ghosts”, “open-ended coming of the other”, and “making the other come”. The structure of the other’s coming promised by différence is similar to that of negative theology, but différence, unlike the divinity in negative theology, cannot form a transcendental ground. Though the pattern of religious structure appears much more complicated in deconstruction than in the other movements, we still see that the mode of “the other” is achieved through dying, transcending, and going beyond.
Through the demonstration of the dual realities throughout Hart’s poetry, we see that it is death, dying, negation, rejection, transcendence, and transformation that act as catalytic agents, making one pole of binary pairs – the conscious, concrete, definite, natural, phenomenal, and physical, transcended and transformed into the other pole, which consists of the abstract, higher, indefinite, intellectual, metaphysical, philosophical, surreal, and unconscious. We remember that Hart, in *A. D. Hope*, argues that Hope is an Orphic or visionary poet, as “the adjective ‘visionary’ does not denote a special category of poetry but rather a habit of perception, one that avows the power of the poetic act to transform nature and the self”\(^{748}\) and that “nature needs to be redeemed” and “the redeemer is Orpheus”\(^{749}\). We are right to posit Hart as an Orphic or visionary poet, as both Hope and Hart “transform nature into song”\(^{750}\), and “sing[s] things into being” and “transform being into poetry” while “not report[ing] on things that have happened”\(^{751}\), and for Hope and for Hart, “poetry has a transfiguring power”\(^{752}\).

I understand that this dissertation is just an introductory study of Hart’s poetry, for there are many elements waiting to be explored in his work. Hart is a well-read and highly intelligent scholar. He is so erudite and profoundly informed that his knowledge on literature, philosophy and theology ranges from classicism and romanticism to modernism and postmodernism, from German thinking to the French outlook, and from the Jewish Kabbalah to Christian gnosticism and mysticism. Hart does not simply inherit the Western tradition by *mimesis* or imitation – he raises the tradition to a higher level by creating his own poems through transcending the culture, to which new meanings, values and significance are added.

A better understanding of these things, I think, will not be achieved merely through one completed dissertation. Therefore, my next topic on Hart’s poetry will comprise two comparisons: one between his poems and Robert Gray’s poems, and the other between his poems and Chinese classical and romantic poems, especially some Tang poems. Through the comparisons I would like to argue that, though the two Australians are Western poets, and their poems, to some degree, represent Western culture and the Tang poets Eastern culture respectively, there are nevertheless both differences and similarities between the two cultures. Thus a conclusion can be drawn: the Western world and the Eastern world should coexist by learning from each other, which would make the future of this world better.

Hart is in the prime of his poetic life, and his “departing ship”\(^{753}\) is just in the middle of its voyage to the other shore. During the ongoing journey, he is likely to produce more elegant and exquisite works. Accordingly, the space of Hart’s poetry will be filled with more elements of literary movements and other philosophical ideas. This dissertation, I hope, will serve as a modest spur to induce more critics and scholars to come forward with their original ideas to contribute to the understanding of Hart’s poetry and its major place in contemporary writing in English.

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\(^{749}\) Ibid., p. 72.

\(^{750}\) Ibid., p. 21.

\(^{751}\) My Interview with Kevin Hart. September 2002.


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