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**Loss of Memory, Loss of Self: A Thematic and Technical Study of Austin Clarke's *Mnemosyne Lay in Dust***

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**Abstract**

This paper provides a thematic and technical treatment of Austin Clarke's *Mnemosyne Lay in Dust*, a long autobiographical work that tells the story of Maurice Devane, the protagonist who stands for the poet himself. The eighteen sections of the poem deal with Maurice's loss of memory and the suffering he undergoes as an insane person inside a mental asylum till he gradually progresses toward recovery. The paper's theoretical framework sheds light on the definition of memory according to psychology, clarifying its importance, types, phases, and processes, as well as the concept of memory loss as handled by psychologists and physicians. In addition, a brief introduction about Austin Clarke, the variety of his literary production, and his development as a writer is given. Then, the researcher presents a detailed discussion of *Mnemosyne Lay in Dust*, focusing on the themes and techniques Clarke employs in the poem. The paper closes with a conclusion highlighting the main points researched by the researcher.

**Keywords:** Austin Clarke, loss of memory, *Mnemosyne Lay in Dust*, theme, technique.

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In *the Dictionary of Psychology*, memory is defined as the "ability to revive past experience, based on the mental processes of learning or registration, retention, recall or retrieval, and recognition" (Corsini 581). Foster, in *Memory: A Short Introduction*, points out how important memory is for almost everything we do in our life. Without memory, "we would be unable to speak, read, identify objects, navigate our way around our environment, or maintain personal relationships" (1). Without memory, we would be unable to remember the events we passed yesterday, the things we have done today, and the tasks we intend to do tomorrow. It is the memory of the past that

helps us do our work in the present and get ready for what we plan to achieve in the future.

Psychologists usually speak of memory in light of types, stages, and processes. Concerning types, we have explicit memory and implicit memory. Whereas the former is related to "knowledge or experiences that can be consciously remembered, the latter is concerned with "the influence of experience on behaviour, even if the individual is not aware of those influences" (Stangor and Walinga 367-8). Memory main stages are as follows: sensory, short-term, and long-term. Sensory memory describes the brief storage of the information that comes from the five senses and only remains inside the mind for a few seconds. Short-term memory is the ability to store a small amount of information inside the mind for a short time. On the other hand, long-term memory refers to the capacity of our minds to store information for a long period: days, months, and even years. Significantly, "the capacity of long-term memory is large, and there is no known limit to what we can remember"(qtd in Stangor and Walinga 375).

As for memory processes, they are three: encoding, storage, and retrieval. Encoding is the first stage of memory. When information enters our memory system, it needs to take a specific form or shape that the system can easily cope with; this enables the system to store this information. So, in this initial stage, information is recognized or learned, perceived, and then related to past knowledge. The second stage is storage which refers to the nature of memory stores that enable the person to maintain information over time. Finally, the third stage is retrieval, which means that the person retrieves or accesses information when he/she needs it. This is an example:

If you meet someone for the first time at a party, you need to encode her name "Lyn Goff" while you associate her name with her face. Then you need to maintain the information over time. If you see her a week later, you need to recognize her face and have it serve as a cue to retrieve her name. Any successful act of remembering requires that all three stages be intact. (McDermott. & Roediger 9-10)

An important point to refer to here is that failures can occur at any stage, leading to forgetfulness or loss of memory.

Loss of memory, or amnesia as often called by psychologists and physicians, is the person's inability to recall past events, whether these events are recent, events from the remote past, or a mixture of both. In many cases, memory loss "may be reversible with treatment," to quote Dunkin, and the person gradually becomes able to restore past experiences, as was the case with Maurice Devane, the protagonist of Austin Clarke's *Mnemosyne Lay in Dust*.

A leading Irish poet, Austin Clarke was born in 1896 and died in 1974. Asked by Robert Frost about the kind of poetry he wrote, Clarke answered:

"I load myself with chains and then try to get out of them."..."Good Lord!" the famous poet exclaimed accurately, "you can't have many readers."...Since 1959, however, when the conversation took place, Clarke's public has steadily increased. (Riordan 1)

Clarke is known for his satirical attacks on the Church and State of twentieth-century Ireland. According to critics, Clarke's poetry reflects a solid poetic voice that has greatly added to the development of the modern Irish literary scene. In *Austin Clarke: His Life and Works*, Susan Hirshfeld affirms that "Austin Clarke is the most significant Irish poet since William Butler Yeats. In a similar context, Craig Tapping argues, in *Austin Clarke: A Study of his Works*, that "critics of Anglo-Irish literature have felt Austin Clarke to be the most important of the crop of Irish poets...that came after Yeats" (9).

Clarke's literary production varies, including poetry, drama, prose narratives, and memoirs. His early poetry, which was written in the period from 1917 to 1925, focused on epic poems as the young poet found inspiration in writing about the legendary past of Ireland. Examples of these works are *The Vengeance of Fionn* (1917), *The Sword of the West* (1921), and *The Cattle-drive in Connaught* (1925). Then, his poetry, specifically from 1926 to 1937, moved to explore medieval Ireland with its

Celtic Romanesque world. One of Clarke's significant works in this regard is *Pilgrimage and Other Poems*, which was published in 1929.

The period from 1938-1960 witnessed Clarke's interest in exploring the reality of his modern Ireland with its dominant Roman Catholic Church and Irish Free State, the main targets of his satirical poetry that included his two famous works: *Night and Morning* (1938) and *Ancient Lights: Poems and Satires, First Series* (1955). These two collections of poems were followed by *Too Great a Vine: Poems and Satires, Second Series* (1957) and *The Horse-Eaters: Poems and Satires, Third Series* (1960). Clarke's satire in these poetry collections was more explicit and direct. Accordingly, the targets of his criticism became more specific. To quote Hirshfeld,

A change in stance has occurred— before Clarke seemed to refrain consciously from making moral judgments: in these three volumes, by comparison, he becomes almost dogmatic. His satire is almost exclusively anti-clerical and gives him a sense of release, a new catharsis. He has moved away from the Middle Ages (the Celtic Romanesque) as [a] setting; he now concentrates on current issues and problems specifically and directly. (88)

From 1961 till his death in 1974, the older Clarke was less satirical and more tolerant than he had been before. He came to embrace life around him with love and forgiveness. Strangely enough, most of Clarke's great poetic works was written during this period, after the age of sixty. Instances of these works are *Forget-Me-Not* (1962), *Flight to Africa* (1963), *Mnemosyne Lay in Dust* (1966), *Old-fashioned Pilgrimage and Other Poems* (1967), *The Echo at Coole and Other Poems* (1968), *A Sermon Swift and Other Poems* (1968), *Orphide and Other Poems* (1970), *Tiresias* (1971), *The Wooing of Becfola* (1974), and *Collected Poems* (1974).

In addition to poetry, we find that drama and prose romance form an essential part of Clarke's literary input. He wrote a lot of plays such as *The Son of Learning*

(1926), *The Flame* (1929), *Sister Eucharist* (1938), *Black Fast* (1941), *The Kiss* (1942), *As the Crow Flies* (1942), *The Plot Is Ready* (1943), *The Viscount of Blarney* (1944), *The Second Kiss* (1946), *The Plot Succeeds* (1950), and *The Moment Next to Nothing* (1953). Clarke was also interested in prose works. He published three prose romances, including *The Bright Temptation* (1932), *The Singing Men of Cashel* (1936), and *The Sun Dances at Easter* (1952).

Clarke has also given his readers two collections of autobiographical memoirs. *Twice Round the Black Church* was published in 1962, and *A Penny in the Clouds* appeared in 1968. Both works shed light on the life of Clarke, the man and the writer. This autobiographical element in Clarke's work is not confined to these autobiographies; it is also included within the poems written by the poet, as we can see in *Mnemosyne Lay in Dust* which narrates a private experience Clarke had fifty years before the poem was first published.

*Mnemosyne Lay in Dust* is a long autobiographical poem consisting of eighteen sections. It traces the journey of Maurice Devane, the protagonist, from mental illness to recovery. The poem recounts a personal experience that happened to Clarke during his young manhood. At that time, he suffered a mental breakdown and had to enter St Patrick's Mental Hospital in Dublin, where he was hospitalized and received treatment till he was cured and left the place as a healthy person. As the poem's title reveals, Maurice experiences amnesia; he loses his memory and loses himself as well. He is unable to know who he is anymore. The poet suggests that Mnemosyne, the memory goddess in Greek Mythology, lay in dust, which means that Maurice's memory is no longer active. As Neil Corcoran observes,

*Mnemosyne Lay in Dust* takes as its basic material's Clarke's own experience of insanity and incarceration in a mental hospital almost fifty years previously; this poem, about loss of memory, about Mnemosyne consigned to the dust, is itself dependent on a very long memory indeed. (43)

It is worth noting that Clarke had a poetic silence that lasted for seventeen years from 1938 to 1955, a period in which the poet published nothing but some verse dramas that cannot be compared to his massive body of poetry. Due to his early sense of literary neglect in Dublin, his continuous clashes with Irish censorship, and the marriage problems he encountered, Clarke not only lost his appetite for writing poetry, but he also suffered a nervous breakdown twice in his life. Corcoran sees that "the lengthy period of repression and blockage before the poem's dark matter [referring to *Mnemosyne Lay in Dust*] could be manipulated into the light of articulation, finds its odd biographical correlative in Clarke's long poetic silence" (43). However, Clarke's poetic energy was restored in 1955 when he published *Ancient Lights*, one of his most significant poetry collections. "In 1955, with *Ancient Lights*," Thomas Kinsella writes, "he emerges from silence in sudden, full-fledged humanitarian rage...and a fund of energy is released, outward and inward (134).

*In Mnemosyne Lay in Dust*, Clarke accurately follows Maurice on his way from the house to the mental asylum, narrating to the reader what happens to the protagonist from the moment he leaves home, the time he enters the hospital, his trauma as a patient there, and his release after he has restored his memory and become a normal person. The poem opens with documenting Maurice's journey from the very beginning – when he gets into the car on his way to the hospital. Speaking in the third person, Clarke tells us of his protagonist as follows:

Past the house where he was got  
 In darkness, terrace, provision shop,  
 Wing-hidden convent opposite,  
 Past public-houses lighting up  
 Time, crowds outside them — Maurice Devane  
 Watched from the taxi window in vain  
 National stir and gaiety  
 Beyond himself: St. Patrick's Day,  
 The spike-ends of the Blue Coat school,

Georgian houses, ribald gloom  
 Rag-shadowed by gaslight, quiet pavements  
 Moon-waiting in Blackhall Place. (*Mnemosyne* 7-8)

On his way to the asylum, Maurice passes the famous places in Dublin City such as the 'Wing-hidden convent', Blue Coat school', 'Georgian houses', and 'Blackhall Place'. He disappointingly looks at people outside the taxi window 'in vain' to find them acting actively while he feels imprisoned and unable to act. Poor Maurice is on his way to St. Patrick's Mental Hospital on the same day that Irish people in the streets celebrate an important national holiday, namely, St. Patrick's Day, an occasion of 'national stir and gaiety'. They celebrate being Irish, feeling proud of their identities as Irish citizens, whereas Maurice seems to lose his identity and can no longer recognize who he is. Desperate and alienated, he feels cut off from communal interaction. As the poet tells us, 'he was got / in darkness', thinking of the unknown fate that waits for him.

Clarke's poetic techniques vividly reveal the meaning of the lines. For example, the use of the word 'got' in the first line reflects a sense of cruelty and brutality practiced against the helpless Maurice. Similarly, the words 'darkness', 'in vain', and 'gloom' suggest an atmosphere of depression and loss of hope. This atmosphere of despair, 'darkness', and 'gloom' is juxtaposed to the atmosphere of 'stir and gaiety' that Maurice 'watched from the taxi window,' where people rejoice and feel delighted during the celebration of 'St. Patrick's Day'. Even the city places seem to interact with the occasion happily, as revealed by expressions such as 'public houses lighting up / Time' and 'Moon-waiting in Blackhall Place'. Another technique used by Clarke in the above lines is enjambment that can be noted in the following lines:

Past the house where he was got  
 In darkness...

The employment of enjambment here reflects the quickness in which Maurice 'was got / in darkness' and highlights "the ignorance and fear involved in the action," to quote O'Neill (156). As mentioned previously, *Mnemosyne Lay in Dust* contains eighteen sections. These sections are untitled and contain stanzas with no regular

patterns and no definite shape, length, or rhyme. One feels that the poem's disconnected and irregular structure expressively mirrors Maurice's scattered self and honestly reflects the state of confusion and lack of action he finds himself in.

It is in the fourth stanza of the poem that Clarke tells us that Maurice reaches St Patrick's Mental Hospital:

The Ford turned right, slowed down. Gates opened,  
Closed with a clang; (*Mnemosyne* 9)

Maurice feels afraid as the hospital building is frightening and threatening, with very high blackened walls and colossal iron gates that are 'opened' and 'closed' with 'a clang', producing a disturbing sound that frightens Maurice and fills him with fear and terror. However, this place will witness the details of his journey from madness and suffering to sanity and healing.

The first experience of Maurice at the hospital was indeed horrifying. Clarke vividly describes the situation:

Straight-jacketing sprang to every lock  
And bolt, shadowy figures shocked,  
Wall, ceiling; hat, coat, trousers flung  
From him, vest, woollens, Maurice was plunged  
Into a steaming bath; half suffocated,  
He sank, his assailants gesticulating,  
A Keystone reel gone crazier; (*Collected Poems* 328)

The lines reveal the terror and bewilderment undergone by Maurice. He was terrified by what he had seen and experienced, bewildered by the 'shadowy figures', and was completely unable to act. His 'hat', 'coat', and 'trousers' were 'flung from him'. He helplessly surrendered himself to 'his assailants' who, after stripping him of his clothes, cruelly pushed him into 'a steaming bath'. 'He sank', Clarke writes, was 'half

suffocated' and became unable to breathe. The scene that the lines depict reflects how skillful the poet is in conveying his message. Clarke's accurate account of the details of Maurice's initial experience at the asylum makes us, as readers, feel how harsh the physical attack on the helpless, unresisting, passive Maurice was. "The dramatic manner" of the lines, to quote Harmon, "immerses us in Devane's agony....His disoriented consciousness engages us; we, too, are plunged into the abyss, we undergo his bewilderment, humiliation, and terror. We feel the poignancy of his loss" (36). Furthermore, the helplessness of Maurice, as a representative of all patients in the hospital, is sharply contrasted with the brutality of the medical staff. Those people harshly strip patients of their clothes, push them into 'a steaming bath', and may even get 'crazier', as the poet mentions in the last line,, and do more than this to torment them.

Alliteration is frequently used throughout the lines. Examples of alliterating words can be seen in line 1 ('straight' and 'sprang'), line 2 ('shadowy' and 'shocked'), line 4 ('woollens' and 'was'), line 5 ('steaming' and 'suffocated'), line 6 ('he' and 'his'), and line 7 ('keystone' and 'crazier'). In all these examples, the first consonant is repeated at the beginning of the words to give music, to connect the alliterating words together and, more importantly, to attract attention to what was cruelly practiced against the helpless Maurice. For instance, the repetition of the consonant /s/ at the beginning of both 'steaming' and 'suffocating' connects the two words, implying that the water of the bath in which Maurice was plunged in was too hot that he was almost choked. In addition, the run-on line in line 4 ('Maurice was plunged / Into a steaming bath;') is very suggestive, indicating the suddenness and haste in which he was pushed into hot water without being told or warned.

Maurice had a tough and painful time at the asylum. The doctors and assistants there were cruel, and their treatment did not help him progress positively. Throughout the poem, Clarke indicates how the medical staff's unsympathetic nature and frowning faces threatened the patients and filled their hearts with terror. An example of these frightening figures, Clarke writes in the poem" is the "[t]all, handsome, tweeded Dr. Leeper" who, "[i]nspecting the mindless at a glance," is

"always ready to leap" as if he were "a duffering Victorian" (*Collected Poems* 331). Two other examples are:

The mad-eyed Dr. Rutherford,  
Agreeable in word  
And the superintendent, Mr. Rhys,  
That burly Welshman ready to pounce  
From everywhere with his band of seizers,  
Drug maniacs  
as they bounce. (*Collected Poems* 331).

The lines explain how the medical staff and warders at the asylum inhumanly treat patients. One feels that doctors and their assistants conspire against those powerless persons to frighten them instead of helping them to improve. Dr. Leeper, who looks like an inspector, leaps among patients in a way that terrifies them. Dr. Rutherford looks like a mad man himself; His looks fill the sick with horror. As for Mr. Rhys, he is accompanied by a group of warders to go from one place to another in the hospital to check that everything is going well. The poet tells us that this heavily built man and his team who are best described as a 'band of seizers' are ready to jump 'from everywhere' on the helpless patients to terrify them.

As usual, Clarke's technical devices expressively reflect the ideas he poses in the lines. The portrayal of the medical staff, together with the clever use of action verbs, is indicative. Dr. Leeper, Dr. Rutherford, and Mr. Rhys – accompanied by their 'band of seizers' – 'leap', 'pounce', and 'bounce' 'from everywhere', 'inspecting' the submissive patients and pouring fear in their souls. This depiction makes the reader feel that these people are not a medical team that is supposed to care for patients and gently treat them. Instead, they look like a bunch of criminals conducting a crime and practicing violence against their defenseless victims. Undoubtedly, such a frightening atmosphere cannot help a patient get well, and this is what exactly happens with Maurice.

In the hospital, Maurice has suffered a lot. Hallucinations and nightmares become frequent. In addition, he is overcome by feelings of fear, anxiety, depression, loneliness, and loss of self. Clarke narrates,

One night he heard heart-breaking sound.  
 It was a sigh unworlding its sorrow.  
 Another followed. Slowly he counted  
 Four different sighs, one after another.  
 "My mother," he anguished, "and my sisters  
 Have passed away. I am alone, now'  
 Lost in myself in a mysterious  
 Darkness, the victim in a story." (*Mnemosyne* 22)

Unable to bear the heavy burden of his dilemma, Maurice sadly heaves deep sighs that honestly reflect the indescribable 'sorrow' in his heart and the inexpressible terror in his soul. He longs for his mother and sisters who have 'passed away', and more importantly, for his self that has been lost in 'darkness'. Accordingly, he feels 'alone' and sees himself as nothing but 'the victim in a story'. The repetition of the word 'darkness' throughout the stanzas of the poem reinforces the sense of loss that overwhelms Maurice and reveals the lack of hope as a feeling that increasingly grows inside him. The recurrent use of alliteration in the above stanza conveys the meaning of the lines by connecting the alliterating words in each line. For example, the repetition of the sound /h/ at the beginnings of the words 'he', 'heard', and 'heart-breaking' in the first line joins the three words together to reveal the meaning that he, Maurice, was indeed disturbed and distressed when he had heard the sound of the rapid beats of his heart. Likewise, the alliterating words 'sigh' and 'sorrow' in the second line are connected by the sound /s/, indicating how Maurice's great 'sorrow' is honestly embodied in the deep 'sigh' he heaves. A third example of alliteration appears in the last line but one where the repetition of the consonant sound /m/ at the start of both 'myself' and 'mysterious' connects the two words, elucidating how

the protagonist is so depressed that he regretfully complains, "I am.../ Lost in myself in a mysterious / Darkness."

As time passes, Maurice's state gets worse. He refuses to eat. He has no appetite for food or even for life itself. However, the doctors have to interfere and he has been force-fed. To punish him, doctors confine him in a padded cell. The consequences are indeed horrible. "Suddenly heart began to beat / Too quickly, too loudly," Clarke writes, depicting the predicament of his protagonist:

Key turned. Body was picked up, carried  
Beyond the ward, the bedwhite row  
Of faces, into a private darkness.  
Lock turned. He cried out. All was still.  
He stood, limbs shivering in the chill. (*Collected Poems* 335)

Maurice is so horrified that his heart begins to 'beat quickly and loudly'. Like a corpse, he is cruelly carried and thrown into the cell in 'a private darkness'. The warders turn the lock, closing the cell door, not only imprisoning Maurice's body, but also locking up his soul as well. The powerless young man 'cried out' in vain, trembling from the cold. No one hears his broken voice. Outstandingly, Clarke's poetic techniques, rhyme in particular, reveal the meaning of the lines. The concluding two lines of the above stanza rhyme together, connecting the two rhyming words 'still' and 'chill'. This connection suggests the continuity of Maurice's suffering; "All was still," the poet points out; even in 'the 'chill', his limbs are 'shivering', and he is continually suffering as if his distress is a non-stop one.

Maurice has become entirely unaware of what is going on around him. Clarke tells us:

He wondered who  
He was, but memory had hidden  
All. Someone sat beside him, drew  
Chair nearer, murmured: 'Think!' (*Mnemosyne* 12)

He does not know himself; he does not even realize where he is or what essentially troubles him. It is a painful experience when one does not know who he is. For him, 'Mnemosyne' actually lies 'in dust'; he remembers nothing at all. It is not only a loss of memory; it is a loss of the self too.

Looking into the mirror, Maurice sees a face that looks familiar to him. He knows these features well but cannot know who the person is. The situation terrifies him and fills his trembling heart with fear. Clarke recounts:

Often he stared into the mirror  
Beside the window, hard-drawn by fear  
He seemed to know that bearded face  
In it, the young man, tired and pale,  
Half smiling. Gold-capped tooth in front  
Vaguely reminded him of someone.  
Who was it? Nothing came to him.  
He saw that smile again. Gold dot  
Still gleamed. The bearded face was drawn  
With sufferings he had forgotten. (*Collected Poems* 332).

In the mirror, Maurice sees an exhausted 'young man' whose appearance takes him back to a person he knows very well but cannot identify. Maurice knows that 'bearded face'. That 'smile' is familiar to him, and that 'gold-capped tooth' is not strange. All these features remind him of 'someone' he knows but cannot recognize.

It is noted in the above lines that Clarke cleverly employs repetition. The phrase 'bearded face' is repeated at the beginning of the stanza, precisely in line 3 and towards the end in line 9, as if the poet tries to help Maurice remember who the person in the mirror is. Similarly, the word 'gold' is mentioned in line 5 in the phrase 'gold-capped tooth' and is repeated in line 8 more strongly as if Clarke says to Maurice,

"Look, gold dot / Still gleamed. Try to remember." Feeling that the repetition of words is not working with Maurice, one imagines, Clarke resorts to repeating the meaning itself. In line 4, he states that the young man whom Maurice sees in the mirror is 'tired and pale'. The same meaning is repeated when the poet in the last line, as if he is making the last attempt to help Maurice, says that 'sufferings' clearly characterize the young man's bearded face. However, Maurice is totally unable to remember anything. The last sentence of the stanza is very significant; 'he had forgotten'.

However, after a long period in the hospital, Maurice gradually begins to remember things, especially when he was a child aged seven. Childhood memories start to jump on his memory. Clarke traces this process of remembering:

Soon Mnemosyne made him smaller,  
A child of seven, half gone to sleep.  
His mother was at her sewing machine,  
The shuttle clicking as she followed  
A hem. (*Mnemosyne* 35)

'Mnemosyne' that previously 'lay in dust' 'soon' comes back, taking Maurice to his early years. He begins to recall the scene when he was going to sleep and his mother was at 'her sewing machine'. He remembers the incident with all its details, even the 'clicking' sound produced by the sewing machine when the mother 'followed' the edge of the cloth she was sewing.

Indeed, Clarke astonishes us with his vivid images and techniques. The image of the sewing machine in the above lines is very significant at this critical stage of Maurice's advancement toward recovery. One feels that Maurice is 'sewing' his thread of memories, exactly as the mother is sewing the clothes to mend them or create a new dress. Maurice is also mending the damage to his memory and starting a new stage of healing. Also, the presence of the mother in the scene is a supportive factor as she had always been in the life of Maurice, particularly when he was a child. The

consonant /s/ repetition throughout the lines, as we can see in the words 'soon', 'smaller', 'seven', 'sleep', and 'sewing,' is also suggestive. This consonant implies secrecy and suits the atmosphere of the stanza as if the process of memory return is accurate and needs a kind of privacy and quietness to be conducted well. Such a process also necessitates the presence of trusted people only, like the mother.

Improvements in Maurice's state continually take place as the poem progresses. This can be noted in section eleven when he, for the first time since he entered the hospital, seems hungry and has the desire to eat. Clarke states:

In June, upon the little table  
Between the beds, he saw a dish  
Of strawberries. As they lay  
There, so ripe, ruddy, delicious,  
For an hour he played with his delay  
Then in delight  
Put out two fingers towards the wished-for,  
Ate for the first time. (*Mnemosyne* 36)

The strawberry dish plays a turning point in Maurice's journey toward recovery. The strawberries are tempting indeed: 'they are so ripe, ruddy, delicious,' the poet observes. The metaphor in line five indicates how Maurice 'played with his delay' towards the delicious dish, in the sense that he eagerly wants to have the strawberries, but feels hesitant. Finally, after a long thought that lasts for one 'hour', he delightfully pounces on 'the wished-for dish', and starts eating, willingly 'for the first time'. This example of metaphor is reinforced by an example of the personification in the preceding two lines where the strawberries 'lay / There, so ripe, ruddy, delicious,' as if they are tempting girls who flirt with their lover. As observed in the above lines, the poem's diction begins to have words that reflect joy and happiness; this can be seen in the poet's use of words such as 'delicious', 'delight', and 'wished-for'. Throughout the previous sections of the poem, we only read words that reveal sorrow, fear, and terror. Finally, the enjambment Clarke employs in line five up to line seven reflects the main idea of

the stanza. To convey Maurice's enthusiasm, eagerness, and 'delight', to get the strawberries and satisfy his desire as soon as possible, the poet utters all three lines in one breath, without any stops or punctuation marks that may hinder the protagonist from reaching his goal.

The real world gets closer to Maurice. He is allowed to go outside for a long walk with one of the warders. Hallucinations and nightmares disappear, and he no longer takes any strong medication. He receives his first visitor, Uncle George, and gets to talk to the other patients. Gradually, he begins to recognize objects and then he becomes able to recall people and places. He finally remembers where he lives and who he is. Memory comes back and the lost self is regained. Clarke closes the tale, celebrating Maurice's release from the mental asylum and concluding that his protagonist has eventually become 'rememorised':

Rememorised, Maurice Devane

Went out, his future in every vein. (*Collected Poems* 351)

To conclude, the present paper has attempted to trace the journey of Maurice Devane, the protagonist of *Mnemosyne Lay in Dust*, from illness to healing. Throughout the poem, we observe how Clarke's honest description, engaging narration style, and evocative techniques reflect the young man's sufferings, frustrations, and aspirations to restore his memory and find his lost self once again. *Mnemosyne Lay in Dust* marks a significant stage in Clarke's development as a poet; critics regard it as the most important poem he wrote in the final stage of his literary career that extended from 1961 to 1974. The poem, being an autobiographical work mirroring an actual experience Clarke had during his twenties and wrote about later, reminds us of the confessional poetry written by Sylvia Plath, John Berryman, Robert Lowell, Anne Sexton, and other confessional poets whose writings reveal highly intensive psychological and personal experiences. However, Clarke's *Mnemosyne Lay in Dust*, one believes, is saved by its author from being a confessional poem; this is because Clarke succeeds in making Maurice's real identity insignificant, making the poem's language, and not the ragged emotions of the protagonist, convey Maurice's

sickness and gradual development toward recovery. By doing so, Clarke has taken his central character away from the dangers of self-indulgence that characterizes confessional poetry to the actual desire to be cured and return to normal life.

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”فقدان الذاكرة، فقدان الذات: دراسة، من حيث الموضوع والأسلوب الفني، لقصيدة ”نيموسين“  
قابعة في التراب للشاعر أوستين كلارك

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أستاذ مساعد الأدب الإنجليزي بقسم اللغات والترجمة، كلية التربية والآداب، جامعة تيوك، السعودية.

### ملخص البحث:

يقدم هذا البحث دراسة، من حيث الموضوع والأسلوب الفني، في قصيدة ”نيموسين“ قابعة في التراب للشاعر أوستين كلارك، تروي القصيدة بأجزائها الثمانية عشرة قصة ”موريس ديفان“، بطل القصيدة الذي يمثل الشاعر نفسه، متبعية إياه بسرد شعري شيق منذ فقدانه للذاكرة، والمعاناة التي تحملها كمريض في مصحة عقلية، حتى تماثل تدريجياً للشفاء وغادر المشفى. تبدأ الدراسة بإطار نظري يلقي الضوء على مفهوم الذاكرة من منظور علم النفس: من حيث تعريفها وأهميتها وأنواعها ومراحلها وعملياتها المختلفة، والمقصود بمصطلح فقدان الذاكرة عند الأطباء وعلماء النفس. تلي ذلك مقدمة موجزة عن أوستين كلارك، وتنوع إنتاجه الأدبي، وتطوره كشاعر ذي مكان ومكانة في المشهد الأدبي الأيرلندي الحديث. تقوم الباحثة بعد ذلك بتحليل القصيدة، موضع الدراسة، تحليلاً شاملاً من حيث الموضوعات التي يتناولها الشاعر والأساليب الفنية التي يستخدمها لتأكيد أفكاره وإبراز معانيه. أخيراً، تأتي الخاتمة لتلخص أهم النقاط التي تناولتها الورقة البحثية وأبرز النتائج التي تم التوصل إليها.

### كلمات مفتاحية:

أوستين كلارك، فقدان الذاكرة، ”نيموسين“ قابعة في التراب، الموضوع، الأسلوب الفني.