

(باتريك كافانا: شاعر التغريب)
(Patrick Kavanagh: The Poet of Estrangement)

م. م. نور شاكر محمود جاسم
Asst. Lec. Noor Shakir Mahmood
المديرية العامة للتربية في محافظة نينوى
The General Directorate of Education in Nineveh
Governorate

Email: noor.shakir86@gmail.com

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المستخلص

يتناول هذا البحث التطور الشعري لباتريك كافانا ابتداءً من محاولاته المبكرة لإقصاء نفسه من عمله كفلاح إلى حد نجاحه في أن يكون شاعراً وروائياً كبيراً. يتضمن شعر كافانا أنواع كثيرة من التغريب والعزلة؛ على سبيل المثال، قد تمثلت العزلة النفسية والذاتية باكتشاف كافانا لمواهبه ومحاولاته لحفظ هذه الموهبة من الذبول. لهذا السبب التغريب الجغرافي أصبح ضرورة حيث إن الشاعر ترك بلدة موناجان وسافر إلى دبلن المتحضرة. في المدينة حلَّ الإبعاد الاجتماعي عندما بدأ الشاعر الريفى بتحرير شعره من قيود الحركة الأدبية الأيرلندية. وهكذا بدأت حركة أدبية جديدة على يدي باتريك كافانا.

Abstract

This paper tackles Patrick Kavanagh's poetic development, starting from his early attempts to alienate himself from his early career as a ploughman until his success to be a great poet and a novelist. Kavanagh's poetry involves different kinds of estrangement and alienation; for example, self and psychological alienation is dramatized in Kavanagh's discovery of his talents and his attempts to save it from withering. Therefore, a geographical estrangement becomes necessary that the poet leaves the countryside of Monaghan, the poet's birth place, for the urban Dublin. In the city, social alienation is taken place since the peasant poet begins to alienate his poetry from the restraints of the Irish Literary movement. Thus, a new movement of post Revival begin to start by Patrick Kavanagh.



At the beginning of the twentieth century, Northern Ireland witnessed a series of bloody struggles between different poles in order to achieve independence from the Great Britain and to be unified with the south of Ireland; this is the demand of the Catholics, the minority in the Northern Ireland. On the other hand, the Protestants supported English forces against the minority in order to achieve unity with the Great Britain.

However, that conflict affected literature and a new literary movement was flourished called Irish Revival. This movement focuses on the beauty of the Irish countryside and mythologizing it in order to encourage the spirit of nationalism. W.B. Yeats (1865-1939) was one of the founder of this movement. In one of his letters, Yeats admits that to be Irish " you will be more original and true to yourself and in the long run more interesting, even to English readers."(Alan Wade, 1955, p. 51)Though many writers followed this movement, others adopted it for a short time in their writings, later, they disown and stand against it. The most important literary figure who represents the second group is Patrick Kavanagh (1904- 1967).

Patrick Kavanagh was born in Monaghan for a working class family. From the very beginning of his education, he showed acute intelligence that he used to sit in two classrooms, listening to the subjects and curriculum of the other classes, but unfortunately this intelligence was not appreciated by his teachers who punished him physically and psychologically (Antoinette Quinn, 2001: p. 36-38).These are enough reasons for Kavanagh to alienate himself from the school and seek for another thing to prove his talents. Thus, the beauty of nature in the garden of the school satisfied his pregnant imagination to escape his bad situation, being an abused child. Kavanagh's epiphanies are clear in his autobiographical poem "The Long Garden:" " It was the garden of the golden apples / in the thirsty hedge old boots were flying sandals / by which we travelled through the childhood skies,"(Patrick Kavanagh,



1965: p.43), these skies of ambition are similar to those ones in Stephen Dadelus' epiphanies presented in *A Portrait of a Young Man As an a Artist*. Thus, Patrick Kavanagh finds his satisfaction in poetry and nature rather than academic education and that is matter was not easy for his father James.

In fact, the school alienation was accompanied by a familial estrangement which , according to k. alligas, can be defined as: the state of "being physically and or emotionally distanced from one or more family members" and the reason behind it is to belittle the inner and external "conflict" between these members.(K. Agllias, 2016 p.4) Furthermore, Kavanagh tries to uproot his origins totally, that's clear in his unpublished poem " Dictator's Genealogy:"

My father stung for me
No geneologic rosary
Beads of hyponotic power-
Iam, as Napoleon said, my own
Ancestors. (Antoinette Quinn, 2001: p. 1)

the real reasons behind this denial of the family can be traced to his relationship with his father. According to Antonitte Quinn who said that Patrick's father was a bastard person who did not care about his son who was baptized as Patrick Joseph instead of Patrick James, as well as, James mistook the real date of his son's birthday. James "had never known gentility or politeness. He [...] had a rough tongue and made little effort to tender himself to his children," who, unfortunately, inherited their father's manner of arrogance. Therefore, James used to knocking his first son, Patrick, down in order to improve his behaviour (23-38). Patrick always tries to escape from his father whose ghost after death still hovers every where, keeping eye on his son. In his poem "Memory of My Father," the son poet imagines his father as angel of death-like:

every old man I see
in October-Coloured weather



seems to say to me:

" I was once your father."(Patrick Kavanagh Poems,2004: p.16).

However, one of consequences of this familial estrangement is that Kavanagh still single and he did not marry until the last year before his death.

In spite of the Oedipus complex, Kavanagh worked on his father's farm and became attached with nature. Thus, his early poems are pastoral, for example, in "The Ploughman," the poet is quite dreamy on the land which he is farming and he regards his labour working among these natural scenes is just like a prayer:

I dream with silvery gull
And brazen crow.
A thing that is beautiful
I may know
Tranquility walk with me
And no care
O, the quiet ecstasy

Like a prayer. (Patrick Kavanagh, 1964: p.3) ¹

However, painting the green land into brown, in the former poem, has a touch of melancholic atmosphere. His next poem "Inniskeen Road: July Evening" admits that Kavanagh is like the outsider inside his land because of his loneliness:

Oh, Alexander Sekirk knew the plight
Of being king and government and nation
A road, a mile of kingdom. Iam king
Of banks and stones and every blooming thing
(*Collected Poems*, 19)

the poet's sense of estrangement and alienation from nature transforms the beautiful nature into a abandon desert island. Nature alienation is developed in the poem " Stony Grey Soil" to be self- pity and blame of his birth place, in general, for stealing his "laugh," "love" and "youth:"

1 All following references are taken from this volume.



You perfumed my clothes with weasel itch,
You fed me on swinish food
You flung a ditch on my vision
Of beauty, love and truth
O stony grey soil of Monaghan
You burgled my bank of youth!(*Collected Poems*,82)

This is another type of estrangement called " work estrangement" since the poet's labour is estranged ad exploited by the earth itself which taken his energy and vision of knowledge and giving him in return nothing just tiredness.

The repetition of passive words;"grey," "clay" and "soil" and the association of seasonal times are coloured Kavanagh's following poems and that refers to his willing to leave working of farming because he is as ambitious as Icarus who tries to fly far away from his land, but he is too afraid of fall: " O can I still stroke the monster's back / or write with unposined" (*Collected Poems*,82). Kavanagh's ambitions to be a poet among paddy people creates for him a kind of self alienation which is defined by Tavvis as " the loss of contact" between the self and its desire which contrasts the "social patterns," accordingly, the person is forced to accept these patterns or becoming unable of controlling his actions. (Taviss, 1969: p.47) For kavanagh, he choices the second situation and rebels against the land by using his pen.

The idea of uprooting the origins by writing tools, as a metaphor of literary work becomes popular after Kavanagh. Seamus Heaney (1939-2013), the Nobel Prize winner is one of those who was affected by Kavanagh in digging into the roots of farm working as a local tradition by using the pen instead of spades in his poem "Death of a Naturalist:"

Through living roots awaken in my head
But I've no spade to follow men like them.
Between my finger and my thumb
The squat pen resets
I'll dig with it. (Seamus Heaney, 1966: p.13)



Thus, Kavanagh's pen starts to attack and criticize any thing associated with the country side; farmers, nature, rustic community and religion. He sands against pastoralism in general and that is clear in his autobiographical poem "The Great Hunger" which conveys familial alienation, self alienation ,social alienation, natural alienation and religion alienation.

The ideal image of the ploughman as a superman who full of strength and enjoyment of life in pastoral poetry is contrasted with the "mechanized," self-deceived and lack of experiences figure whose psychological state is deteriorated by waiting and waiting for the end of this work:

We will wait and watch the tragedy to the last curtain,
Rolls down the side of the hill, diverted by the angles
Where the plough missed or a spade
Stand, straitening the way. (*Collected Poems*, 34)

A farm is like a prison for farmers who should work most of the time regardless of enjoyment or even thinking of getting marriage and having a cozy house with children and a wife. The speaker of the poem is Maguire who is Kavanagh in disguise since the poem is an autobiographical one and the whole situations Maguire undergoes are Kavanagh's. However, Maguire is presented as a farmer who is expected to be given masculine adjectives, on contrast, he is presented as a man who is controlled by his old mother whose expressions are deformed to have "a venomous drawl / and a wizened face like moth-eaten leatherette," (*Collected Poems*, 37) and her voice is just like a knife that "cut him up the middle till become more woman than man" (*Collected Poems*, 47). Maguire's feminization is necessary to diminish the idea of the pastoral strong ploughman.(Jonathan Allison, 2005). P. 49-50) Thus, this son-mother relationship is based on familial estrangement (which discussed previously according to the son-father relationship), Maguire accuses his mother to be a liar "when she praised the man who made a field his bride" (*Collected Poems*,



36). The prohibition of getting marriage because he has already got married to his earth and his preoccupied ideas of sexuality are kind of a sexual estrangement which is twined with religion alienation since he cannot satisfy his desire because of religious restrains.

Maguire's first visit to the church is presented in section four of the poem; he is too lazy to pray and his prayer is mixed with coughing and rubbing dust: he "coughed the prayer phlegm up from his throat and sighed: Amen" (*Collected Poems*, 39). This false prayer is directly followed by temptation and lust for a young girl, but his puritanical principles and "the coward's blow" prevent him "from the fruited tree of life" (*Collected Poems*, 40). Thus, his oppressed desire disables his "religious faith." (Jonathan, 2005: p.48) He accuses his mother again to be a lair when she asks him to pray and confess his sins in order to bring fortune and get wealth, health and love:

Now go to mass and pray and confess your sins
He listened to the lie that a woman's screen
Around a conscious when soft thighs are spread
And all the while she was getting up the lie
(*Collected Poems*, 42)

In the second time Maguire decides to go the church to pray, he shows indifference to the place and what's new now is that plough men fellows "envied his holy rise." Envy uncovers another type of alienation, called social alienation which is "the sense of estrangement" diverted by "sudden discovery" of the fact that social community cannot fulfill aims and hopes. (Taviss, 1969: p.47) Only Maguire agonies from the obstacles against his hopes among the country side members who are semi-conscious, envious, ill educated, womanish and totally blind to their bad situation. Even more, they do not want to open their eyes or awake from their sleep and improve their situations. The only open eyed is Maguire whose ambition is to be a famous figure:



Maguire was an undergraduate
Who dreamed from his lowly position of rising
To a professorship like Larry Mckenna or Duffy
Or the pig-gelder Nallon whose Knowledge was amazing
(*Collected Poems*, 47)

Unfortunately, the ambitious poet Maguire is imprisoned with "pigs and cows" and he is "tortured" because no ignorant plough man will read his "woman's signature" (*Collected Poems*, 45).

The word "blind" is repeated four times along the whole poem: two of them are mentioned in section thirteen to assert that a peasant was not born as a blind. In section eight, the poet is disappointed that all men become "as blind as could be" (*Collected Poems*, 43). Furthermore, in section four, they "blindly" put their seeds with their dreams to sleep underground forever. The open-eyed Maguire tries to make the blinds see their miseries, but he fails. He is just like Nunez in *The Country of the Blind* (1904) who is the only person who can see among the blind and he tries to explain what the sight means to them, but he fails. Instead, the blind want to uproot his eyes because they think that his eyes are the source of his madness that there is nothing called "sight." Therefore, Nunez escapes to another place.

Maguire, Nunez and Kavanagh face a common problem which can be solved only by the geographical and environmental estrangement. Thus, in 1939 Kavanagh decides to leave Monaghan for the urban Dublin where "arts, music, letters are the real things" (*Collected Poems*, 121). Unfortunately, in the city, the matter is not easy for a one who lacks an academic education to be a famous poet among educated figures who refused him bitterly: "the cycle of a race that will persist / when all the scintillating tribes of reason / are folded in a literary mist" (*Collected Poems*, 30). Besides this social alienation, the most difficult challenge for



the peasant poet was facing and overcoming W. B. Yeats' (1865- 1939) effect on the criteria of good poetry at that time. Donald Davie says:

"Yeats must figure as the great ventriloquist;
If they relax their concentration for a second
[...] They find themselves sitting on the great

Ventriloquist's knee, using not their own voice but his." (Austin Clarke and Padraic Fallon, 1975: p.42).

The problem here is that Yeatsian idiom is totally pastoral, idealizing the miserable country side from where Kavanagh comes.

What Kavanagh does is that he begins to criticize the other poets for being imitators of the repeated themes which belong to Yeats. However, Kavanagh's attacks and satire are his best tools to achieve his golden chance among the literary community. Thus, by writing his antipastoral novel *The Green Fool* after his coming to Dublin publishing "The Great Hunger" after three years Kavanagh succeeded in transforming poetry subject matters and themes from mythology into reality.

After a few years of his coming to the urban city and because of the bad situations after the Second World War, Kavanagh feels again alienation, but now alienation from the city itself. Though he feels nostalgia to the country side, he revisits another country side inside his imagination. Thus, the poet creates an alternative country side where his the king rather than a farmer. Many poems like: "Peace" and "Epic" represent this nostalgia, mixed with epiphanies.

The last years of Kavanagh's life (starting from 1955 till his death) after his illness and the lung operation a new baptized phase of his poetry begins, represented in his series of poems called "Canal Bank Walk:"

Leafy-with-love banks and the green waters of the canal
Pouring redemption for me, that I do
The will of God, allow in the habitual the bank,
Grow with nature again as before I grew.

(*Collected Poems*, 150)



In this phase, the poet stop satire and criticizing his literary fellows. Instead, he depends on the parochial which means focusing on the positive and the beautiful thing among the all difficulties associated with it (Naho Washizuka, 2018: p.33). According to Hegelian theory, Kavanagh's thesis is the country side, the antithesis is the urban life and the synthesis is the urban country side which means that the poet searches for the beauty and nature in the city and everywhere and because he loves nature "he can see the finger of God even in a nettle." (Qt. in Antoinette, 2001: p.37).

As a person of estrangement and after his fame, Kavanagh disowns and estranges his early antipastoral works especially his poem "The Great Hunger" for lacking of comedy and being "not fully born" (*Collected Poems*, xiv). Nevertheless, Kavanagh still antipastoral in respect of denying Irishness and politics in his literary works. Thus, he succeeds in his literary estrangement by making the familiar unfamiliar.

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