


Article

By herself – Analysis of the Short Story “The Bride” by Maeve Brennan

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ABSTRACT

This article is an analysis of the short story “The Bride”, by the Irish writer Maeve Brennan, from the perspective of the Irish diaspora to the USA and, in particular, of the female migration. As a theoretical framework, it uses Stuart Hall’s theory of fragmented identity; Halbwachs’ concept of memory, and Silva’s theorization of alterity. Moreover, McWilliams and Murphy’s literary criticism of Brennan’s work, among others, perform a special role in this analysis.

KEYWORDS: *Short stories; Female authorship; Literature of Migration; Modern Irish Literature; Loneliness.*

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Maeve Brennan (1917-1993) was born during the movements for the independence of Ireland. At that time, England held Ireland as a colony. With the independence and the split of Ireland into two different countries, the Republic of Ireland, the southern and biggest part of the territory, kept Dublin as the capital city. The part north continued attached to the United Kingdom, with Belfast as its capital city. The word "Republic" means a lot when we look at Maeve Brennan's history because her parents were deeply involved with political and cultural issues at the beginning of the 20th century. They were republicans and they took part in the Easter Rising of 1916, an articulation that aimed to mobilize the Irish public opinion against the excesses of England. As a consequence of the political involvement, her mother, Una, was under arrest for some days, and her father, Robert, was sentenced to death. This penalty was changed afterward to a mandatory work penalty. Robert Brennan was arrested again because of his political participation in 1917 and in 1920, being in prison when Maeve was born.

Therefore, we may consider that Maeve Brennan's childhood was fragmented between the time her father was present and the time he was in jail for political reasons. Years later, after the Irish Free State split Ireland from the United Kingdom in 1922, Robert Brennan was nominated as a political figure of Ireland in the United States. He moved to Washington with his wife and daughters. By this time, Maeve was 17 years old. Thus, because of the Republic in formation in Ireland, Maeve became an immigrant in the USA, like many of the Irish people by that time. Different from them, however, she migrated under a good perspective of life. Maeve graduated in English in the USA, in 1938, while most of her young compatriots had to work full-time once arrived in America. In New York, she worked as a journalist and lived there until her death. The short story "The Bride" is one of her writings focused on the Irish women who migrated to work as servants. "The Bride" was written in 1953 and first published in *The New Yorker*, the magazine in which Brennan used to have a column about lifestyle in New York, the city where she published most of her literary work.

Emigration was a constant trace of Irish culture in the past. The main reason lies in the Great Famine between 1845 and 1849 when more than one million Irish people had to leave Ireland. The second great reason for the Irish withdrawal can be placed in the colonization of Ireland by The British Empire, which led Ireland to a constant situation of poverty. The number of Irish people heading to the USA was so high that, around 1930, a policy of restricting quotas for entry into North American began. As a result of this policy, for the first time in a century, the number of men returning to Ireland overcame the ones leaving the island to America.

According to Maureen Murphy, in the article *The Irish Servant Girl in Literature*, at the end of 19th century, "the pattern of the Irish emigration to the United States is a unique feature of western European migration

to America” (Murphy, 1998, p. 133). It is important to highlight that single females took great part in it. In spite of this female domination, there is much more male emigration literature. In this sense, Murphy emphasises the differences on what writers pictured on poems and ballads, such as the Irish immigrant poet Edward Cronin. On texts with men as main characters, the male voices describe their own sense of loss leaving Ireland, while the female voices are concerned with their mothers and family rather than their own challenges or losses, which implies the biggest sense of female altruism. Mostly, the heroines of these ballads are pictured as strong spirited, resourceful, brave, gentle, generous, pious and ethical. Self-sacrifice is another of the attributes of the Irish emigrant servant girls, while male Irish heroes win fortune and succeed. Some male writers build the men immigrants as characters who are successful due to hard work and strong moral, in opposition to the women immigrant who sacrifice themselves in the name of family, employers and the church. While the men hero is rewarded with fortune, the servant girl is often rewarded with return to Ireland.

It was so usual for Irish migrant women to become maids in the United States during this period that many of them received the generic nickname “Bridget”. In her stories Brennan humanizes the issue of migrants in the figure of Irish maids living in the United States, many of them depersonalized by the replacement of their names with the nickname “Bridget”¹. This was a name considered ordinary in Ireland and by which some Irish women were called in the host family’s houses where they found work in the USA, in part because of the ease in pronunciation, especially because the proper pronunciation of some Gaelic names could be difficult. In what regards the name Bridget, Murphy explains:

In Irish folklore, Saint Brigit is often described as a servant girl or as performing servant girl’s duties. The name itself is associated with servant girls so much so that the Oxford English Dictionary defines Bidy as “the familiar abbreviation for Bridget used chiefly in the United States for an Irish maid or servant. . . . Irish servant girls recall they were often addressed not by their own name but as Bidy or Bridget . . . It is an appropriate connection but it is the example of St. Bridget, perhaps as much as anything, that reinforces the image of the selfless Irish servant girl not only as she appeared in Irish-American fiction but, what is more important, as she appeared to herself. (Murphy, 1998, p. 146).

In Brennan’s narratives, some of the housekeepers become Bridgets, Biddies, or Bridies (shorter forms). Destitute from their identities, far from home, and in a different cultural environment, they had only one another. These women start to be seen as pieces of social gear instead of human beings taking part in a community. Through the reading of Brennan’s fictional writings, we can realize that these Irish women were in fact blurred in the work of cleaning and cooking. Thus, the American middle/high class may shine triumphantly in the “American

¹This is mentioned also in *Philomena*, movie by Stephen Frears, 2013, based on a real story.

way of life” through the exploitation of the female Irish workforce. The name “Bridget” appears in the play *Long Day’s Journey into Night* (1956), by Eugene O’Neill, an important play in the canon of Irish-American literature canon, on which Bridget is the Irish maid of the Tyrone family, according to Murphy (1998).

But the model of a young woman making an effort to help her family dates back the Irish literary origins. According to Murphy, “Irish mythology has its own example of self-sacrificing sister in the figure of Fionnuala, from *The fate of the children of Lir*” (Murphy, 1998, p. 136). Fionnuala and her brothers were transformed into swans by their jealous step-mother and it is Fionnuala’s task to comfort and shelter her brothers under her wings, besides seeking her father’s help.

Brennan shows she is aware of the toughness of life for these characters’ real life during the decades of the 1950s and 1960s by writing narratives inspired by young and poor migrants. As a matter of fact, she can be considered an attentive writer who perceives the vicissitudes to which the women migrants, her countrywomen, were subjugated. In despite of her rare condition as a privileged Irish woman, once she used to work as a journalist and had a degree in America, Brennan was a writer aware of the experience that shaped the lives of most of Irish women in the USA. According to David Katzman, in “Seven Days a Week” (In: Palko, 2007, p. 76), young Irish women constituted the biggest percentage of foreign housekeepers in the first decades of the 20th Century, in the USA.

Many of these women immigrated to run from poverty in Ireland and they used to make domestic services in the USA for low wages (nowadays that is the reality of many migrants, all around the world), even so their pocket money used to represent a big help to their families back in their homelands. Brennan had met some of these Irish women working as maids who inspired her narratives in American houses during dinners on which she was a guest – an Irish woman occupying the other end of the board. Many of these Irish servants she met in a refined part of New York, named Sneden’s Landing, where Maeve Brennan lived after her marriage. This gated community was the inspiration for Herbert’s Retreat. Situated 30 miles from New York on the East side of the Hudson River, it served as the setting for some of Brennan’s short stories, especially those talking about “Bridgets”.

The choice of displaying servants as her main characters shows Brennan’s empathy toward her countrywomen. At the same time, when she brings servants forth in her plots Brennan projects her own assimilation of the social differences and her discomfort with some of the values kept by the rich society in New York, in the decade of 1950s. Brennan’s maids are figures who are servants but not serviles, as Murphy explains about Irish servant girls of twentieth-century American literature.

Ellen McWilliams, in the article “Avenging ‘Bridget’: Irish Domestic Servants and Middleclass America in the Short Stories of Maeve Brennan”, argues that Brennan’s reimagining of the Irish Bridget can be approached as a form of feminism revisionism. McWilliams understands that Brennan offers an alternative story of the Bridgets, in which the empowerment of the figure of the domestic servant can be understood in terms of the role in the model Brennan modelled for herself by fashioning herself as an alternative and empowered model of Irish womanhood (McWilliams, 2013a, p. 101). American society used to associate Irish immigrants to servants. However, these same people were reading Maeve Brennan’s fashion clues to the new season and were attentive to what she points as “the last and definite style mark” on the pages of one of the more relevant fashion magazine in the country, *The New Yorker*.

Analysis of “The Bride”

In “The Bride” Brennan delineates the identity of an Irish woman working in the United States as maid. The story of the main character, Margaret Casey, works as an example of dozens of other Irish girls and young women feeling homesick, treated as outsiders in the family’s houses where they work with no bounds in their workplace, having relationships with also migrant men, learning how to live in an odd place, under new and challenging rules. The story is influenced by what Brennan used to see in the USA: Irish women migrating and working at family homes, due to the lack of employment in Ireland. In this environment of poverty and no opportunities in Ireland, they must help their own family by sending money home.

One of the reasons why young Irish women migrants used to opt for domestic work, even if they could have other choices of jobs in the USA, we may infer that is because domestic chores were what they already did back in Ireland, according to Palko (2007). Even if they were not professionals in the domestic field in their hometown, most of them came from big families, with many siblings and no luxury, helping in the housekeeping and in the rearing of the youngest. Another reason lies in the domestic universe which put them in company with other Irish in a similar situation (outsiders in the USA) and culture. Even if they did not come from the same Irish town or county, they were a cohesive group in sharing memories and aspirations: “It was in the company of their fellow immigrant domestics that these women began the process of assimilation into American life” (Palko, 2007, p. 77). Still, in “their” kitchens, they were supreme, feeling almost at home as if at least that space was their own.

The first paragraph of “The Bride” focuses on actions. What happens at this part of the narrative, the beginning of the short story, to locate the reader in the sense of: (1) who are the characters, (2) where they are and (3) what is happening. The circumstances of the first sentences help the reader to understand something important about

the main character, Margaret: she is an outsider at that house. We can infer this through the information of where her room is located (at the top floor, apart from the rest of the rooms) and by the way she sits on her own bed (on the edge, not comfortable). These circumstances let the reader to know that Margaret lives apart from the family and she does not feel comfortable there. Margaret's desolation is reinforced by the fragment: "The phone was shut off, the refrigerator was disconnected, the windows all were locked, and all the beds, except hers, stripped for the summer" (Brennan, 2000, p.153), as a matter of fact, the family does not really care about Margaret. She will be in the house for at least one more day, as her marriage will be held on the following day. But even the refrigerator is disconnected. This shows how low the family esteems their maid. We can almost infer that Margaret's presence in the house is an empty house to the family, as they turned all the appliances off. Just as if she were less like a human being and more like a plant or any other appliance. It is her wedding day eve and she cannot even drink a glass of cold water. The sentences are grammatically displayed in passive voice, which also embodies a message to readers: it was not Margaret's action to turn off the appliances. As the text displays her actions in active voice in the beginning of the narrative, if she was the one who had turned off the appliances, the text would maintain the active voice pattern. Due to the change in voice from active to passive, we can infer the bride did not closed the house herself, but someone else closed and turned everything off, despite of the fact Margaret remains in there.

From the statement "Margaret had dreaded the moment of their departure" (Brennan, 2000, p. 153), the narrator steps into Margaret's head and heart. Then, the reader, who is already aware of the scenery, is informed about Margaret's feelings. The verb "feel" itself appears on the next lines. As the short story goes on, we have a much more psychological narrative, pervaded by actions expressed through material processes when it mentions her past making use of two flashbacks, which suggests Margaret's thoughts are fragmented between the present and the past. The first flashback goes back years before, in Margaret's hometown, to the night preceding Madge's wedding. The second flashback goes back to Margaret's childhood and to an expected tour that never happened.

To Stuart Hall (2006), fragmented identities characterize modern individuals. Societies had faced sociocultural changes in 20th century, which fragmented the understanding of social individuality, until then is had been considered as solid. Margaret is presented as a fragmented individual, divided into life in Ireland, which somehow she wants to return to after making some money in the United States, and her life far from Ireland, as an immigrant that does not belong to the small island any anymore.

The identity of Margaret Casey is constituted by her memories, by what she lived with her family in Ireland, and by what she experienced by herself in the USA. Both at home and at Smith's house she had to

deal with the fact she has not been important to anyone. At home, she testified her mother's sorrow because the older daughter got married: “there were fewer tears shed over Margaret's departure for a foreign land than over Madge's decision to marry a boy she had known all her life” (Brennan, 2000, p. 155). At the house she works she cannot count on the family's support, not even on her wedding day. The lonely and not loved person she felt she was in Ireland reverberates in the relationships in the new place. Thus, she has no bonds with the employers and keeps a relationship with Carl only to have some companionship.

Both, at home and at the Smith's, the lack of bonds happens because the other people also do not see Margaret as a relevant person, once she is the one open to establishing connections. The only one prone to be by her side is the person she does not really like, Carl. With regards to memory and its importance to the identity constitution, Halbwachs (2003) reveals that even the succession of the most personal memories is explained by the changes that take place in our relationships with the various collective environments and the transformations that take place in them, individually and together. Personal memory would always be located within the collective or group memory. The memory may even sound personal to the individual, but it is influenced by shared memories, whether within the family, community, or nation.

Identity can be also associated with space, with a nation. According to Benedict Anderson (1991), for each person, the nation is a community imagined from individual experience and learning. Anderson explores the idea that nations are social constructions, not necessarily based on kinship ties or direct interactions between their members, but rather based on a shared imagination of belonging to the same community. The idea of a nation being born as a Republic permeates Maeve Brennan's history, once because of the Revolution which set the Republic of Ireland free that her parents moved to the USA. Thus, she observed other Irish migrants and chose to write about those people working as servants far from home to make a living. For Hall (2006), the symbolic and representative discourse of national culture is a way of making sense of the national culture, and it influences both our actions and the conception we have of ourselves. Identity can be seen as a form of security: belonging to a place, which is part of us and can be recreated whenever we want to or need to. It is also a construction based on otherness – on the recognition of similarities and differences. In the perception of the existence of the other and their perception of us. There is no closed identity, but the various forms of coexistence can interfere with the formation of an individual's identity. That's why Margaret developed herself as a fragmented individual, as she has no strong bonds with anyone.

Maybe because Margaret sets herself up as a fragmented individual, incommunicability determines her relationships. In addition, she became a fragmented individual due to not had happened proper communication developed within her family. She had not an outright dialogue with

her mother and sister. Instead of that, she felt apart from her family. It is the same with the Smiths, to whom she plans to say something, but does not succeed, finding her speech changed by their reactions. This is what happens when she wants to tell them to stay with her in a difficult moment for her which is her marriage since they were her only “family” in the USA, but she says nothing. Also, when she plans to give notice, but with no reason blurted out she was going to marry Carl and then there was no way to come back and undid the already said. As McWilliams highlights, it is revealing “that Margaret feels obliged to offer a reassuring picture to her middle-class employers of her life outside their walls, one that promises an upward move on the social scale” (McWilliams, 2013a, p. 102). It is if she needed to follow the American family life model in order to provide them with a reasonable excuse to leave her job. There is a system of exclusion permeating the main character, in which Margaret is foreign both to the world she left and to the world she lives in.

Moreover, the lack of communication is the predominant feature of her relationship with Carl as well. She does not love Carl and bestows him with promises because of his persistence. She feels he is beneath her, not only because he is a plumber, but also because he is not tough enough and shows himself as a good-natured person. Margaret is sure her sister Madge would grasp these characteristics of Carl in the first minute she lay her eyes on him, as we see in the fragment: “He would never fit with the crowd at home. They would laugh at him behind his back and say he was thick. Madge’s cruel eyes would cut clear through the smart American clothes to see the soft, good-natured, easily hurt fellow underneath” (Brennan, 2000, p. 156).

The same adjective that makes Carl inappropriate as a person to Margaret’s family, being good-natured, is also used to describe herself by the neighbors when her mother is crying, before Madge’s wedding, and Margaret said she would not leave home: “the neighbors nodded approvingly and said that was a good daughter” (Brennan, 2000, p. 155). If she was the good one, by the opposition, Madge was less good, and even so, Madge had attention and her mother’s love. According to Eric Landowski (2002), the subject acquires awareness of himself, of his presence in the world, from the difference, regardless of order, character, or variation. The construction of the “I” goes through a process of exploring the world. Both in relation to the world that surrounds him, as in relation to himself and the other, the subject, in the same way, is constituted by difference. The subject would need another to reach a sense of his own existence. This is because the subject attributes something specific to this difference, a determined or suggested content, precisely what separates the self and the other. In this way, the subject defines itself or tries to define itself, from a self-constructed image and also considers the image that this other sends back to the self. Even though Margaret is a good daughter and all, Madge is the favorite, and the understanding gives to Margaret a bad feeling about being a good

person. An understanding that good people do not achieve the best things in life and that being good can mean also being a little fool and weak.

Lack of communication also appears in the mysterious tours of the tourist buses out into the country, when Margaret was a child. Her parents had promised her to go on one of these tours someday, but they always had an excuse to keep her from experiencing it. The buses with only the driver knowing the destination in the Irish countryside tell the reader about people being driven, having their lives decided by others, but also it means lack of communication as a practice between adults. We can connect the people being driven with the history of Ireland, being explored and ruled by the British for centuries, which is part of Brennan's memories as daughter of revolutionaries. If we associate these buses with the political situation in Ireland until independence, it is something good that Margaret's parents never let her go, because it means that another kind of future was predicted for her, a future with a range of possibilities in the United States. Or else not stay in the old continent being controlled by the British, but the possibility to assume her life in a new place.

Memory makes it possible to revisit the past, not as it was, but with images modified several times by the different moments/circumstances in which the memories occurred. In addition to imagination, memories are also articulated through language, with which the subject expresses himself, gives meaning to the world and the representations made about it. But Margaret associates the mysterious buses of her memories with a possible conduction to death, fearing that the vehicles would never come back at all. In some way, other people's decision guide Margaret. She travels to work in a different country when what she wants in fact is to stay in Ireland. Moreover, she accepts Carl even though she does not love him, and she agrees with the marriage even if what she really wants is to give notice to the Smiths and find a new job in another city.

Margaret fears the disapproval of her family in relation to Carl would extend to disapproval towards her. She keeps engaged only because she has no other person to count on and maybe because of Carl's persistence. Even when they are at the same level at home, Margaret feels she is superior to her boyfriend. "When he reached the second-floor landing, he looked up and saw her. . . She wanted to scream at him that he was beneath her and that she despised him" (Brennan, 2000, p. 157-158). Much more than not being Irish or being poor Carl's weakness, according to Margaret, lies in his tendency to reveal his feelings. Maybe because she was once sweet, she feeds her dreams of traveling in a charabanc, as her parents had promised and repeatedly deceived her, as the day out never happened for her. But, to someone that had only rosary beads for herself, Carl is at least a warm body to have some bonds with.

In regards to the narrator, it reproduces Margaret's worldview and, according to her values, what is good and desirable has no connection

with getting married to a German plumber. She accepts marrying him as a postponed decision, believing she would manage to fix this on time. She usually postpones decisions. She chooses to live in the dreamed future while things are not good at present, but because of her difficulty communicating with other people, she commits herself repeatedly to a life she does not really want. We could say just as if Margaret was living on one of her dream tours with an unknown destination she wanted to take. As well as Margaret, the narrator seems to have a Catholic background. Similar to someone that grew up in a very religious place, like Ireland, for example, because when analysing Margaret's probabilities of changes in life, the narrator turns to God as a saviour. "If only God had given Margaret the strength to wait a while longer, something might have turned up . . . There was no limit to the things that might have happened, if she'd only had patience" (Brennan, 2000, p. 156). This practice of waiting for a miracle to happen in order to change her life for better, a passive way of life, matches with a Catholic way of thinking, different from a more pragmatic way of action, characteristic of Protestants in Ireland.

When expressing herself as Irish, in comparison with Carl, that is German, Margaret expresses they both as social identities, not perceiving herself or Carl as individuals. Nonetheless, not Carl or Margaret can be identified as completely German or Irish anymore, since they are young characters building new identities in a third country, a multicultural place. Maeve Brennan writes this short story in the beginning of the 20th century and that was a time of intense cultural movement on what concerns identities.

The narrative of "The Bride" is set in two closed spaces: the Smith's house and Margaret's memories of her home back in Ireland, when she remembers. But Margaret desires to be in open spaces, as a way to be free. In the first paragraph, she wants to go after the family asking them to accompany her. She used to dream with a tour to the countryside that never happened. In despite of how a home can be cosy, the narrative keeps no cosiness, and the home spaces are related to coldness in people's feelings towards Margaret.

The way Margaret blames her sister for stealing everything from her without lifting a finger echoes England's ways of exploiting Ireland for centuries. Another aspect which mirrors the sister's relationship to the political history between Ireland and England can be considered the geographic position of both countries, side by side, and also the Celtic background in common. By replacing the Irish language and culture for the English one, the British left Ireland in a state in which the Irish people could not come back to their culture or else to a widely use of Gaelic even after the independence. By this time, the Irish people were in a position where they did not want to keep the English tradition. However, the new generations, after centuries of exploitation, did not know how to live as Irish people anymore as their ancestors did when they were.

Under these terms, the Irish Literary Revival, in the late 19th and early 20th century, was thought by some writers and people connected with cultural issues, such as the poets W. B. Yeats and Lady Gregory, to bring the Irish and the Celtic cultures back into life also and develop the Irish Nationalism for the younger. Something similar happens with Margaret towards Madge: the protagonist feels despoiled by her sister and sees no perspective to go back home, at least not in the way she used to live.

In “The Bride”, Margaret’s “revival” is related to the start of a new life alongside Carl, in the USA. The title of this short story refers to what actually bothers Margaret at the moment the narrative is in progress: she is a bride and her wedding is the following day, there are few chances of getting free of this commitment by the time the narrative progresses. Being a bride is exactly what Margaret does not want because it ties her to a person she is not inclined to and whom she considers inferior. In Margaret’s view, Carl is not in the same position as she is, as he is not Irish (he is German), he is a plumber, he is sympathetic and it is not good in Margaret’s opinion, in opposition to herself, as she learned to be tough, in a not loving enough family. All the qualities Margaret takes as positive, including the actions she wants to take, oppose the idea of getting married: moving cities, traveling to Ireland, and opening a business in her hometown. She wants to be free and the marriage ties her to an undesirable person, maybe forever. Although she misses a homey atmosphere and feels lonely, Carl is not the kind of family Margaret longs for. Her feelings and thoughts differ from what a bride traditionally can feel or think on a wedding’s eve. Margaret resembles much more someone who is about to face a sacrifice than to her own marriage, not because of the union, but because it represents her disconnection from her home place and maybe the loss of freedom.

The title of this short story is relevant in terms of the definite moment in which Irish immigrant women had to make a decision. In other terms, until their wedding abroad they could feed some hope of returning to Ireland since most of them had the idea of traveling in order to work, make some money, and go back home after some time. But once they get married in the host country, most of them in the USA and many times with a no Irish man, since in America they get in touch with people from all around the world, their returning home would be placed in a dream field forever. Therefore, the marriage can mark the definite choice for the foreign country for these women and it could be a sad and challenging moment of their lives. McWilliams sees Margaret Casey almost as a Joycean character, by the serious way Brennan explored Margaret’s paralysis:

Like Evelin, petrified on the Dublin quays in Joyce’s eponymous story, or Little Chandler’s terrible recognition of his own powerlessness in ‘A Little Cloud’, the main character of ‘The Bride’, who is about to leave her employers to marry her German fiancé, undergoes similar agonies. (McWilliams, 2013a, p. 102).

The story in “The Bride” reverberates also in the novel *Brooklyn* (2009), by the Irish writer Colm Tóibín. *Brooklyn* and “The Bride” focus in an Irish young woman that has to migrate to the USA because of the lack of opportunities in Ireland and/or as a way to help the family back there. They are both lonely women living among strangers, feeling homesick and disconnected from their new life in America. They both have an older sister that is a model in some way, a cold and distant mother, and plumber boyfriends by whom they did not fall in love. Both of them are walking into marriages without no emotional connection, but are inspired by the sense of practice, what leads us to think they are going to stay in the USA and both were the Irish girls who “made” this country. The way the main character of *Brooklyn* resembles Margaret Casey and the similarities between Brennan’s and Tóibín’s creations of these characters can be an indication of how often stories like these indeed happened.

In the article *Theorising Exile*, Michael Böss writes that the migrant reconciles themselves with their experience of exile, “loss and uprootedness by negating the permanence of the exile, seeing it, instead, as provisional” (Böss, 2006, p. 32). It is like a sense of return soon “lingers as a subliminal coordinate” (idem) of the migrant’s existence. For Margaret Casey and other Bridgtes, to marry is like losing the chance to go back home.

Margaret’s loneliness on the evening before her wedding day contrasts with the evening before her sister’s marriage, Madge. A group of people visited Madge, who was proud and happy “posturing around in her wedding dress of blue silk, showing off before the neighbors” (Brennan, 2000, p. 155). Margaret has nobody to show off to. In opposition to her sister, who dressed her wedding dress, Margaret’s dress hung in the closet and it is not even a proper dress, but a jacket and skirt. While her sister had a blue silk dress, a shiny colour that evocates happiness, in a noble tissue such as silk, Margaret has a navy-blue shantung, which is a dark and more formal colour, not really proper to a young bride, and it is made of a tissue derivative from silk, but not in an equal level of softness and nobility. Through Margaret’s perception of herself in relation to her sister, they were both made of the same (genetic) material, but in some way Margaret feels beneath, a loser, disconnected.

The narrator’s solidarity level in relation to Margaret is low. As in “Of course, it was her own idea in the first place to get married the day after they left for the summer” (Brennan, 2000, p. 153), the narrator does not ease Margaret’s fault for being alone in her marriage’s eve. This statement is from the narrator, but it can be read also as Margaret’s own thought, on which she blames herself for her loneliness. There is also a prejudgement from the narrator when says “It would be heartless to tell him straight out that she had no use for him” (idem, p.154), in what concerns a possible intention of Margaret may nurture in breaking up with her boyfriend. In some points of the narrative, the narrator’s voice

and Margaret’s voice are displayed in the same paragraph, with no linguistic marks, which would point to a direct speech, as in: “Margaret sat as astonished as though they had ordered her out of the house. All I wanted to do was give notice, she thought, and here I’ve gone and committed myself” (*idem*), which means the access of the narrator to Margaret’s thoughts.

Conclusion

The Irish writer Anne Enright, on an article to *The Guardian*, says Maeve was conceived 37 weeks after the Easter Rising, in 1916. She was practically conceived together with the Republic. Even so, she chose not to live in the Republic dreamed by her parents. In spite of had been a “daughter of the Irish Revolution”, Brennan chose not to live in Ireland. With the decision to stay in the USA even after her family had gone back to Ireland, a loneliness time had begun in her life. In the decade of 1980, it is as if she had disappeared and her work had almost been forgotten. By this time, she wandered in hotels in 42nd Street in New York and died alone, in a rest home, 76 years old, in 1993.

“The Bride” is representative of Brennan’s short stories, with a lonely migrant Irish woman in her wedding’s eve, feeling she does not belong to any place. The protagonist, Margaret Casey, does not fit to her fiancée world, because he is just another poor immigrant, used to back doors, not Irish, but even worst, because he is a good-natured person. Carl’s arrival by the back door, which is the servant’s entrance, is “a reminder of the fixity of the social hierarchy that conspires against” (Mcwilliams, 2013b, p. 103) the couple of servants.

Margaret also does not belong to the family to whom she works for ten years, because she is not accepted among them, not as friend or as an equal at least. She lost the timing to go back home, in Ireland, to show herself as a winner in the new world, because her mother passed away and her sister does not care, and she could not find her place in the USA yet. She cannot come backwards, and she finds no way to stay comfortable in the new place. Thus, Margaret is a character who feels the no belonging towards anyone or anywhere feeling, and this feeling is the tonic in Maeve Brennan’s stories.

In “The Bride”, the maid that is the main character who keeps her name, Margaret Casey, even if most of Irish female servants had had their names changed into “Bridget” at the time. However, the word “bride” from the title and the word that also nominates Margaret in this narrative, since the narrative occurs during her marriage’s eve, refers to the name Bridget because of the phonetic resemblance. The word “bride” in the title recalls the name Bridget, under which some of the Irish maids were called in the USA mainly due to the difficulty in pronunciation of their Gaelic names. As an Irish servant living in the employer’s house just as an appliance which belongs there, Margaret is another Bridget, devoid of her identity and culture.

There is a sense of Irish superiority that makes the main character, Margaret Casey, feel she is closest to the American family she works for (even if they do not care about her) than of her German migrant boyfriend. The way the story ends, with Margaret retreating into powerlessness, refusing to reveal to Carl what she intends to, recalls Joyce's "Evelin", that feels paralyzed in the harbour, passive like a helpless animal, since both Margaret and Evelin face a future they do not like and without strength to fight for their happiness, like McWilliams (2018) highlights.

The character Margaret recalls Joyce's Eveline, however differently from this character from *Dubliners* (2012 [1914]), Brennan's protagonist is paralysed after she crosses the Atlantic. On the other hand, "The Bride" and *Brooklyn* show migration as a dialectical movement, which affects both the individual migrant or the migrant's receiving space and the group/space left behind.

As a matter of fact, despite of being the majority of immigrants in the USA Brennan is giving voice to a group of people who is not used to be represented when she tells stories with Irish servants as main characters.

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Sozinha – análise do conto “The Bride”, de Maeve Brennan

RESUMO

Este artigo analisa o conto “The Bride”, da escritora irlandesa Maeve Brennan, sob o enfoque da diáspora irlandesa para os EUA e em especial da migração feminina. Como referencial teórico, é utilizada a teoria de identidade fragmentada, de Stuart Hall; memória, de Halbwachs, e alteridade, de Silva; além de uma visada em artigos de McWilliams e Murphy, entre outros, como crítica literária à obra de Brennan.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Contos; Autoria feminina; Literatura de Migração; Literatura Irlandesa Moderna; Solidão.*