Different Cultures, Different Identity Constructions: An analysis of the impacts of a conservative upbringing in the novel Stir-Fry

Culturas diferentes, construções identitárias diferentes: Uma análise dos impactos de uma educação conservadora no romance Stir-Fry

Esther Gazzola Borges

Abstract: *This paper aims at analysing the possible impacts of religion and conservative cultural standards in the novel* Stir-fry *(1994), written by Emma Donoghue. The story is set in rural Ireland in the early 1990s, and this study centres on how Maria Murphy, the main character, perceives her own Self as well as the society surrounding her. The analysis will focus on the different excerpts from the first two chapters of the book, in which Maria has first moved to Dublin and interacts not only with the different characters but also with a different, more modern, and fast-paced society. The goal is to examine how the strong religious background that was perpetuated in rural Ireland affects Maria's sense of identity and what she constructs as the "Self" and the "Other". By means of the analysis, it was possible to understand the way in which she deals with the cultural differences of a big city, in opposition to the traditional society she was raised in, and how she expresses this conservative upbringing in the face of what is "different", more specifically by way of stereotypes as well as repression.*

Keywords: *Identity; Stereotypes; Irish Literature; LGBTQ+.*

Resumo: *Este artigo tem como objetivo analisar os possíveis impactos da religião e dos padrões culturais conservadores no romance* Stir-fry *(1994) escrito por Emma Donoghue. A história se passa na Irlanda rural no início da década de 1990, e o estudo se concentra em como a protagonista Maria Murphy percebe seu próprio "Eu", bem como a sociedade ao seu redor. O objetivo é examinar como a forte configuração religiosa que foi perpetuada na Irlanda rural afeta o senso de identidade de Maria e o que ela constrói como sendo o "Eu" e o "Outro". Por meio da análise, foi possível compreender como ela lida com as diferenças culturais de uma cidade grande em contraposição à sociedade tradicional na qual foi criada, e como expressa essa formação conservadora diante do "diferente", mais especificamente por meio do uso de estereótipos e da repressão.*

Stir-Fry was published in 1994 and the story is set in the time frame of the early 1990s. The novel begins with Maria finding an ad on her university board from two women searching for a roommate, with the warning of "No bigots!" and the symbol of the feminist movement drawn on it. The main character has just started college in Dublin and is living with her aunt, but wishes to move out to somewhere else, so she can be more independent. Although she lives comfortably, Maria seeks change. She says that "If Dublin was going to feel so odd . . . then the odder the better" (5). Although slightly apprehensive with the unknown, Maria decides to call and, after meeting the writers of the ad, Ruth and Jael, at a dinner party, the young woman moves into the apartment. Extremely lonely in the new city, Maria's social life practically revolves around her new roommates, except for a few college colleagues. Maria is characterized by being very young and naive, almost innocent in some respects. The character is 17 years old at the beginning of the novel, and in her interaction with other characters, she constantly scolds herself, thinking that she sounds too young and inexperienced when expressing her thoughts and feelings. One day, when arriving from work, Maria is faced with an unexpected scene: Ruth and Jael kissing, with a level of intimacy and affection that makes it clear that this is not the first time that such an event has occurred. After reflecting on the last few weeks of living together, Maria scolds herself for not having noticed before, since it now seems obvious that the two are a couple. At the same time, she is irritated and resents her roommates for not having openly told her, asking herself "how the hell was she meant to know?" (69)

A great part of her naivety can be credited to her lack of social awareness regarding marginalized identities (such as LGBTQ+ people or other social movements) as a direct result of her cultural background growing up. Her upbringing in rural Ireland did not guarantee her a keen eye for diversity and non-normative existences, and this becomes very clear on her first interactions with her roommates and university peers. Despite initial anger and resistance, driven by prejudice based on stereotypes, Maria slowly begins to overcome the barriers of internalized aversions and gets closer and closer to Ruth and Jael, finally realizing that their sexuality is not something harmful. The relationship between the three becomes increasingly closer and intimate, until, at the end of the year, Maria is forced to face the feelings she has been harbouring towards her roommates. It comes to a point where Maria has no other choice but to confront her desire, the intricate intimacy she has created with these people and how it has affected her, and the grant possibility that her love for them is one that goes beyond friendship.

Through the course of just a few months, the main character experiences a series of essential changes and achievements. Throughout the novel, Maria undergoes an intense process of metamorphosis and growth, leaving the end of her childhood years behind, together with her very closed off vision of what constitutes as "normal" and her "Self", and becoming an adult that is self-assured in her newly formed identity. The story follows the character's process of maturing and transformation as she left her hometown in rural Ireland to attend university in Dublin. This change marks the beginning of Maria's self-awareness regarding how fragmented her identity is. The character must come to terms with the fact that the image she has constructed of herself is made under the historical-social influences of her hometown. By changing the environment in which she lives, Maria establishes a relationship with a variety of people who come from different backgrounds, putting her face to face with those she classifies as the "Other". By the terms of Jean François Staszak (2009), the creation of the "Other" is the result of a discursive process by which a dominant in-group ("Us," the Self) constructs one or many dominated out-groups ("Them," Other) through the stigmatization of an either real or imagined difference, that is presented as a negation of identity and therefore can be considered a possible motive for discrimination. When it comes to rural Ireland, where Maria is raised and therefore creates her cultural expectations of Self and Other, that means being white, catholic, male, and heterosexual. After moving, Maria is forced to not only to face a reality and the existence of people who are not acknowledged by the environment in which she is raised but also make her deal with the possibility that what she believes that constitutes the Other is not what she expected. In addition, and as a result of this contact with the "different", the main character begins to recognize herself as those she had initially classified as the Other. Thus, the identity perspective of the constructed "I" is destabilized.

In Dublin, not only in the new apartment but also in Ruth and Jael themselves, Maria finds a new home. According to Avtar Brah (1996), the issue of home is intrinsically linked to how processes of inclusion and exclusion operate and are experienced by the subject in certain circumstances. Maria's rural hometown is immersed in a traditionalist heteronormative culture. It defines the way she sees the world, and in consequence, her way of categorizing it, including its reaction with groups with which she does not identify. The experiences she undergoes in the new home she finds in Dublin modify this previously created vision, not only about the Other but about herself. Stuart Hall (1990) states that, when evaluating a subject's speech, it is necessary to keep in mind the traditions and inheritances of expression and cultural creativity present in the context of their raising. In this sense, the past is not only the position we are talking about but also a necessary resource about which one must talk about. Although Maria tries to step back from her cultural background, it has an

enormous influence on the way she perceives society, from the use of stereotypes and concepts of right and wrong to the invisibility of certain communities. Maria cannot even consider the possibility of her roommates being lesbians and the concept of being a lesbian herself even less, as her upbringing does not allow her to consider the existence of lesbians in the first place. Her local and social environment change affects her present, and the experiences she goes through become part of a new stage in her life. Consequently, there is a change in her self-identification.

Ireland And Sexuality in *Stir Fry*

One of the biggest plot points in *Stir-Fry* is Maria's difficulty in accepting the Other and behaviours or identities that she had considered, until then, to be "wrong" in some sort of way, or even simply imagining that some people are different from her idea of what "normal" is. As previously mentioned, Maria's general social perception of society are shaped by the rural environment in which she was raised. According to Luke Gibbons (1991), rural Ireland persisted with an ideology of traditional values in the face of modernization, collectively refusing to abandon the normative and outdated beliefs held until then. At the beginning of the book, the main character states the need to leave the rural environment and change certain aspects of her life. This need reflects the final argument of the character's internal discussion about whether to move into an apartment with feminist roommates or not, and her decision to keep living there after finding out about their sexuality, and in many other situations where her traditional values are brought to light. Her past and upbringing, in addition to her age and lack of life experience, lead Maria to have a traditional and closed view at first, even if not consciously or purposefully. Her education guaranteed her a limited vision that renders the couple invisible, because how can they be together if both are women?

During Maria's first dinner with her future roommates, as she listens to Ruth and Jael talking about their lives and relationship with Dublin, the character thinks to herself "How many years before she would become a foreigner like them?" (13). It is interesting that she categorizes as foreigners not people who are not from Ireland, but simply those who are raised in a different city, with a different cultural setting and lifestyle. The character labels them as "Other", as they have lived through different experiences and social expectations than the ones she was raised with. It shows from the very beginning how much of her thought process relies on establishing difference and how strongly she positions herself separated from it, though not necessarily in a negative sense. Soon after, in contrast to her new roommates, Maria talks about her own life back at home while growing up:

> Maria was reminded that she still had to prove herself. "About what you were asking—I can't really say what I like to do. . . . t's just that I've never lived away before, so I don't know what I'll be like. At home, I draw and watch wildlife documentaries and stuff. I sit around nattering to Mam while she cooks, and keep my brothers away from breakable objects." (20)

This excerpt exposes how Maria's upbringing was, and how much it affected the understatement of her own identity. The character lived a very tame life, without hobbies that diverged from her expected future, as a calm, domestic wife and mother. Her life revolved around taking care of her brothers and helping her mum at home, with no mentions of going out, except for church and family or religious events. In truth, this shows how much Maria does not know about herself, how much of her identity she ties to her home and how hard it is for her to separate herself from it to try and think about what she likes. The experience of leaving the place in which she grew up into a completely different environment is her first chance to grow and find out more about herself, all the parts that are hidden and unseen and buried down after 17 years of a social life that does not allow for these parts to emerge and exist freely. As mentioned before, the character eventually discovers more about her Self and her likes, although certainly more than she had expected to.

When dealing with remnants of her upbringing that are ingrained in her values and routines, she also initially plans to continue attending Mass, but increasingly seems to be sabotaging herself, so she does not have to, forgetting to set the alarm to wake up, etc. An example of this can be seen right at the beginning of the second chapter, in the excerpt below:

> "Christian duty," Yvonne told her with a theatrical sigh. "But listen, about mass. Do you still go?"
> "Of course. I mean, yes," she went on more warily. She dipped to pick up a squashed can.
> "No, I just wondered, because so many people seem to stop as soon as they get to college." . . .
> "I sort of like it, especially if there's a good folk choir. It's peaceful."
> "Yeah, but are you very into the religious part of it? Do you actually believe?"
> "I suppose I do." Maria's voice was suddenly uncertain." (41-42)

In this interaction, Maria confirms she still goes to church but is uncertain when it comes to talking about her actual faith. When explaining why she still goes, she mentions the music and how peaceful it is. It seems to be something she does out of habit because she was raised going to church weekly and so "of course" she still goes to mass. It is, as Yvonne states, her duty as a Christian. This is also a habit that, as foreshadowed by Yvonne, slowly begins to die as Maria's

life in the city begins to pick up and get busier, and as she gets closer to her roommates. The longer she stays away from the conservative society in which she was raised and finds out more about herself and who she is away from it, attending such religious events stops being a priority.

We can see that although she maintains her positioning as regards her religious beliefs and church habits, she does so with hesitancy. It marks a contrast with the second excerpt analysed, in which she affirms not being able to say what she likes or not to do, as everything she had ever done until then was strongly based on her family. This marks a point of contingency, in which the character's resolution falters and aspects of her own undiscovered personality seep through. She has not changed completely to the point of simply abandoning everything she had done until then, or strongly affirming not to believe in God anymore, but she seems less certain, and more questioning of her likes and beliefs. A short number of months in the new city were not enough for her to abandon completely the faith and practices she had been carrying out her whole life, but it was enough for her to see that maybe they are no absolute truths and that perhaps they do not properly align with who she is or wants to be. The image she has built of her Self until that very moment is not a true reflection of her identity, as one is much more fragmented than the solid Christian, "good girl" identity, Maria had strived, deliberately or unconsciously, to represent to the ones around her, thus cementing a solidity to how she could understand herself. One's identity goes beyond one single image, and it can be much more than what her conservative upbringing had deemed to be possible.

Additionally, according to Robert Merton (1968), institutional norms are defined, regulated, and controlled by culturally defined goals, which leads to historical taboos such as the perceiving of homosexuality. All of this operates together to shape one's social practice and are not always constantly related: cultural emphasis on some goals varies independently of emphasis upon institutionalized means. There is a social structure that must be followed, and the proper adaptation to it works as a permit – if one achieves the aspirations determined by this structure, then they have a positive value or worth. This can be seen in terms of Maria's thoughts on marriage and heterosexuality, her need to get in relationships with men regardless of her stating a lack of attraction to them, all due to her trying to manage her family's expectations and values. Her family is responsible for the diffusion of cultural standards. Her parents expect her to follow this specific lifestyle, they teach her this is the correct and the expected and so, this is what she tries to achieve. The setting of these social expectations creates a false idea that by getting married and having children, as it is socially expected, one will be happy. The production and perpetuation of this social discourse leads to an established social conformity, and those who deviate from it can be seen as individual problems and not social. They are anomalies that, through seeking different ways of personal fulfilment, become

excluded. This can be seen as Maria tries to think of unmarried women and all she comes up with are either lonely or socially inept women, as it will be shown in the analysis section.

Little by little, the traditional values generated by her environment and culture in her upbringing, to which she clings while at the same time displays a deep will to withdraw, are dissolved in the creation of a new Maria. These changes are even verbally acknowledged by other characters. At the end of the book, in a discussion in which Maria finds it difficult to accept her desire and the profound change that this would cause in how she sees her Self, Jael tells Maria: "You don't know who you are . . . I've watched you for three months, you changed under my eyes, you've come so far." (228). According to Said (1994), people exist between the "old" and the "new", the contexts in which they are present, articulating the tensions, irresolutions and contradictions in the territories on which their cultural maps are positioned. Maria exists between her "I" created in the rural area of Ireland, and therefore reproducing the traditions and values of this original culture, and her "I" who resides in a busy and diverse urban environment. In this place, she lives with queer people, but only identifies herself as such for the first time when facing her own desire.

Maria seems to reproduce a line of thought that reinforces the concept of compulsory heterosexuality, which would be a direct result of her upbringing. This process is described by Gaytri Spivak (2010) when analysing the formation of the subaltern subject and his/her voice asks: how could the subordinate subject manage his/her speech? How could they articulate power, desire and interest? The traditional normative culture in the context of Maria's upbringing reproduces epistemic violence that uses the tactic of neutralizing the Other, making it unfeasible and expropriating it from any possibility of representation, and therefore silencing it. Consequently, Maria, being a product of this culture, reproduces the same structures of power and oppression. The Other is mute because the Other does not exist. Until the final moments of the novel, Maria is unable to conceive of the possibility of being anything other than heterosexual, since her background does not allow her to see and understand the Other, even less to become this Other. Still citing Spivak, the author argues that the path of sexual difference is doubly obliterated, since the very "ideological construction of gender maintains male domination" (287), an easy statement to note in the novel. The sexist culture is strongly reproduced in *Stir-fry*, although two of the main characters are feminist activists. Men tend to be the focus of Maria for a long time since she is constantly seeking attraction to them because she thinks this is the rule to be followed, the pattern to be reproduced.

Following Spivak's theory, the subaltern has no form of agency, as it is a necessarily heterogeneous subject that lacks both representation and voice – and therefore it cannot, in fact, speak. More specifically, because they are not heard, they cannot even represent themselves

(293). Maria is doubly subordinate due to her sexuality, although this second one is not recognized until the last moments. Due to being a woman and to having been born in a cultural context that does not allow the existence of lesbians, the character is doubly silenced in her society and can neither speak nor recognize her own need for speaking. She is not only oppressed for being a woman to the point of initially reproducing strong sexist comments towards a few university colleagues, but also so sexually silenced that she cannot even imagine that she is not heterosexual.

Going beyond her image, this cultural environment leads to a very specific set of constructions when it comes to who counts as the Other, which leads to the use and creation of social stereotypes. According to Walter Lippman (1922), subtle, but omnipresent influence, are those that feed and maintain stereotypes. These previous conceptions orient one's social perceptions. It is exactly through this subtleness of stereotypes, that we construct the concepts of "Us vs Them" (Breslin, 1991) that are the starting point for extreme negative reactions and bigotry. Although Maria does not express disgust towards her roommates or hatred per se, she feels anger and a certain level of discomfort when she finds out about their sexuality. Although she eventually overcomes these feelings and comprehends that lesbians are humans, just like her, and not any sort of monster or evil sinners, it is clear that there is an internalization of ideas and social roles that are spread, therefore being incorporated and believed by most of the society, and not singularly, affecting people from different social groups (Klinkenberg, 2008).

Similarly, Elizabeth Harkot-De-La-Taille (2016) exposes that when it comes to life in smaller, rural areas, the community consists of the sense of belonging and recognition for the individual, meaning that there is a tendency to preserve social behaviour that is acceptable. As larger cities tend to be more individualistic, and less community based, there is less pressure to fit into a certain expected lifestyle or identity group; there is more freedom to be oneself, although still dealing with some sort of social pressure. Furthermore, the collectivity in which one has been raised under is always a parameter, regardless of the person's wishes to step away from it, as it happens to Maria by going to Dublin. Although she is situated in a much larger city for a few months when she finds out about Jael and Ruth's relationship, her reaction is still mostly based on prejudice and stereotypes ingrained in her brain by the conservative culture she was raised in. She carries the beliefs of her origin, even if it does not take long for her to understand that they are not true. These constructs and the need for the establishment of social cohesion and tension, operating without generating any sort of antagonism, work as an internal regulation that is stimulated by fear or shame, which are sentiments motivated by values that are considered either positive or negative, based on how one sees themselves and how they are embraced by their communities. Maria holds deeply to the concept of her

sexuality more than anything else for a deep shame of being different, in a way that would be considered immoral and would eventually lead to her possible exclusion from society, as it's what has been culturally taught and shown to her. The idea of being part of such a marginalized group runs so deep inside her, that she cannot even understand, let alone recognize and accept, her own desire. It is only in the very last pages that she is able to face her own feelings and accept them, as she rejects a romantic proposal from one of her roommates by realizing that she is in love with the other one.

Furthermore, Harkot-De-La-Taille (2016) exposes that although many social movements, such as feminism, make an effort to change social and cultural values, such as how people of a specific gender are perceived by society, they have not yet achieved enough impact to completely erase these expectations. The notion of gender is created and regulated by their social treatment, through the process of validation that is based on social stereotypes. It is through these stereotypes that one has access and learns about the different cultural means of how to perform the Self. According to the author, in our daily lives, we are seldom invited to consider our relationships with the Other in a way that goes beyond presupposition but also constitutes (confirms, reformulates, questions) our ideas of Self and Other, based on our own actions. A universe that presents a relatively narrowed value system limits the characters that need to either contain or abandon their own desires to be accepted. They are obliged to act according to the existing value system with extremely limited possibility of freedom to expand such a system. They must contain themselves, and fit in, in order to belong, otherwise they will be ostracized and abandoned.

We can see examples of how these social treatments and roles, and the use of negative stereotypes to regulate other behaviours are used by Maria in different points at the start of the book. On her first week of classes, Maria witnesses another female student going through a school ritual called "the witch dunking", in which young women are submerged in the school fountain to perform an integration ritual and welcome the freshmen:

> Maria could see the woman now; she bucked and shoved, making vain attempts with one free hand to keep her billowing peachy skirt between her knees while a dozen boys towed her, head first, down the steps. . . . With a shriek and a violent kick one leg leaped free, but the sandal dropped off, and four hands caught the ankle again. "Heave! Heave!" They swung her twice over the water, their chant drowning her out. And then the body dropped with a splash. . . . Almost at once, a sleek black head emerged over the lip of concrete, dripping and laughing, calling for a helping hand. . . .
> "Were you watching the ritual witch-dunking?" Galway jerked his eye toward the lake.
> "She's no witch, she's a bimbo," retorted Maria, more viciously than she meant . . .
> She was laughing, for God's sake. How could she let them toss her into all that oil and sludge, and then laugh . . . I think it's sick." (25-26)

Maria's comment presents a sexist image of women, with clear expectations of how one should act, and a very harsh reaction if one acts differently. She calls the other student a bimbo based on her alleged sex life and stereotypes her considering what a "decent" girl should act like. Although the character has been presented as very sweet until this moment, when facing this reaction that deviates from what she considers to be the correct, expected behaviour, Maria grows angry and aggressive in her comments. It becomes evident that, although she moved to a different city seeking what's new and diverse, she has yet to learn how to deal with those who act differently from her own cultural standards. Further along the chapter, we have access to the "images" and "roles" of women that Maria had access to while growing up, and how that has affected her:

> Counting the lights of the small town nestling around her house, she realized that all the women she knew were wives and mothers. Except for the young ones heading for the uni, and that librarian with the hay fever, and a couple of teachers. And of course, Nelly the Nutter, who sat on the steps of the town hall, scratching her ankles. That night Maria slid down and tucked the quilt over her head and could not sleep for worrying what she would turn out to be. (27).

Maria's view on marriage and on the lifestyle she is expected to have is brought into focus. All women she knew were married and had children, and the few of them who broke this rule were either too young to be married, like herself, or had some sort of "quirkiness" that deemed them socially excluded and, therefore, unsuitable for marriage, such as having hay fever or being considered crazy. This lays the foundations for other regulating behaviour such as calling a woman a bimbo for laughing in an uncomfortable situation, when that would be considered an inappropriate reaction. Even if Maria's direct family is not the strictest or the most conservative, this paragraph says much about the society in which she grew up and the expectations and social pressures that are inserted and easily internalized by her and other young women. She must marry and have children, otherwise, something must be wrong with her. It is a lifestyle that she feels obliged to pursue, even if she does not want to. The same sort of reluctant relationship can be seen when it comes to religion and religious habits and beliefs, as per the excerpts analysed previously in this article.

Through excerpts from the first two chapters of the novel that show it is possible to understand more about how the character understands her identity, as well as what she perceives to be the Other when in contact with people who had a different upbringing than hers. By analysing Maria's first interactions in Dublin, it is possible to see not only the conservative values that the character has brought with her from a rural, conservative Ireland to the modern city but also the vague idea she has of herself. She is unable to tell her future

roommates her likes and dislikes, her hobbies or anything else about her personality, for until then her life had been focused on her family, by helping at home and taking care of her brothers. When in the first excerpt Maria calls her roommates and the rest of Dubliners "foreigners", she establishes the stark limits between Self and Other; hence, she is also a stranger, even to herself. Through subsequent excerpts we can see how the cultural values and expectations that were established during her childhood affect the way she perceives her own gender and what is expected of herself and other women.

There are very specific roles and actions that one can and should play, and breaking these rules cause strong, negative reactions and social exclusion, as it has been established that social coercion and pressure play a big role in the establishment of one's participation in society. Even Maria herself, who does not manifest excitement at the idea of following the traditional expected role of wife and mother, is quick to judge and use negative words against another young woman who behaves in a way she considers morally wrong, claiming it makes her "sick". Although the character is unwilling to commit to new experiences as she has been taught to live the "correct" way, this rejection seems to happen only on a superficial level. The shame and possibility of social rejection and exclusion are so ingrained that she also applies the same negative reaction and rejection to those who diverge from these conservative patterns, even though she herself feels restricted by them and does not completely agree or want to apply them in her life.

Conclusion

By analysing different excerpts from the novel, paired with different theorists approaching concepts of identity, cultural impacts and the use of stereotypes, one can infer that the character's upbringing has a strong influence on her sense of "Self" and how she perceives the "Other". Furthermore, it is possible to understand how she deals with the "different", and how that helps her to understand those aspects of herself in a new light and to try and understand the parts of her character she had never had the possibility of acknowledging before.

In these first chapters of *Stir-Fry*, Maria gives the first steps to separate herself from the strict concept of identity and narrow understatement of Self she had construed until then, based on her very conservative upbringing, to see that maybe these beliefs are not so true and standard, and the world is not as concrete and black and white as she had previously believed. These first contacts and questionings of the Self are the first to a long list of realizations until her final discovery of the most diverse aspects of herself that she had until then suppressed and categorized as belonging exclusively to what she called the "Other". Throughout the rest of the novel, by facing the "different" from up close, daily and inside her own home, Maria slowly

learns that one's identity is more than the eye can see and that her own identity is composed by more parts and fragments that she had noticed before. She is composed of the values and morals she was taught during her upbringing, and cannot separate herself from them completely, even if she no longer believes them to be true. Slowly, the group to which she thought to belong no longer fits her, and thus she starts to identify herself more and more with those she had considered being so different. Thus, the place of the "Self" and the place she had previously categorized as the "Other" intersect in some respects and become not so different from each other. The "Other" is part of the "Self" and vice versa, and they complement and carry each other throughout life even if there is a social tendency to establish them as total opposites with no similarities or contact. Regardless of these popular beliefs, our identities are formed by different aspects and fragments of our experiences and encounters. Therefore, like Maria, we too grow learning to cultivate an understanding of both our taboos and customs, as well as what lies beyond our own world view.

In conclusion, narratives carry the power to lead societies in the process of understanding and normalizing issues considered as impasses and inconsistencies related to the way in which the concept of identity is understood. This power, then, becomes even more relevant when we question identity representation and the fragility of these identities and their constructions in the post-modern world. Furthermore, it is necessary to take into account the growing waves of intolerance and the intense insertion of the social logic of "us" versus "them", implying a distant "I" and "Other" and in opposite states, in the current world. Especially those who are part of marginalized groups, and it must be reinforced as something positive in order to lead to the eventual normalization of the existence of these groups. Taking up Said (1994) again, it is the duty of the person who performs the intellectual work of analysis not to accept the given identity policies, but to show how all representations are constructed, why, who and with what components. *Stir-Fry* depicts Maria's story, but one can always blurry enough the details to see how the structure and conflicts of the novel can be applied to other experiences of conservative and restrictive ideology when facing differences, and the effects that leads to society.

Works Cited

Brah, Avtar. *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities*. Routledge, 1996, London.

Gibbons, Luke et al. "Challenging the Canon: revisionism and cultural criticism". In: Deane, Seamus (ed.). *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*. Field Day Publications, 1991, Derry.

Hall, Stuart. *A identidade cultural na pós-modernidade*. 7a ed. DP&A, 2002, Rio de Janeiro

---. "Cultural identity and diaspora." *Identity: Community, culture, difference*. Ed. Jonathan Rutherford. London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990. 222-37

---. *Questions of Cultural Identity*. SAGE, 2006, New York.

---. "Quem precisa da Identidade?" In: Silva, Tomaz Tadeu da (org.), Woodward, Kathrin & Hall, Stuart. *Identidade e Diferença: a perspectiva dos estudos culturais*. Vozes, 2014, Rio de Janeiro.

Harkot-de-la-Taille, Elizabeth. *Sentir, Saber, Tornar-se - Entre o Sensório e a Identidade Narrativa*. Humanitas, 2016, São Paulo.

---. "Construções do eu e do outro em Atwood e Munro; repercussões na leitura de si mesmo, do outro e de valores sociais contemporâneos". In: *VII Congesso Internacional de Estudos Canadenses - Interseções Brasil-Canadá: perspectivas transnacionais*. UFMG, 2003, Belo Horizonte.

Klinkenberg, J.-M.; Edeline, F. *L'Aventure des Modèles Interprétatifs ou la Gestion des Résidus*. Liège: Laboratoire DynaLang et Equipe SEM de l'Université Paris Descartes; Groupe μ, 2008. p. 22-35.

Lippmann, Walter. *Public Opinion*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1922.

Merton, Robert K. "Social structure and anomie". In *Social Theory and Social Structure*, Edited by Merton. p. 185–214. Free Press, 1968, New York.

Said, Edward. "Freedom from Domination in the Future". In: *Culture and Imperialism*. Vintage, 1994, London.

Staszak, Jean-François. "Other/Otherness". In: *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography*. P. 43-47. Elsevier, 2009.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. *Can the Subaltern Speak?* Trad. bras.: *Pode o subalterno falar?* [Translation by Sandra R. Almeida, Marcos P. Feitosa & André P. Feitosa.] UFMG, 2010, Belo Horizonte.