

# Compulsive Travelers and Irish Identity in Emer Martins Novels

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Odjel za anglistiku

Preddiplomski sveučilišni studij engleskog jezika i književnosti (dvopredmetni)

**Marija Vukić**

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Compulsive Travelers and Irish Diaspora in Emer Martin's Novels

Završni rad

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Zadar, 27. rujna 2018.



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## Introduction

This paper sets out to explore *Breakfast in Babylon* (1997) and *More Bread or I'll Appear* (2000) by an awarded Irish author Emer Martin. It will primarily focus on female protagonists, reasons why they decide to leave Ireland, and their experiences as migrants. It will also discuss gradual changes concerning Irish women's rights and roles from the late seventies until the mid-nineties. This work will try to explore how those roles evolved in a relatively short period, by analyzing female protagonists in those two novels. Furthermore, it will explore the lives of Irish diaspora, particularly young Irish women and the reasons why they do not seem to find happiness in their homeland. In my analysis one of the main secondary sources is going to be Bronwen Walter's *Outsiders Inside: Whiteness, Place and Irish Women (Gender, Racism, Ethnicity)* (2000), which thoroughly discusses issues of nation, gender, and ethnicity in the globalizing world. In this paper, I will try to demonstrate how the selected novels portray the characters in search of a new identity and the need to break strings that attach them to their Irish background.

Moreover, Zygmunt Bauman's concept of "liquid modernity" will be used to show how identity is not an unchanging concept. Bauman actually shows how identity is prone to changes in postmodern age, and his concept can be applied to the formation of new identities in the selected novels by analysis will also try to demonstrate how Martin portrays contemporary Irish reality and criticizes the hypocrisy of the Catholic Church in Ireland. Already at the beginning of *More Bread or I'll Appear* Martin laughs at 1979 Pope's visit to Ireland an event that in many ways marked the beginning of the new era in Ireland, and the conception of the new golden generation.

Both selected novels center on free-spirited women who choose to live the lives of vagabonds as they find their new family among people of different races and religions abroad,

far away from mother Ireland. Therefore, these novels give us an insight into the generation of women whose lives have drastically changed in comparison to their mother's generation. Another important theme that concerns Martin is the decadence of the youth and the loss of traditional family values which are omnipresent in her writing. The new generation refuses bonds that tie them to the "prison" that is the life of a housewife. They no longer choose motherhood and marriage as their calling but have the courage to discover rather different lifestyle options. Irish women at the end of the century have access to education, birth control and are no longer afraid to resist the shackles of patriarchy.

1. Compulsive travelers and the vagabond life in the diaspora

*Breakfast in Babylon* and *More Bread or I'll Appear* focus on young Irish women in the diaspora and their escape from their Irish roots. *Breakfast* follows the path of young Isolt who leads the life of a vagabond in various European capitals. She sleeps and lives in the streets where she encounters many eccentric people from all around the globe, as well as her abusive lover Cristopher. Even though her experiences abroad are not all positive, Isolt still refuses the idea of returning to Ireland. She is an example of a compulsive traveler who prefers the freedom of the life on the road and the inexistent ties that keep her at one place. On the other hand, in *More Bread or I'll Appear* we witness the deconstruction of a large Irish family as almost every member of the family leaves Ireland. The story follows two youngest siblings Keelin and Siobhan who are in search of their eldest sister Aisling who left Ireland years ago and has not contacted the family ever since. The sisters follow Aisling's traces over four continents. Through this voyage, they manage to find out the truth about her years in absence as well as her complex sexuality. Other siblings, Patrick and Orla, emigrate to the States just like their uncle Oscar who is a priest. Uncle Oscar seems to embody the open

critique of the hypocrisy of the clergy and through his character she also addresses the issue of the Irish diaspora in America.

In *Breakfast*, Martin focuses on the early nineties, the era when she was a young adult just like Isolt. On the other hand, the beginning of *More Bread* is set back in the late seventies and it leads up to the mid-nineties. Here is how Martin recollects her childhood in Ireland in an interview for *White Hot Magazine*: “I hated Ireland as a teenager. It was a repressed, dark, dreary place” (Forson). It seems that Martin shared the same view as her characters when she states in the mentioned interview that she felt “suffocated”. In both *Breakfast in Babylon* and *More Bread of I’ll Appear* we can see the new generation of Irish diaspora that breaks all the strings that tie them to their homeland: “They have all been born a homeless soul” (*Breakfast* 268). On one hand, we have expatriates like Patrick, Orla and Siobhan who left the country mostly due to the economic situation while on the other hand, there are Isolt (*Breakfast*) and Aisling (*More Bread*), young travelers who left Ireland primarily to run away from the tyranny of the Catholic regime. They principally leave the country due to the social and moral circumstances, as well as restrictive laws which made a woman’s life in Ireland unbearable (Walter 13).

Unfortunately, Isolt’s wish to escape from the oppression backlashed. Even though her husband Christopher is not Irish, he abuses her in many ways and says that there is no such thing as rape in the marriage and that domestic murders do not count for much (*Breakfast* 253). Isolt is a young woman who had been through a lot and who is now facing the great disappointment and loneliness of living abroad. However, she still does not wish to return home. Isolt is not only running away from the oppressive Irish society, she is also in search of “extreme” experiences, the ones she would not be able to live through had she stayed with her parents in Ireland. Martin describes her in the interview for *The Index Magazine* in 1999 as “a drifter who is drawn to the intensity and the craziest people”. Our main heroine prefers to live



in the streets and beg rather than endure the boredom of her home country. For instance, when given a job offer in France, Isolt awkwardly refuses it by saying that she already works: “Viens, j’ai du travail pour toi” “Je travaille maintenant”, Isolt said, trying to be “lowkey” and get rid of this nasty woman” (*Breakfast 51*). The same woman offered her some warm milk instead of money; Isolt accepts it, but is visibly disappointed: “Isolt felt obliged to drink it” (*Breakfast 51*). On the one hand, she is a beggar, but on the other, she is a chooser. She refuses to work even though she is perfectly capable and prefers the freedom of living on the streets to being a worker in the capitalistic system.

On one occasion Isolt states that she would go mad if she was forced to join the normal society ever again. Martin explains to *The Index Magazine* that Isolt belongs to the group of people that are “the black sheep of Europe”. The novelist sees Isolt as a person who is unpredictable and indecisive, at least when it comes to choosing one path in life: “You know when I wrote the screenplay for Babylon I kept asking myself, What does she want? Well, she doesn't want anything! But you're not allowed characters that don't want anything.” The novelist further explains that it is hard for her to know what Isolt really wants, even as her creator. Nevertheless, Martin concludes with a simple, yet powerful constatation that all her heroine want are crazy experiences: “I mean, she is a drifter, that is her nature. She's drifting by, but I do think she wants experiences. She wants intensity“ (Malinovich and Speyer). Martin left Ireland at the same age as her character Isolt, with whom she has a lot in common. They even share the same “disease” and obsession with traveling as it was stated in the interview for *Erasincloud.com*:

“The characters in Emer's books and stories travel a lot, as an example, we might remember Keelin who leaves Ireland and passes through many different countries, Japan, The States, Cuba, Honduras and Guatemala before finding her sister Aisling. Ironically, on the anthology

*Fortune Hotel*, Emer is defined as suffering from Compulsive Travelling Disorder, an illness which obliges her to move from a country to another at the speed of light” (Battista)

Even though Martin does not give us much insight into Isolt’s family history in *Breakfast*, we know, on the other hand, that Aisling in *More Bread* had a disruptive childhood with her father being absent, the abuse of her priest uncle Oscar and the fact that she had to share the bed with her mother until she was twenty. Therefore, it can be argued that these conditions and lack of space for personal development made this young woman disappear. If she had stayed in Ireland, it is possible that she would have not been able to explore her sexuality, her goals in life nor open her mind to new and strange ideas. At the time she left, in the early eighties, Ireland could only offer her restraints and sex-based discrimination. At the beginning of the novel, she leaves the country to spend summer in France; on this occasion she expresses her nationalist side and the way she was raised to think: “I wouldn’t touch England with a ten-foot pole. Not while they are letting our hunger strikers die one by one, like animals. Now the French – they always helped us out.” (*More Bread* 22).

Nevertheless, after fifteen years abroad Aisling realizes how small and irrelevant Ireland really is, and how there is so much more to life than IRA and the British oppression: “Who gives a fuck about land that doesn’t belong to you anyway? The poor Catholic’s enemy is not the poor protestant or the poor Brit. They have the same enemy” (*More Bread* 259).

Aisling creates her own definitions of sex, gender, family and home. She is not burdened by the complicated Irish history; she does not pressure herself to be “a true Irish” and to preserve the traditional values. However, it is interesting that she taught her Japanese friend/lover Toru some sad old Irish songs such as “Danny boy”, although she turns her back on everything Irish, her family included. Her sister Keelin, urged by her mother, leaves Ireland in order to find her runaway sister. The tragedy of this lays in the fact that Keelin is the only of the five siblings who wants to stay in Ireland and work as a teacher. She shows no interest in the life

in the diaspora at the beginning of the novel, nor for the uncertainty of bohemian lifestyle. However, after spending a few months abroad, we can notice that she realizes that life in Ireland could become quite dull for her and that she has to leave in order to find some excitement. She realizes that life is too short to spend it in one place, with ordinary people: “The idea of teaching in the same school I went to for the rest of my life ... Shite, at least Aisling had some grand passion with Fatima” (*More Bread* 149).

Instead of leading a life without passion, Aisling yearns to experience everything that life has to offer, just like Isolt. Even though these two characters have vastly different experiences, what connects them is the fact that they are both free-floating, encumbered individuals, or as Bauman calls it “the popular hero” of contemporary existence. (*Identity* 20). At the very beginning of his *Identity in the Globalizing World*, Zygmunt Bauman recognizes the importance of identity as a notion: “One may say that ‘identity’ has become by now a prism through which other topical aspects of contemporary life are spotted, grasped and examined” (*Identity* 121). Martin in her novels points out the question of changing Irish identity and the consequences it has on society. Nevertheless, Aisling does not give a damn about her national identity, and turns her back on Irish/Catholic identity. She states on one occasion that her lover Fatima’s vagina is her religion. Furthermore, she is proof that sexuality and gender identity are discontinuous and impossible to be restricted by any norms that society poses on individuals. She experiments with her sexual identity, and that is how Martin subverts traditional Irish values as well. She is a lesbian who occasionally has “kinky” sex with men for money. She is in love with a woman but chooses to use partner’s brother to father their child. This is a perfect example of how Martin subverts the concept of the traditional Irish family, as well; it does not necessarily have to consist of a heterosexual couple and their biological children to be functional and happy. Aisling likes cross-dressing with her Japanese friend who is a drag queen. The two like to go out and pretend to be a

heterosexual couple. Aisling is thus a character who tends to change and use different identities and can be argued to have a fluid identity. She seems to subvert everything connected to Irish traditional values in any way she possibly can.

### 1.1. Irish Diaspora and the Issue of Identity

Both Z. Bauman and S. Hall explore the concepts of identity as well as its changing nature in postmodern times. While Bauman's *Identity in Globalizing World* explores the changes that happen to identities in the time of globalization and he explains that they are no longer a trait that we inherit, Hall also gives us his view of cultural identity. He presents how identities are constructed by narratives which give us a sense of belonging and in the case of these novels, it is a matter of belonging to a particular nation. Stuart Hall in his *Cultural Identity and Diaspora*, defines cultural identity as a sort of "one true self" which is imposed on the people that share a similar ancestry and history (Hall 223). This set image of one group provides it with a certain dose of unchanging safety and a frame to which one belongs. However, Hall also points out that the cultural identities are changing, they are not just based on "who we were" but also on "who we are" and that we will become (Hall 225). Therefore, cultural identities are not just a matter of shared history but also a matter of a shared future, which is what keeps them alive.

The question of cultural identity is particularly problematic when it comes to migrating groups, in this case, diaspora. Hall explains it on the example of Caribbean identities (Hall 225), but his theory can equally be applied to the Irish diaspora in Martin's novels. Hence, it is evident that history is a very important factor which forms a sense of national identity as well as the sense of "difference". Consequently, we can see that the older generations of the Irish diaspora, in this case, uncle Oscar, are more concerned with the politics and historical conflicts, whilst the young generation of the Irish diaspora is not preoccupied with preserving

those old narratives. The young characters in *More Bread* and Isolt in *Breakfast* are not “obsessed” with preserving the knowledge of Irish history nor traditions, as a matter of fact, they chose to detach themselves from it and do not feel guilty about it. They are a part of the new generation which is in contact with foreign cultural influences, especially while being in the diaspora, and they are not afraid to embrace those.

Bauman, however, defines identity as a constantly changing and fluid notion, which is fragile and unsteady (Bauman, *Identity Conversation* 2) and its nature is closely related to modernity. He claims that each individual is responsible for finding his own identity within the society he belongs to; a modern individual has the need “to become” and is obliged to “self-determine”, which is one of the main traits of modernity (Bauman, *Identity Conversation* 4). These traits can be seen in Martin’s heroines, who are in search of their true selves. For instance, while traveling the world, Aisling incorporates a bit of every culture that she encounters into her own identity. Both of these novels convey Irish characters in the context of a changing world and therefore in the context of inevitable changes that take place in Ireland as well. The institutions of the Church and the family may seem “plastic and static”, but taking into consideration that they consist of a heterogeneous group of individuals, its values and rules inevitably change. As a consequence, we see in the selected novel that these social forces can change and are almost completely redefined.

I will also focus on Bronwen Walter’s view of home as a place of departure and return. When we talk about young Irish people leaving the nest, we can notice how their parents do not openly object to them leaving. For example, Keelin’s own mother Molly advises her to leave Ireland by saying: “Ireland is a hard place, Keelin. There’s no work here. Nobody stays” (*More Bread* 30). It is sad to think that her own mother wants for her youngest daughter to leave their homeland; even if that means that she would stay alone in Ireland and live for Christmas time - the only occasion when the Irish youth returns home.

Walter discusses the romanticized notion of “home” as a place of origin that we yearn for, “(...) a meeting place, a location of intersections of particular bundles of activity space of connections and interrelation” (10). On the contrary, Martin shows her own version of home through Aisling; a home is not assigned to one from birth, it is a place and a feeling that one must look for. Even though her sister Keelin defines her paradise as “Christmas at home”, on the very last page of the novel we can see that the reunion with her absent sister has taught her something: “There must be other homes to be had. Safe places in the world. Safer than her own home had been” (*More Bread* 266). This lack of home as the anchor that pulls us back to the point of departure is what connects Martin’s protagonists. Even though we expect that Keelin would return to Ireland to their family home guarded by their mother for years, we soon realize it cannot happen. This young woman is unable to do so because their mother sells their family house, leaving nothing but boxes of memories for her daughter.

Molly in *More Bread or I’ll Appear* can be said to symbolize these institutions as she is the mother of five and a woman who has never left Ireland. In fact, she is the living symbol of Ireland: an old tired mother that watches her children leave the nest one by one without looking back. Her body is torn by typical female diseases such as breast and uterus cancer, which is why she was bound to have a hysterectomy. Patrick comments on his mother’s procedure in a morbidly funny manner: “Poor mammy – I hate the idea of a hysterectomy,” “I had always counted on going back to the womb as an option,” “It’s like the door from where I came from has been bricked up” (*More Bread* 159). His remark represents the mentality of young emigrants: If everything goes wrong we can always return to mother Ireland. However, Patrick’s home in Ireland disappeared, just like his mother’s uterus after the surgery. What is more, Patrick finds a new home in America, the most popular destination for Irish diaspora.

According to Bronwen Walter in her *Outsiders Inside*, Irish-American is an accepted identity unlike Irish-British hybridity (9). It is a kind of hybridity that is possible, for instance, there is an opposition between Irish and American, just like there is one between migrant and settler, but since the Irish are white and their culture isn't too different from the American, they feel accepted in the newfound home (9). The Irish diaspora has a positive image in the United States, especially in New York where they founded their own neighborhoods, and today, many descendants of the Irish immigrants still celebrate their roots: "Irish-American is proudly proclaimed(...)"(Walter 76). For Patrick and Orla, Bronx is like Ireland, full of their people and pubs, just with a better weather. Moreover, Oscar enjoys the perks of being a priest even while he is in America since there are many of his compatriots who are in need of a clergyman's services.

## 2. Critique of the Irish Catholic Church

It is well known that up to the last decades of the 20th century, Irish women were tremendously influenced by the Catholic Church. Walter explains how Irish women were expected to follow the example of the Virgin Mary as a self-sacrificing mother, a woman who is asexual and obeys God's will. While the Virgin Mary had to see her son die in order to liberate us from sin, an Irish mother had to send her sons to defend the country on the battlefields or sail away in search for a better life. Having set this rigorous role, the society ran by the Church accepts no diversions from it: only married women or nuns are acceptable, single women or unmarried mothers are therefore marginalized (Walter 200). As Kate Walsh argues for *The Irish Central*, married women were banned from the social practices by "marriage bar" from the 1930s, which prevented married women to get an employment in a bank or any public service. They could not be a part of the jury, drink in a pub nor report an

abusive partner (Walsh). In *More Bread or I'll Appear*, we can see that Molly cannot even play golf on the weekend because the club is only reserved for men. Keelin recognizes this absurd discrimination, and gives her mother a radical but also humorous piece of advice: "I'd blow up the clubhouse if I were you" (*More Bread* 44). Molly belonged to the generation of girls who had to get up whenever their male family members entered a room and had to brush their hair and wash their clothes; she was virtually her twin brother's servant.

Walter argues that Irishness is deeply gendered and that the rules that apply to women do not apply to men. Therefore, their experience in Ireland is different and so are their reasons to leave the country (34). Women in Ireland have been oppressed by men through centuries, sacrificed for the sake of the family upon which their society lies; just like the "Mother Ireland" was oppressed by the British. Therefore, the Act of Union (1801) between Ireland and the United Kingdom can be compared to a marriage in which Ireland is the female party, robbed of her rights, and in need for male protection and guidance. Walter notes that in the nineteenth century, Celts were presented as a feminized race that is charming but unreliable, while the British race is masculine: "This placing echoed the feminization of the Irish nation by masculine, controlling Britain, and the characterization of Celts as artistic, impractical and unreliable in contrast to rational, trusting Anglo-Saxons" (Hickman and Walter 146). Therefore, she finds the connection between sexual and political dominance.

This vision of Ireland as a feminine country presented in Hickman and Walter's essay can also be applied to Martin's character Molly in *More Bread*. Just like Mother Ireland, she watches her children leave one by one without looking back or planning to return. Molly is metaphorical "home" that her children chose to leave and where they occasionally return. It can be said that Molly's role is very static. She constantly waits for someone and welcomes them patiently, but every time, she ends up alone. Molly stands for "small" Irish women that barely had any recognition in the society and it might be argued that she symbolizes Ireland



itself. For her five children, Ireland is the point of departure, a place that raised them; but when the time comes, each of the children leaves just like all of us eventually leave our family home.

Another important theme in Martin's novels is the question of divorce and the destructive consequences it has on families and traditional values. Divorce in Ireland was a taboo, a disgrace and above all illegal, until nineteen ninety-five when the country voted to remove the constitutional ban. Until then, couples could only be separated or sleep in different rooms (Holmqvist). Children whose parents were separated had to endure a terrible stigma: "The older ones avoided the stigma of their parents being separated, said he was dead" (*More Bread* 10). In the mentioned Irish Times interview, psychologist Nuala Deering explains that at the time of the referendum people were indecisive because of the fear of divorce planted by the Church. People feared that if they voted for the divorce, they would contribute to the increase of divorced couples and the undermining of the family as the ideal. People were also scared that the new law would enable cheating men to abandon their families and leave them with no financial support. More than twenty years have passed since the divorce law was introduced, and Ireland is still one of the countries with the lowest divorce rate in Europe - one in ten (Holmqvist).

Molly in *More Bread* is an example of an Irish woman who could not get divorced, even though her husband abandoned her with five children. Martin sheds light on the stigma of divorced or separated women through Molly's character and shows how that discrimination reflects on children. Molly's children are ashamed to be a part of a single-parent family, and it seems that it would be easier for them if their father was dead. Perhaps the reason why all her children leave the country with no visible sadness nor nostalgia is the fact that they never really had a happy and stable home. We can also notice that romantic relationships these characters have in their adult lives are mostly instable, or even abusive as in Siobhan's case

when her British lover stalks and physically punishes her. Without positive role models in this respect, it is no wonder either of them can achieve a healthy and constructive relationship.

Another occasion where Martin openly criticizes and mocks the Catholic Church is the Pope's visit in 1979, which is mentioned in one of the first chapters of *More Bread*. According to David McWilliams in *The Pope's Children*, the famous visit of John Paul II in 1979 took place the same year as the biggest baby boom since the Great Famine (1845-1849). From the beginning of the seventies, 20,000 babies were born, and the peak of the baby boom took place in June 1980, exactly nine months after the pope's visit. During this summer, Ireland welcomed 74,000 newborns. McWilliams presents the case of a young Dublin girl who lost her virginity to a working-class young man during the Pope's mass during which he lectured the youth about pre-marital sex. Considering the demographic explosion, she is just one of the many (McWilliams 108). We can find a similar example in Martin's *More bread or I'll Appear*; when one of the siblings, an 18-year-old Orla, gets pregnant in the early eighties with a man who is unwilling to accept the baby and marry her. Her eldest sister Aisling tries to convince her to go to England to have an abortion. However, due to her mother's influence, Orla keeps the baby since abortion was considered an unforgivable sin. From the beginning of the novel, we can see that Aisling is an example of the new generation that does not accept the constraints of the Catholic Church; she believes that her younger sister deserves a second chance and that having a baby would stop her in pursuing her career: "Fuck the Church. This is her whole life at stake here" (*More Bread* 20).

Martin portrays the Holy Father's visit in a rather mocking way; she describes how Molly brought her five children to the great mass in the Phoenix Park, a mass to which a third of the country's population assisted: "This brutal cacophony of the mass lasted for hours" (*More Bread* 17), and we can see how the families are freezing in blankets while drinking and eating cheese sandwiches, waiting in line for the public toilets. Bad organization and an insufficient

number of public toilets left a bad impression of the entire event, which Aisling commented in a hilarious, but realistic way: “Funny” (...) how the Pope’s visit will always be associated with shite” (*More Bread* 18). However, her remark was not only related to the lack of organization but also to the pope’s actions and statements. He visited New York after his tour in Ireland and had a rather disparaging comment on the possibility of priestesses in Catholic Church: “Women asked why he would not ordain them as priests. He angrily stated that there was to be none of that nonsense in the Holy Catholic Church” (*More Bread* 18).

The children mentioned above are not only called “the Pope’s children” because their conception coincided with the visit of John Paul II, but also because of the Church’s influence in Ireland was still very strong at the time. For instance, according to *The Circular* article, contraception was illegal and criminalized in Ireland until 1993 and women had to travel to Northern Ireland in order to get birth control (Williams). Even though the day before the Pope arrived was declared a national holiday, we can see that Martin recollects this visit with a dose of irony and bitterness. She also mentions the phenomenon of the “moving statues” that apparently occurred in rural Ireland during the eighties. Her characters openly ridicule the euphoria caused by these rumors. Keelin and Siobhan mock their brother Patrick, the main altar boy about his newfound religious obsession: “In America they’ve UFO’s; here we have twitching virgins, Keelin teased. Have you seen anything Paddy?” (*More Bread* 25) The young man reluctantly admits that he hates his service and decides to leave the parish.

Martin criticizes the Catholic Church on many occasions, but the character of the decadent father Oscar embodies everything that is, according to Martin, wrong with that institution. From the very beginning of the book Oscar plays the role of “pater familias” for his sister’s five children; that in fact he could not wait to dispose of. He moralizes, and criticizes Molly by saying that she lets Aisling “act and speak like a son.” He is a respectful priest both at home and in the USA, who enjoys a lot of benefits that come with the position.

He openly judges his unmarried niece Orla for getting herself pregnant. Furthermore, he makes her keep the baby only to force her to give her son away for the adoption. He is an Irish nationalist “obsessed with being Irish” who knows Joyce better than the Bible; he glorifies the western cultures and underestimates the indigenous ones: “Say what you will about white people but we made it to the Moon” (*More Bread* 192). He is a typical example of a “white male” that has all the power and will never be the outsider, even when he is in a foreign country. However, he is perhaps the only character in the novel who shows attachment to his Irish roots the most, as opposed to his nephew and nieces who disengage themselves from their national identity.

However, Oscar has a few secrets of his own: he is a gay priest and an incestuous pedophile, and an opportunist that spent his life lying to his “sugar daddy” in order to have a luxurious lifestyle. He abandons his ex-lover and first victim Gerry, who is dying from AIDS after years of wild life in San Francisco nightclubs. He is the type of the corrupted cleric that helps the poor in his neighborhood and is well loved and respected, but in reality, he has done more evil than the devil himself. Oscar shamelessly uses alcohol as a way to silence his bad conscious which will eventually drive him mad. This man has so deviated that he does not mind lying to his own sister about the fact that he had switched her son’s ashes for the ones of his ex-lover, while being drunk. In the epilogue, we can see that he discusses the Redemption with his lover Leo, which he had been ironically cheating on for years. They are in a five-star resort on Maui, and he just had his facelift done, another sign of vanity that should be unacceptable for a man who took a vow of chastity and modesty. Even though he is bisexual, therefore, a member of an oppressed and discriminated minority, he has no sympathy for women; he sees them as lesser beings, just like most of his colleagues.

For instance, he looks at his nephew Patrick as the gem of the family of four daughters: “Aren’t you the only man among all these hens? We can’t lose you.” (*More Bread*

7) Moreover, he blames the decay of the family as an institution on the women who have become too disobedient: “When women aren’t contained, Chaos” (*More Bread* 177). This sentence most accurately represents the agenda of the church: women should be kept silent and within the walls of the family home which is controlled by men. Oscar calls out women for being wild and immoral, while he is being the exact example of all that the Catholic Church is supposed to condemn. Given the fact that Oscar is a pedophile priest, we can say that Martin practically predicted sex abuse scandals that would shake up the people’s trust in the Catholic Church at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Oscar is the character through whom Martin heavily subverts the Catholic Church, without the fear of outrage she might provoke.

## Conclusion

This paper has dealt with the main issues of the Irish diaspora and Irish society, which Emer Martin presented in her novels *Breakfast in Babylon* and *More Bread or I’ll Appear*. It focused mostly on the female characters in diaspora, their adventures, struggles and reasons why they have decided to leave the country. Martin incites us to reconsider the image we had of Ireland and the Irish people in diaspora, especially of Irish women. These modern Irish women yearn to travel, explore all that the world has to offer and while doing so, find their own place in the world. Heroines such as Isolt and Aisling show us that unfavorable economics and politics are not the only motives to emigrate, but also finding one’s personal identity and satisfying one’s curiosity. Furthermore, they set us the examples of modern women who do not let their national and religious background define their future. After having read and analyzed these two novels, it can be argued that Irish identity has drastically changed in the past thirty years and that it has become more open to foreign influences.

Martin demonstrates how traditional Irish family is starting to disappear, but she also gives us hope in the example of Aisling and the family that she has started while strolling across the globe.

The paper also centered on the influence of the Catholic Church in Ireland and its decline at the end of the century which Martin features in both novels. Through the character of Oscar, Martin represents all that is wrong with the Catholic Church as well as the moral decay of the clerics. Martin belongs to the generation of writers who are not afraid to openly call out such a powerful institution and criticize its hypocrisy. Having analyzed these two novels, we can conclude that Ireland has turned into a secular country whose identity is no longer defined by Catholicism. Martin's fictional world makes us realize that in today's Ireland, and the world in general, everything is unstable and prone to change, or, as Zygmunt Bauman puts it, 'liquid'.

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Kompulzivne putnice i irski identitet u romanima Emer Martin *Breakfast in Babylon* i *More Bread or I'll Appear*

Sažetak na hrvatskom jeziku

Ovaj završni rad bavi se dvama izabranim romanima irske autorice Emer Martin *Breakfast in Babylon* (1997) i *More Bread or I'll Appear* (2000). Rad prvenstveno istražuje živote ženskih likova u inozemstvu, kao i koncept irske dijaspore. Oslanjajući se na teorije Zigmunta Baumana i Stuarda Halla o pitanju identiteta, ovaj rad pokušava prikazati kako se irski identitet na kraju stoljeća transformira u Irskoj i inozemstvu, te kako je on sada daleko od tradicionalne slike irskih iseljenika. Rad se također osvrće na autoričinu kritiku sveprisutnog licemjerja u irskoj katoličkoj crkvi.

Ključne riječi: irska dijaspora, kompulzivne putnice, globalizacija, Eimer Martin, tekući identitet.

## Summary

This final paper analyses two selected novel by Emer Martin: *Breakfast in Babylon* (1997) and *More Bread or I'll Appear* (2000). The paper explores mostly female protagonists in these novels and notions of Irish diaspora. Using theories of Stuart Hall and Zygmunt Bauman concerning the concept of identity, this paper tries to demonstrate how Irish identity has transformed in turn of the century in Ireland and abroad, and that the contemporary Irish diaspora is a far cry from the traditional image of Irish immigrant communities. The paper also explores Martis's criticism of Irish Catholic Church and its hypocrisy.

Key words: Irish diaspora, compulsive travelers, globalization, Eimer Martin, liquid identity