Irish Family and Homosexuality in Emma Donoghue's novels

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Preddiplomski sveučilišni studij engeskog jezika i književnosti (dvopredmetni)

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1. Introduction

Irish society was heavily influenced by the Catholic Church for centuries. For a long time it was rather inappropriate to write about controversial topics in a rigid, conservative, Catholic society. Despite the decline of the influence of the Catholic Church in contemporary society, it still had a major impact on people's lives just 20-30 years ago. It affected the way people behaved and thought, but also made them feel afraid of uncovering their true identities. Emma Donoghue's novels *Hood* and *Stir-Fry*, which will be under discussion in this paper, could serve as great examples of what Irish society looked like in the late 20th century. Although Irish women writers were marginalized for a long time, Emma Donoghue managed to become part of the Irish literary scene. *Stir-Fry* and *Hood* were the very first two novels Emma Donoghue published in 1994 and 1995 respectfully. These two novels were chosen for analysis because they show the imperfections and dysfunctionalities of the Irish families. The fact that the publishing of the *Stir-Fry* was quite difficult, with it being rejected by several publishing houses shows the state of the society at that time. Homosexuality was not just stigmatized in the real world, but also in the fictional world of Irish women writers.

This final paper is going to analyse Irish family and family relationships in Emma Donoghue's novels, *Stir-Fry* and *Hood*, both of which are lesbian fiction novels. Both novels deal with protagonists' fear of coming out and revealing their true identity, as it was unacceptable to be in any kind of a non-heterosexual relationship. The author herself is a proclaimed lesbian and many of her novels deal with homosexuality. *Stir-Fry* is a coming of age novel and focuses on Maria Murphy, a 17-year-old student who moves in with a lesbian couple without knowing so. *Hood* follows Penelope „Pen" O'Grady in the course of a week after the tragic death of her lover and „flatmate" Cara Wall. This novel deals with two delicate subjects, death, and homosexuality. *Hood* is a story about hidden, secret grief, as the main

protagonist, Pen, still in the closet, is in fear of revealing her homosexuality. According to Maloney and Thompson, by the time Donoghue wrote *Hood*, she was out of the closet for a long time. Donoghue claims how she wanted to make a character that was more representative than her to show what it looked like to be in the closet. She also claims how Pen was self-deluded by her fears; not realizing how other people would actually be accepting and loving towards her even if she came out (179). Pen does not realize how Mr. Wall (Cara's father) knows about her and Cara's relationship and accepts it (Maloney and Thompson 176). It would have been rather unlikely not to realize that the two women whom he lived with were in a relationship. The aim of this final paper is to analyse Donoghue's portrayal of the family, family relationships, sexuality and, homosexuality, especially in relation to Catholicism.

2. Ireland and Irish family in the 20th century

According to Romero, the foundation of the Irish Free State in 1922 was followed by the development of a deeply regressive and conservative notion of national identity. Cultural life in the Irish Free State was dominated by the Roman Catholic ethos, opposite of the more liberal United Kingdom's society, which was mainly anti-Catholic (78). Romero states that the notion of the family was presented as a foundation of the new Irish State (78). Since the process of the foundation of the Irish Free State was a difficult and strenuous one, it is not surprising that the family, the basis of the Irish State, was so much valued and appreciated. This has led to the transmission of traditional family roles through all levels of society. Family was seen as an institution in which each member had their own function and which was regulated continuously by moral and political discourses. In a traditional family, the role of the father was to be the head of the family and an authority figure. The role of the mother and the wife was to give unconditional love to her husband and

children and show humility and respect to her husband. It is pointed out how a child's role in the family was mainly to serve the needs of the society, and not his or her own needs (Romero 79-80). Problems would arise when individuals would not comply with their defined roles.

The Article 41 of the 1937 constitution of Ireland recognised family as a fundamental societal group. Family was considered a necessary basis of social order. Following this, The State guaranteed to protect the family and its welfare. Family was founded on the institution of marriage so The State pledged to guard the institution of marriage. Woman, by her life at home, was to support the State, as without her its common good could not have been achieved. Marriage was seen solely as a relationship between man and woman, and any deviation, as in a relationship between two men, was to result in imprisonment, with or without hard labour. The enforcement of such laws was directly breaking human rights and restricting them from living their life in the desired way (Bourke 330). Because of the fear of being rejected, marginalized, and in the end imprisoned, there are not a lot of examples of homosexuals fighting for their rights in the 20th century. One well-known example is Norris Dudgeon's. According to Bouerke et. all, in 1988 Norris Dudgeon filed a case against Ireland claiming that the legal prohibition of homosexuality violated his human right of having a private life. The case was called Norris vs. Ireland. Norris claimed how, due to the law, he suffered physical harm. He suffered from depression, loneliness, and anxiety attacks, fearing how overexpression of his sexual orientation would get him prosecuted. As he was never actually prosecuted for breaking the law, he was held not victim and therefore his claim has been dismissed (330-331). This showed how Irish society at the end of the 20th century was still not ready to open up and accept sexual diversity of its citizens.

In accordance with Irish Constitutional Law from 1937 and Irish Catholic Church's teachings, there was only one acceptable possibility of the manifestation of the family, and that was heterosexual marriage (Romero 79). The preservation of this family model depended

on the transmission of gender roles. It was argued that this, traditional type of family was deeply rooted in women's sexuality, marginalising in that way homosexuals. According to Romero, family used to be one of the social behaviour's regulators, so it was not unusual that discussions about family models were often related to discussions about gender and sexuality (79). In order to "protect" the family, there had been different laws approved. One of them was preventing married women to get financially independent, and the other prevented violent husbands from getting indicted. Ultimately, it could be said how the ideology of the family in Ireland traditionally served to get social control over women. However, modern society is becoming more open and stress is now put on people's personal freedom, human rights, and social justice (Romero 79).

In the year 2015 through a national referendum, Ireland showed how the influence of the Catholic Church weakened, as 62% of people who voted, chose 'yes' as an answer to the question of whether civil weddings between same-sex couples should be allowed (Hillard and Ó Caollaí). This change in wedding tradition is a clear sign that Ireland is becoming more and more secular. Homosexuality was, and still is, a complicated issue that evokes different opinions among people who live in societies where heterosexuality is the standard. As it was previously mentioned, the traditional Irish family has been heterosexual. Not only has it been heterosexual, but it has also been homophobic, meaning that heterosexual people have had sort of a fear of getting into contact with homosexuals, thinking homosexuality was contagious (Romero 88). The term homophobia was first associated with a fear of reducing the value of family and the state itself since it was claimed that family is fundamental for the state's wellbeing. According to Romero, the term homophobic was later aimed towards those who are infected with fear, prejudice, and hatred (88). Although the ill-treatment of gay men and lesbians has been often related to religion, the problem transcends the boundaries of the

official churches. Homosexuals are often victims of hate crimes and social exclusion, not only in Ireland, but in many other countries as well.

3. Irish women's writing and issues of (homo)sexuality

Just as Catholicism had a major influence on people's lives, it also had a significant influence on literary works. According to Maher, since religion was bound closely to nationalism, culture, and politics and given its prominence in the evolution of Irish society, it is strange that there had never emerged a new genre called "Catholic novel" (117-118). Catholicism was deeply integrated in all aspects of Irish people's lives. Catholic and Irish almost became synonyms at this point because they were so closely connected. In order to understand Irish women's writing at the end of the last century, when *Hood* and *Stir-Fry* were written, let's have a brief look at Irish literature throughout the 20th century. As Luis Althusser claimed, social forces such as religion, political system, family, school and censorship, continually control people's everyday lives, shaping in that way the way people think, live, and behave (11-12). Books in Ireland were often censored and banned. The Censorship Board was officially founded in 1929, but even before that the books that "were not appropriate" would get banned, and writers of those books would be called nasty and immoral. Shame and guilt were constantly connected to sex and sexuality in general. This can clearly be seen in the banning of Kate O'Brien's novel *The Land of Spices* from 1941 which subtly referred to homosexuality: "She saw Etienne and her father, in the embrace of love" (1941/2006, 165). The novel is set in an Irish convent school and "avoids mention of sexuality at all, let alone homosexuality" (Ukić Košta 53). However, this novel was thought to be criticising Irish ideology and nationalism, and that could not be tolerated.

Irish society was influenced by Catholicism for centuries and for a long time it managed to resist the external influence from the USA and Great Britain. According to Ukić Košta, the external influence led to significant changes in Irish literature during the sixties, which overlapped with the second wave of feminism. In the early sixties, Edna O'Brien wrote and published *The Country Girls Trilogy* (56). The *Trilogy* follows the coming of age of two girls, from their childhood and education in the convent school, to marriages, affairs, and finally to the death of one of the girls. Having two coming of age protagonists was a novelty for the Irish novel. One of the girls is exactly as an Irish woman should be, according to Irish ideology, and the other one, by refusing to follow societal standards, is her opposite. As Ukić Košta claims, despite the fact that the *Trilogy* got un-banned five years later, Kate O'Brien's novel *Mary Lavelle* remained banned for a much longer time. Mary Lavelle's plot is set in Spain, but the main protagonist's native country is Ireland. Although she no longer lives in Ireland, Irish ideology is still rooted in her (54-55). The fact that the main protagonist, however, "is not just a passive girl lured into an adulterous air but demonstrates a sexual assertiveness which totally defies Catholic submission" (Ukić Košta 55).

As stated in Ukić Košta's paper on Irish women's writing, the seventies marked a period when the obedience towards the Catholic Church began to wane. The generation of writers born in the sixties and seventies seem not to be too concerned with literary tradition, nor with religious and cultural tradition. Their focus is put on the broad spectrum of human experience. Ukić Košta also claims that without fear of being censored, contemporary Irish writers focus on intruding topics, such as homosexuality, heterosexuality, and try to deal with the question of what it means to be a woman, either heterosexual or homosexual (59).

According to Jeffers, the 1990s was a very productive period for the Irish novel. During this period, a group of young Irish writers managed to get their place on the stage, allowing them to change and create a completely new agenda of the novel. Some of those

young novelists are Laura Harte, Anne Enright, Robert McLiam Wilson, Glenn Patterson, Tom Lennon, Kate O'Riordan, and, finally, Emma Donoghue (1). Jeffers claims how the main theme of many of the novels from the 1990s is the body, as it is linked to pre-established on the one hand, and the rapidly changing grid of power on the other hand in contemporary Ireland. Contemporary Irish writers started challenging the concept of "being brainwashed with heterosexuality" and started to openly explore the topics of homosexual experience in an Irish concept. The point of writing about this theme was to show what was it like and what it still today is like, to live as a gay or lesbian. Despite homosexuality no longer being illegal, the "coming out" remains daunting. In order to overcome this problem, it is important to educate all the new generations about it, so that the new generations of gay men and lesbians do not suffer loss and exclusion (9-10). The above-mentioned Irish contemporary writers write about reconciling homosexual identity with Irish identity. For Emma Donoghue, this identity refers to the one that would allow women who love women to live like Irish women and to live in a world that does not always refer to the heterosexual standard (Jeffers 11).

Structures of the church, state, societal and political norms in Irish society privilege males as well as the cultural and social construction of heterosexuality, which in turn defines women by patriarchy (Jeffers 11). The social and cultural structure of heterosexuality stressed men's economic position as a crucial element of their masculinity. Due to the prosperous economy, the economic construction of gender is closely connected with the change in national identity in the Republic of Ireland during the 1990s. According to Jeffers, social, cultural, and political aspects of identity have been transformed by economic growth since the 1960s. This was done through mass media exposure, urbanization, and demand for consumer goods (12-13). As Jeffers claims, after the Free Irish State was founded, it was led by Eamon de Valera. During his leadership, Ireland pursued an agrarian and isolationist policy, which left Ireland behind not only in terms of technology, trade, and industry, but also in terms of

culture, and individual rights and policies. Although Ireland failed to join the modern world, circumstances in the state were changing. During this period, the Catholic Church offered important symbols of identity and culture to those who were determined to stay connected with the past (13-14).

The novels that are under discussion in this paper are, as already mentioned, lesbian fiction novels which disrupt the boundaries of gender and sexuality. Finlay-Jeffrey talks about the terms "lesbian writer" and "lesbian fiction". She says how the term "lesbian writer" refers to an openly lesbian author, such as Emma Donoghue. "Lesbian writing" is associated with works that discuss lesbian themes, regardless of the sexual orientation of the author (29). The presence of lesbians and gay men in any kind of literary work tears down privileged formations of traditionally constituted 'man' and 'woman'. Emma Donoghue's very first novel, *Stir-Fry* is coming-of age and coming-out novel. The title of the novel *Stir-Fry* is pertinent and its symbolism is used a few times throughout the novel. First, when Maria comes to Ruth and Jael's apartment for the first time, they prepare stir-fry. Stir-fry is also the metaphor Ruth uses in her letter for Maria towards the end of the novel when she calls the relationship between the three of them a sort of a stir-fry: "It's sort of like a stir-fry, that's the only way I can think of to describe it, don't laugh. I thought you could chop up lots of different vegetables and mix them in and raise the heat, and they'd all make each other taste better. It never occurred to me that ginger and fennel might clash." (Donoghue 161). Ruth is here referring to the way Maria has fallen in love with her but is attracted to Jael. Moreover, the title of the novel also refers to the complexity of female desire. The first part of the novel deals with the emotional stir-fry that goes on in Maria's head as she makes her way towards Ruth and Jael's apartment. On her way to their apartment, Maria reads a magazine article about breast cancer. This is also symbolic as it represents yet another "female topic" which is to be discussed and talked about. Furthermore, the symbolism of Maria standing between two

steps, as she found herself in the darkness, refers to her being between two worlds, being between homosexuality and heterosexuality. She was in darkness in a literal and metaphorical way (Peach 108). "Between two steps Maria found herself in darkness" (Donoghue 11). According to Peach, it could be said that the whole novel is sort of a generic stir-fry, as it is at times a sexual bildungsroman, coming-of-age novel, lesbian fiction novel, and at times campus novel (107).

On the other hand, *Hood* is both a lesbian and post-coming of age novel, in which the homoerotic desire is not fully "out". The 'coming of age' novel or bildungsroman usually follows the development of an individual character, from his/her childhood to maturity. The coming of age novel in the 1990s very often turned into the coming out novel. For instance, in *Stir-Fry*, Maria is a young, naïve student, who moves in with a lesbian couple without suspecting it at all. Maria seems to be unable to engage in "normal" activities that one freshman student would be interested in, such as dating, drinking, and dancing. Her mum notices her inability to be "normal", claiming how Maria is going to end up as an "old maid": "Mam remarked that Maria might end up an old maid, being too picky to be satisfied with any one man. Marriage was about give and take and a fair bit of giving up too. It occurred to Maria to suggest polygamy, which she read about in her history book's brief section "Our Tribal Ancestors," but her mother was probably too Catholic to find that funny" (Donoghue 25-26). Maria is brought up in a traditional, religious household. It does not even occur to her or to her mother that the reason she is not interested in dating is because she is lesbian and obviously cannot conform to heterosexual ways of behaving.

Emma Donoghue's works picture homosexuality in a very graphic way, which was virtually impossible in the previous periods, given the censorship. It could be said that Emma Donoghue reintroduced sexuality in contemporary Irish fiction. She also constantly challenges religion in her novels. Pen's stream of thoughts throughout the novel constantly defies Irish

Catholic morality. For example, Pen who is now virtually a widow fantasizes about making love with Cara during Cara's funeral. Throughout the whole novel, the Catholic Church is the subject of parody and irony. As *Hood* constantly shifts between past and present, Pen also remembers Cara calling her "such a Catholic" (Donoghue 154) because of her "morally correct" behaviour. This instance is a great example of the Catholic Church being ridiculed in the novel.

4. Complicated Families and Lesbians in Donoghue's novels

In traditional Irish families, children live with their parents until they start attending university, just as it is the case with Maria, in *Stir-Fry*. The traditional Irish family usually consists of a husband, wife, and children, although it is no longer unusual, nor forbidden for the Irish family to consist of a homosexual couple and their children. For a long time, it was prohibited for people of the same sex to get legally married, but Ireland was, despite the regressive beliefs of many citizens, the very first country to make marriage between the people of the same sex legal and possible (Hillard and Ó Caollaí).

In Emma Donoghue's second novel, *Hood*, Pen seems to be a practising Catholic afraid of breaking any rules and afraid of the consequences. On the other hand, Cara is a more liberal character. Despite that, she still refuses to admit to her dad that she is a lesbian. This shows that Catholicism and the need to obey the rules are still deeply rooted in her. The selected novels were published at a time which marked a breakthrough for Irish society. During the 1990s women were becoming more and more politically active, which has led to "lesbian visibility" as many of them were in fact lesbian. Also, the very first pride took place in 1993 and it was organised by a group of lesbians and gay men. During the 80s and 90s, many lesbian women made part in women's movements in Ireland. A lot of them were

"closeted" for a long time because of the fear of rejection and disapproval of society. This "coming out" of Irish women could be reflected in Maria and Pen's coming out. Just as many Irish women spend years in the closed, Pen does the same thing. It was only after her lover's death that she came out, but only to a couple of people.

As it was mentioned earlier, traditional Irish families used to consist out of a mother, a father, and children. *Hood'*s both main characters come from atypical Irish families. Cara's family was all but a traditional Irish one. After her parents' divorce, Cara lives with her dad in Ireland, and her mother and sister left to live abroad. Cara and her mother and sister live on different continents and do not have much of a relationship with each other. Kate comes to her sister's funeral without actually knowing or remembering what her sister Cara looked like. We do not know what kind of a relationship Cara has with her mother. Given the long time period of them being separated, it is possible to conclude how they have not stayed attached to each other in any way. On the other hand, although Cara lives with her father her whole life, it is not known whether Mr. Wall even suspects that Cara and Pen were a couple or not. The fact that she was afraid to come out to her dad shows how their father-daughter relationship was also not a perfect one.

Sexual orientation is a very big and important part of someone's identity. In a situation where one person in the family is gay or lesbian, it takes a lot of effort to hide it. It is especially difficult to hide true identity in front of the family and household members. Perhaps the only way to hide it would be drifting apart, which is the case with Pen and her mother. It is easier for Pen not to communicate with her mother than to come out to her. Family is supposed to be a safe place where one is not afraid to speak out and to say what is on his or her mind. Pen and her mother hardly even talk to each other. Pen practically became a widow and had nearly no one to seek comfort. It is not known whether Pen comes out to her mom when they are supposed to meet at the end of the novel. This might be so because Pen

suspects how her mother would not take the news in a good way. Having a lesbian daughter would be rather strange and unsuitable for this Catholic family.

The main protagonist, a 17-year-old, can still be considered a child. The kind of a relationship she has with her parents in probably similar to the one she had with them when she was a little girl. Maria's conversations with her mother reveal how her mother really does treat her like a little child, without taking into consideration that Maria is no longer a small child, but a university student. "Ah, Mam, it's very civilised, not like a squalidbedsit at all. You can stop fretting. OK, I didn't mean fretting—being concerned." (Donoghue 20). "Yes, I'm eating very well, Thelma cooks everything in a cream sauce. Mam, she specifically asked me to call her that, it makes her feel younger. Yeah, she's still at the upholstery." (Donoghue 20). Just like Maria, Jael also comes from the country side and ever since her mother threw her out out the house, she has rarely visited her family home. The reason Jael had to leave home was because she was a lesbian and her mother found out about that in a rather unpleasant way: "My folks, yeah, I turn up at the stud farm on occasion … My mother found me in bed with a girl when I was seventeen. She let me stay till I got my leaving cert, then I headed off to Spain" (Donoghue 94). Ruth's family situation is somewhat similar to Cara's. After Ruth's parents' divorce, Ruth never saw her father again. According to Jael, Ruth is her mother's "hope and joy" (Donoghue 94), similarly to Cara and Mr. Wall.

It is quite common for people to discover their true identities when they leave home for college or university. Maria, the main protagonist from Donoghue's first novel, is a Catholic girl, who moves from the country to Dublin to attend university. The fact that she attends university is a proof of liberalisation and modernisation of the society (Peach 106). As she moves in with the lesbian couple, she begins to question her own sexuality. Dublin seems to be much more liberal and open towards other kinds of (sexual) identity than her native town. It is only when Maria meets and spends some time with the lesbian couple that she

starts to question her own identity as a heterosexual. According to Peach, Maria's coming out mirrors the process of modern Ireland's emergence (108). Maria's transition from the countryside to Dublin could be compared to Emma Donoghue's transition from Ireland to England, where she found herself in a much more liberal and sexually open environment. Emma Donoghue was born and raised in Dublin, but moved first to England and then to Canada, which makes her an Irish-diasporic writer (Maloney and Thompson 179). Comparing Dublin to Cambridge, she felt as if she came to "lesbian heaven" (Maloney and Thompson 171). In Cambridge, most of the lesbians that she met were lesbians who had come out of the closet, and there was a lot of activism and socialization, no one was hiding in their own world.

Getting away from home enabled her to widen her horizon and realize who she really was in terms of sexual identity. Speaking of love experience, Maria's is not actually that different from other people's college experience. A lot of people first engage in love relationships during university or college, just as she did. The only difference is that she realizes that she wants to be with another woman. Later she discovers how she misplaces her love for Jael and actually loves Ruth. There is also nothing unusual about Pen and Cara's relationship. They have fallen in love in high school and had a few breaks in their relationship. Pen is faithful the entire time to Cara, whereas Cara always wanted to have someone else on the side.

Hood shows us other ways of life in the 90s Ireland. One of the motifs in the novels that contributes to this portrayal is the Amazon attic, a lesbian community in Dublin. We find out that Cara loved going there, whereas Pen is still afraid to be openly gay. According to Quinn, there is a certain relationship between the attic and the closet. She explains it in the following way: "Since Jane Eyre and the sexual repressions of Victorian Britain, the attic has been a site of secret sexuality in women's literature. What is closeted and

monstrous in 1990s Irish society, however, is homosexual rather than heterosexual desire“ (150).

What neither Pen in *Hood* nor Ruth in *Stir-Fry* realize is that they are “out of the closet” in front of a lot more people than they think. Mr. Wall knows about Pen and Cara’s relationship, and Ruth’s mother probably knows about Ruth and Jael’s relationship. What neither Pen nor Ruth realize is that regardless of their sexual orientation, their mothers still love and accept them. It is probably just difficult for them to admit it. It could be assumed how Pen and Ruth’s mothers fear getting excluded from the society if the world knew that their daughters are lesbians. On occasion when Maria and Jael are looking at photographs and talking about their and Ruth’s parents, Jael said following about Ruth’s mother: “The doublethinking old bitch must know something’s up by now. She’s always dropping caustic comments about Ruth’s short hair and unsuitable friends. But she won’t admit it to herself, of course; she can just about cope with a spinster daughter so long as no one mentions the L word.” (Donoghue 94). Being in the closet can have a huge effect on someone’s mental health. Emma Donoghue calls the closet “spreadable virus of fear”, claiming how the normalisation of homosexual relationships could make a serious difference for a lot of homosexual people, especially gay and lesbian teenagers who are in the closet, and in the end, end their own lives out of the fear of rejection (Maloney and Thompson 176).

5. Conclusion

This paper has analysed Emma Donoghue’s two novels, Stir-Fry and Hood, published in the mid-nineties, an era of rapid changes in Ireland. After a long period of censorship and the heavy influence of the Irish Catholic Church, Emma Donoghue published novels that not only openly discuss sexuality, but also homosexuality. In the selected novels, Donoghue

portrays how difficult it was for Irish lesbian women at the turn of the 21st century, and how much strength and courage was needed to come out to their friends and families. Laws regulating marriage and sexuality that the Free Irish State imposed on its citizens throughout the 20th century had a huge impact on Irish identity, especially on the identity of Irish woman.

Donoghue's *Hood* and *Stir-Fry* clearly demonstrate that Irish society has been changing slowly in terms of private and official attitudes towards gay and lesbian population in Ireland. Donoghue also shows the Ireland in which she grew up, discreetly incorporating autobiographical elements. In this paper I have tried to analyse the portrayal of homosexualty, but also the ways in which Donoghue represents the Irish family, which is more often than not rather dysfunctional. She shows that for her lesbian protagonists living in a family, let alone in a dysfunctional family can be very difficult. They are compelled to hide their sexual identity which is not only difficult, but mentally exhausting and damaging. Pen is afraid to come out to her mother even while she is grieving the death of her long time girlfriend, and we can only assume that when the novel ends she might tell her mother the whole truth. Maria is only starting to find out about her sexuality, and it is not likely that she is going to come out to her family which is a typical traditional Irish family. Cara's father, Mr Wall functions as a positive example, as he does not judge, but tacitly approves of his daughter's life style. The portrayal of Mr Wall in many ways opposes homophobic Irish society at the end of the last century. On the other hand, we know that Jael's mother kicked her out of the house when she found out that her daughter was a lesbian. Unfortunately, this could be regarded as a typical reaction toward homosexuality in Ireland for most of the 20th century. The Irish family in the selected novels is portrayed as an institution which is still rather traditional and conservative, but which is slowly changing. As we have seen, Donoghue's lesbian characters are afraid to come out to their families, but the very fact that the author openly writes about various issues

regarding Irish gay women speaks a lot about both Irish women's writing and Irish society at the turn of the 21st century.

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IRISH FAMILY AND HOMOSEXUALITY IN EMMA DONOGHUE'S NOVELS

Summary

This final paper explores representations of the Irish family and homosexuality in Emma Donoghue's novels *Hood* and *Stir-Fry*. The selected texts are lesbian fiction novels with the main protagonists afraid to come out in Ireland which was at the end of the 20th century still rather conservative and homophobic. Focusing on the relationship between the traditional concept of the family and homosexuality, the paper analyses how Donoghue's lesbian protagonists function in daily life and how they challenge the heterosexual norm in contemporary Ireland.

Key words: Emma Donoghue, *Hood*, *Stir-Fry*, lesbian fiction, family.

IRSKA OBITELJ I HOMOSEKSUALNOST U ROMANIMA EMME DONOGHUE

Sažetak

Ovaj završni rad bavi se istraživanjem predstavnika irske obitelji i homoseksualnosti u romanima Emme Donoghue, *Hood* i *Stir-Fry*. Odabrani su tekstovi lezbijski romani, čiji se glavni junaci boje otkriti svoj identitet u Irskoj koja je na kraju 20-og stoljeća i dalje bila izrazito konzervativna i homofobna. Ovaj rad istovremeno analizira način na koji u svakodnevnom životu funkcioniraju Donoghuine lezbijske junakinje i kako osporavaju heteroseksualna pravila u modernoj Irskoj te se fokusira na odnos između tradicionalnog koncepta obitelji i homoseksualnosti.

Ključne riječi: Emma Donoghue, *Hood*, *Stir-Fry*, lezbijska fikcija, obitelj.