

Neo-Victorian Incest Trauma and the Fasting Body in Emma Donoghue's *The Wonder*

*Lin Elinor Pettersson**

University of Málaga, Spain

* Address correspondence to Lin Elinor Pettersson, PhD, Departamento de Filología Inglesa, Francesa y Alemana, Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, Universidad de Málaga s/n, Campus de Teatinos, ES-29071 Málaga, Spain. Email: pettersson@uma.es.

Abstract: The Catholic nuclear family, as a product of historical and cultural contingencies, has predominantly figured as dysfunctional in Irish literature. Emma Donoghue's most recent novel, *The Wonder* (2016), builds on trauma, dysfunctional family relations and the Gothic: three master tropes that have become well-established within neo-Victorianism. She has written three neo-Victorian novels up to the moment, and this time she returns to post-famine Ireland to narrate the story of a fasting girl who is caught up in a struggle between sainthood and patienthood. My principal aim is to analyse how Donoghue explores the figurative language of food-refusing behaviour to convey trauma. First, I will establish an analogue between the fasting body and anorexia nervosa, to subsequently explore the psychological-cum-corporeal in the novel through an anorexic lens. Then, I will analyse the non-verbal and symbolic language of the fasting body to disclose psycho-somatic traces of incest trauma drawing on Judith Butler's 'Quandaries of the Incest Taboo' (2004). By doing so, I hope to demonstrate how Donoghue confronts the boundaries of the incest taboo and dissolves the limits of 'the nonnarratable' in *The Wonder*.

Keywords: Fasting saints, anorexia nervosa, incest trauma, Emma Donoghue, neo-Victorian