

This call is for abstracts for an edited collection, with the working title *Representations of the Mother-in-Law*: in British/ American/ Australian/ and European literature, film, and television.

### Call-for-Papers

Mothers-in-law are familiar figures in jokes, stories, and culture. They are everywhere. Yet it is interesting to note that, to date, and even though the mother-in-law figure is an ever-present figure in life and an important part of our social and cultural history, it would seem that there are no published academic books on representations of the mother-in-law from the angle suggested in this cfp.

It would indeed be most interesting to discover how the mother-in-law is represented in the popular and social culture as explored in British/ American/ Australian/ and European literature, film, and television. (Examples that come immediately mind are small screen productions such as *Downton Abbey* and the BBC production *Upstairs Downstairs*, and the Australian-American film *Monster-in-Law*, as well as two Australian novels, *Confessions of a Once Fashionable Mum*, by Georgia Madden, and *The Unknown Woman* by Jaqueline Nunn).

Potential questions to be addressed include but are not limited to:-

- What is the range of ways in which the mother-in-law is represented in British/ American/ Australian/ and European popular culture?
- Is it possible to identify contemporary writers of popular culture in British/ American/ Australian/ and European literature, film, and television, who predominantly engage in a practice of centring their work on representations of the mother-in-law? Do any of these writers, (if any), illuminate individual representations of the mother-in-law in a new and innovative way?
- How might the mother-in-law be represented across the British/ American/ Australian/ and European cultures, and what are the common factors if any? How do class, ethnicity, and race shape these representations?
- Are there cultural or socially historical antecedents for consideration of representations of the mother-in-law in popular culture, as explored in British/ American/ Australian/ and European literature, film, and television?
- Is there a difference between the ways in which the mother-in-law is represented in cinematic film to that in small screen, and between those mediums to representations in literature? Or in these representations, is there a reasonably broad consensus between these genres?
- What are the distinctions between how the mother-in-law has been typically represented in jokes and anecdotes, to that in popular and social culture as explored in British/ American/ Australian/ and European literature, film, and television?
- How often, if at all, are these representations told from the point-of-view of the mother-in-law herself?
- As well, are there examples of representations of the wonderfully successful mother-in-law?

This collection of scholarly essays will make an interesting intervention in the field by fulfilling a number of aims. It will: be the first of its kind to explore whether or not there are characteristic features and definitions within the representations of the mother-in-law in

popular culture; document and record how our western societies perceive and represent the socially important figure of the mother-in-law in film and literary works; establish a new and dynamic area of theoretical research in social history, and point the way to possible future work in an ever-expanding field through examining various representations of the mother-in-law in popular culture; permit scholarly consideration of the extent to which Anglophone writers establish popular representations of a figure who is an intrinsic part of the western culture as a whole.

#### Submission Instructions.

Abstracts should be no more than 500 words in total, 1.5 spaced, written in Times New Roman point 12, justified, and follow the style and format given M.L.A. Handbook (6<sup>th</sup> -7<sup>th</sup> edition). At the top of your abstract, after the word “Keywords,” please add five keywords for you abstract. Full-length chapters (6000 words each) will be solicited from these abstracts.

Please submit a short biographical note with your covering letter.

Papers should be forwarded to:

Jo Parnell [Jo.Parnell@newcastle.edu.au](mailto:Jo.Parnell@newcastle.edu.au) or, alternatively, to [joandbobparnell@bigpond.com](mailto:joandbobparnell@bigpond.com)

Deadline for abstracts: July 30, 2016.

#### Editor:

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