

International Conference “The Multiple Representations of the Spanish and Irish Mother in Contemporary Literature”

Call for Papers

7, 8 and 9 May 2025

University of Almeria

“The Multiple Representations of the Irish and Spanish Mother in Contemporary Literature” aims to explore the intellectual, artistic, and literary production of Spain and Ireland on the figure of the mother, taking as starting premises on the one hand the multiple theoretical-conceptual axes, and on the other hand the socioeconomic and cultural contexts of both countries.

The representation of the maternal figure in contemporary literature emerges as a fertile area to examine the construction, perpetuation and questioning of gender stereotypes. The foundational studies by Cixous (1975) and Spivak (1985) dissect the kaleidoscopic ways in which narratives around motherhood reflect and challenge power structures and inequality, while theorists such as de Beauvoir (1949) and Kristeva (1980; 2014) highlight how certain literary portrayals of women—and, by extension, mothers—can either subvert or reinforce segregationist discourses and patriarchal norms.

In her seminal work “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Anti-discrimination Doctrine Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics” (1989), Crenshaw emphasises the need to move beyond stereotypes tied exclusively to the figure of the white woman and mother, advocating for an intersectional approach to gender analysis that incorporates other critical variables that influence her interpretation. Building on these insights, a comparative analysis of maternal figures in both Spanish and Irish contexts might shed light on how variables such as social class, ethnicity, race, education and religion, among other aspects, interact and shape the conceptualisation of motherhood in different socioeconomic and cultural contexts.

In both Ireland and Spain, the figure of the mother has historically and inevitably been intertwined with multiple cultural, political and religious symbols that have influenced identity formation and have shaped women’s roles in societies. For instance, the influence of Catholicism in both countries has profoundly shaped societal expectations around motherhood, often producing reductive and simplistic portrayals such as that of the ideal housewife—a stereotype that still resonates in contemporary culture despite undergoing significant mutations.

Considering the above, this conference aims to foster a climate of debate in which these historical, cultural and social influences and intersections will be analysed to assess their impact on women’s lives and in their representation in the contemporary literature produced during the 20th and 21st centuries. In a world where globalisation and economic shifts are significantly altering the structures of the family institution, as well as the expectations and roles of its members, this exercise is both imperative and necessary. The examinations of these themes in contemporary Irish and Spanish literature serve to challenge and deconstruct stereotypes, while contributing to a reevaluation of women’s experiences and voices within literary studies.

These discussions, by extension, play a significant role for the feminist movement by shedding light on the understanding of the evolving concept of motherhood. They encourage a reinterpretation of the maternal figure that has been both loved and demonised in contemporary literature.

The format of the congress is hybrid. Proposals up to 250 words (either in Spanish or English) should be sent to mielc25@ual.es before January 15, 2025. Please include in a

separate file, the following information: name and surname, institutional affiliation, a brief bio (250 words) and your email address. Proposals may explore the main theme of the congress from any academic discipline. Final presentation should not exceed 15 minutes. Suggested topics include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Spanish and Irish mothers: differences and similarities
- Matrifocal voices in Irish and/or Spanish literature
- Being a mother: beyond stereotypes
- Stereotypes: the Irish mother and father
- Stereotypes: the Spanish mother and father
- Mother, daughters and/or sons
- Mother and trauma
- Mother and silence
- Mother, violence and resistance
- Mother and the workplace
- Mother and rights
- Mother, health and/or illness
- Mother, disability and/or bodily autonomy
- Mother, war and/or peace
- Mother, rural and/or urban spaces
- Mother, ethics, politics and participation
- Mother, inequality and social conflicts
- Mother and citizenship
- Mother and (de)colonisation
- Mother, sexual and reproductive rights
- Mother, human rights, political struggles, activism, resistance and/or protest
- Mother, history and memory
- Mother, language and transgressive writing
- Mother and religion
- Mother, ethnicity and/or race
- Mother, prosperity and/or austerity
- Mother, youth and/or old age
- Mother, fears and prejudices
- Mother and identity
- Mother, prestige and power
- Mother, sexual articulation and gender
- Motherhood, pregnancy and obstetric violence
- Intensive motherhood
- New momism / the Supermother and/or the cosmopolitan Superwoman
- Sacred motherhood
- Matrophobia
- Maternal rejection
- Representations of motherhood in fairy tales, legends, myths, etc.

Organising committee : Madalina Armie, Germán Asensio Peral and Verónica Membrive Pérez

Collaborating entities:

- Ministerio de Igualdad, Instituto de las Mujeres
- Vicerrectorado de Igualdad, Inclusión y Compromiso Social, Unidad de Igualdad de Género, Universidad de Almería
 - Facultad de Humanidades, Universidad de Almería
 - Departamento de Filología, Universidad de Almería
- Lindisfarne Research Group: Literature and Culture of the English Speaking Countries, Universidad de Almería

