The Cycle of Life in Art, Literature &Science (Coventry, 1 Jul 16)

Coventry University, United Kingdom, Jul 01, 2016
Deadline: Mar 13, 2016

Andrea Hannon

The Cycle of Life in Art, Literature and Science

This is an interdisciplinary conference exploring meanings, perceptions and the scholarly and creative reception of cycles of life in art, literature and science in historical and contemporary cultural contexts. The aim is to bring together a wide range of scholars from different disciplinary backgrounds, including those with interests in the History of Art, English Literature, Shakespeare, Theatre, Early Modern History, Classical Studies, Medical Science, Psychology and the Social Sciences.

The 400th anniversary of William Shakespeare's death takes place in 2016. To mark this important event and as part of the international celebrations that will be taking place, Coventry University is hosting a conference entitled 'The Cycle of Life in Art, Literature and Science', taking as a starting point Shakespeare's Seven Ages of Man speech from his play As You Like It.

Holy Trinity Church in Stratford-upon-Avon has also commissioned the artist Jonathan Waller to paint seven new pictures on the theme of the Seven Ages. Shakespeare is buried in the church and it is visited by more than a quarter of a million people each year. The pictures will hang in the church between April and September 2016. After the conference a coach will be made available to transport the participants to Stratford-upon-Avon to see the works in situ.

Context:
Early Modern England witnessed the Renaissance, the age of exploration, the start of a movement away from rural life towards expanding urban centres, the early development of industry and the establishment of a merchant middle class. However, life expectancy was only 42 years and considerably lower in the urban environments. Women were often considered inferior to men and had limited rights. There were few single people and everyone was expected to marry. These marriages were frequently made for social and financial gain rather than for romantic love. Although As You Like It is a comedy about romantic love, Shakespeare wrote the seven ages speech against this backdrop. Noticeably, he highlighted the negative or shadow side of the archetype for each age, rather than the ideal.

Life is very different today. Little of the world remains unexplored and access to it - either physically or virtually - is commonplace. Countries have become more multiracial and multicultural. Additionally, the boundaries between gender roles have become blurred and sexual diversity is now more acceptable. Cures for disease, scientific discoveries and genetic engineering make possible

the extension of life. Radical enhancement and transhumanism challenge us to go even further beyond the naturally given. At the same time the planet's resources are being used up and the environment is in crisis. With these things in mind can we still find meaning in Shakespeare's evocation of the 'seven ages of man' and how might we reinterpret concepts of natural life-cycles in our own time?

Topics of interest for submission may include, but are not limited to:

How has the human life-cycle been portrayed and explored in art, literature and in other cultural/-social contexts?

How has this shifted over time, or been influenced by different contexts?

Can Shakespeare's description of the seven ages continue to have relevance in a society that champions social diversity?

What parallels can be drawn between a human life-cycle and other life-cycles found in the natural world?

Can we still recognise universal developmental stages of life that we may think of as innate and/or timeless?

Given the advancements of science, what lies beyond our natural life-cycle?

Proposals
Abstracts of no more than 400 words are invited for papers, panels and workshop presentations and should be suitable for presentations of approximately 20 minutes.

Please send the 400-word abstract in English, either as a Word or PDF attachment to Jonathan Waller - j.waller@coventry.ac.uk by March 13th 2016.

Any questions or requests for further information should be directed to: andrea.hannon@coventry.ac.uk

Reference:
CFP: The Cycle of Life in Art, Literature &Science (Coventry, 1 Jul 16). In: ArtHist.net, Feb 15, 2016 (accessed Nov 20, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/12230>.