

CONFERENCE:

From the Cradle to the Grave: Life-Course Models in Literary Genres

To be held at the
Bildungshaus St Virgil, Salzburg,
13-16 November 2008

Organised by
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CALL FOR PAPERS

"... life, unlike art, has an irritating way of bumping and limping on, undoing conversions, casting doubt on solutions, and generally illustrating the impossibility of living happily or virtuously ever after ...", says Charles Arrowby, the first-person narrator in Iris Murdoch's novel *The Sea, The Sea* (1978) after embarking on a tortuous journey towards writing his life. While he experiences the inadequacy of various literary genres in narrating life, the interest of this conference is precisely on *how* particular genres, especially non-(auto)biographical genres, narrate life and in so doing emulate or generate particular life-course models.

Representations of the human life cycle in literature have varied with time, social conditions, and value systems and may be seen as projections of, or deviations from, an 'ideal life'. The cult of childhood, the focus on initiation or, conversely, ageing, life extension, and immortality are indicative of what has been valued about life and how life course models have been shaped according to these ideals. The main questions of this conference are: how is life patterned in literature? What mode of narration, perspective, or structure is preferred/required for the representation of a particular life course – a retrospective view, an omniscient narrator, a single perspective or shifts in point-of-view? How do particular life-course models impose certain features onto narratives and how do narrative genres influence our perception of real phenomena? Focusing on how individual literary genres represent the human life cycle, we are interested in both case studies and genre theory and invite papers exploring:

- the generic properties of narratives representing the human life course, such as the *bildungsroman*, the picaresque novel, romance, gothic, science fiction, fantasy, travel literature ...
- structural and narrative elements, in particular issues of plot and perspective
- changes in a genre reflecting shifting life patterns
- genre criticism in the context of changing life-course models.

Papers may not exceed 30 minutes delivery time and will be followed by 15 minutes of discussion. Two papers will be given in one session of 90 minutes in all. The language of papers and discussions is English. This conference also includes a forum for PhD students working in this area and a teachers' forum. The latter will be announced separately.

If you are interested in this conference and wish to offer a paper or take part as a general participant, please contact **by 31 March, 2008** (adding an abstract of 350 words describing your project and bearing your name and institutional affiliation):

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