

Panel Title:

Labyrinth as Paradigm in Late Medieval and Early Modern Cultures

The opening session of *La métaphore du labyrinthe*, an interdisciplinary seminar organized by Roland Barthes during 1978 and 1979, reached two principal conclusions: first, that despite the apparent chaos always linked to its semantics, the notion of ‘labyrinth’ actually implies "a factor of intentional and systematic construction"; second, that the labyrinthine structures have essentially a hermeneutic function. The wear and tear of the labyrinth as a metaphoric trope drove Barthes to conclude that maybe the labyrinth is but a “pseudo” metaphor, where the letter is richer than the symbol and thus, the labyrinth would engender narratives rather than images. This analysis breaks away from the traditional concept of labyrinth – its chaotic and visual nature – and proposes it as a paradigm that works, at the same time, as a productive figure and a classifying one.

Transferring the ideas proposed by Barthes' seminar to the cultural framework of the Early Modern and the Late Middle Ages, this panel aims to open new approaches to the topic: taking into the account the recurrence of the figure of the labyrinth in the mentioned periods (as used by Teresa de Jesús or Hildegard von Bingen to represent mystical visions, or as a theatrical metaphor of the world as in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* or Calderón's *El laberinto del mundo*, or as the underlying structure in Dante's *Divine Comedy*), we would like to move towards a bidirectional study on the paradigm – on one hand, the labyrinth as a theoretical tool employed to unravel the cultural products born between the fourteenth and the seventeenth centuries; and on the other, the labyrinthine structure as epistemological model used by early modern and late medieval thinkers and creators.

Topics include but are not limited to text codification, a taste for the intricate, the multiplication of parallel levels of reading, the visual and narrative tricks and *trompe-l'œil*s, the labyrinthine representation of divine visions, or the decentralization of subjects and identities. This panel also aims to extend the hermeneutic function of the labyrinth to the intertextual level, encompassing rewritings, translations, apocrypha, annotations and appropriations.

Finally, we want to continue down the path opened by Barthes and join his proposal of overcoming the model of the Cretan labyrinth, omnipresent in Western thought. Thus, this panel welcomes papers that consider models of labyrinth present in different cultures: Egyptian, Germanic, Oriental, Amerindian, and others.

Please send 250-word abstracts for 20-minute papers by the deadline of 23 September, 2015 to Ana Garriga Espino (ana.garriga@uam.es) and Victor Sierra Matute (vics@sas.upenn.edu).