

MASTERING THE MAZE IN GÓNGORA'S SOLEDADES

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The famous opening lines of the dedication to Góngora's pastoral masterpiece the *Soledades* (1612-14) articulate the reader's entry into the poems as a plunge into a solitary, confusing path of language:

Pasos de un peregrino son errante
cuantos me dictó versos dulce Musa,
en soledad confusa
perdidos unos, otros inspirados. (1-4)

These lines have inspired a variety of critical responses over the years, but only Leo Spitzer, one of Góngora's most eloquent and perceptive readers, has recognized that the meandering footstep-verses establish the labyrinth as a paradigm of structure and hermeneutic process in the poems: "The poet's errant course through his sentence-labyrinth—his disappearance in it, his discovery of the way out, his working his way out before our very eyes, his compelling us to work our way out together with him—reflects the very drama of poetic creation, the process of becoming master over the world and imposing order on it" (91).¹ Spitzer suggests that the labyrinth image modeled at the beginning of the *Dedicatoria* resonates throughout the work, generating a conceptual master key to the text and to Gongorine poetics. This study pursues the implications of Spitzer's observation to offer readers a poetic analogue to Ariadne's thread, an imaginary map that will enable them to navigate successfully the *Satzlabyrinth*, the "sentence-labyrinth" of the *Soledades*, in a collaborative pact with the implied author.

The small circle of elite readers who formed the original, intended audience of Góngora's *Soledades* knew well the image of the maze.² References to labyrinths appear frequently in Golden Age literature. For example, Lope's Sonnet I of the *Rimas sacras* (1614) repeats the first verse of Garcilaso's Sonnet I (1543), "Cuando me paro a contemplar mi estado," and renders explicit the psychological circumstances of the earlier poem, in which the subject alludes to maze-like confusion while contemplating his misguided past. Lope's poetic "I" presents

himself as a penitent sinner lost in a moral maze, "Entré por laberinto tan extraño," whom God has redeemed from darkness through divine light (Rivers 60, 262). Rosaura paints a similar portrait of moral disarray as the curtain rises in *La vida es sueño* (1636). The heroine searches for her horse, "hipogrifo violento," in a rocky wilderness, ". . . al confuso laberinto / desas desnudas peñas," a labyrinthine place seemingly set apart from the laws of God and humankind that captures to perfection her own inner state of chaos and disequilibrium (Calderón 85). According to Huston Diehl, these sixteenth- and seventeenth-century images of the maze eventually spawn the explosion of labyrinths in contemporary literature. He maintains, however, that the alienation and claustrophobia currently identified with such images reveal closer kinship to Protestant rather than Catholic models: "When it emphasized original sin, encouraged mistrust of all external things, rejected good works, and insisted on the central importance of faith, Protestantism, quite unwittingly, sowed the seeds for the alienation, doubt, and impotence that the contemporary labyrinths suggest is the central truth about modern existence" (289). The subjective experience portrayed by Garcilaso, Lope, and Calderón tells a very different story, expressing the conviction that active use of free will allows humans to negotiate the maze of life and make their way to God.

Góngora and his peers inherited in the labyrinth an image already invested with centuries of symbolic significance. Long before the maze figured in Christian iconography, or underwent a Protestant/Catholic hermeneutic schism, the symbol embodied a rich tradition grounded in the supernatural and in mythological lore, traceable to prehistoric times. For the educated public of Imperial Spain, as entranced as the rest of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe with the tales of antiquity in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the cuckolding of the Cretan King Minos, Daedalus's design and construction of the labyrinth, Theseus's slaying of the Minotaur and escaping the maze with Ariadne's help, and the corollary story of the death of Icarus constituted familiar elements of an oft-repeated narrative cycle. Ovid inscribes a labyrinthine pattern into his text in a descriptive passage that compares Daedalus's artful creation to the legendary Meander River:

Just as Maeander plays among the meads
 Of Phrygia and in its puzzling flow
 Glides back and forth and meets itself and sees
 Its waters on their way and winds along,
 Facing sometimes its source, sometimes the sea,
 So Daedalus in countless corridors
 Built bafflement, and hardly could himself
 Make his way out, so puzzling was the maze.³

This comparison invites a merger of art and nature in emblems of artful nature and natural artifice that form an integral part of the *Soledades*'s poetics and the aesthetics of Góngora's age. The pastoral masterpiece offers ample opportunities to baffle reader and composer alike, and extends numerous challenges to the audience to puzzle their way through the poems' tortuous linguistic corridors.

The pattern Ovid conjures in the mind's eye also recalls the labyrinth's existence as an ancient design independent of literary contextualization. In fact, his description corresponds to the standard layout of mazes of antiquity—a unidirectional, meandering design in which the path twists to-and-fro, turning back on itself, but inexorably moving towards a well-defined nucleus. To return to the point of entry, the maze walker must turn around and retrace his/her steps. This imagistic model of multiple, curvilinear switchbacks, frequently enlarged into a four-fold geometrically symmetrical version, possesses a distinctly aquatic cast that may relate to its role in the sacred rituals and mysteries of the ancient world. Group dances performed in meandering configurations, perhaps following an outline sketched on the pavement for the occasion, have been linked to fertility rites, with the winding movements perhaps reenacting travel into and out of the womb along the route of the birth canal. Individuals may have participated in a rite of initiation by maze walking, in which the journey to the labyrinth's center represented a return to the womb of Mother Earth followed by a triumphant reappearance at the entrance, all symbolic of death and rebirth. The meander seems to have enjoyed considerable popularity, too, as an ornamental design painted on Greek vases, worked into Roman floor mosaics, and replicated on ceilings in the classical world, doubtlessly valued both for beauty and the magical powers inscribed within its form. Antiquity also provides architectural monuments with labyrinthine blueprints unlike those of the meander, but of obvious conceptual propinquity. The Mycenaean palace at Knossos and the Egyptian pyramids, with their numerous, interlocking rooms and hallways, anticipate the modern paradigm of the maze in their nightmarish array of confusing directional choices.⁴

The metonymic relationship between the Cretan labyrinth and its creator proved strong, and persisted well into the Middle Ages, when "the house of Daedalus" or just "Daedalus" became synonymous with "maze." The mythic architect metamorphosed into *Daedalus artifex*, the archetypal master artist, artisan, and builder; and the founder of sacred, fortified cities—Troy, Constantinople, Jericho, and Jerusalem. The architects of the great medieval cathedrals frequently left the imprint of their profession, i. e. the labyrinth, in the pavement or on keystones within the edifice. The Cathedral at Chartres boasts the quint-

essential example of these Christian mazes, a unidirectional design cut from the same mold as those of classical antiquity. Maze walking retained spiritual significance in cathedrals rebaptized as a symbolic pilgrimage to Jerusalem during which the pilgrim undertook a meditative journey from penance to conversion. By the fourteenth century, the labyrinth emerged as a notable feature in garden architecture, although the maze did not become a standard part of the gardenist vocabulary until the sixteenth century, closer to Góngora's epoch and the period of newfound enthusiasm for Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Despite the secular space the garden maze occupied, the structure still bore the title of House of Daedalus.⁵

Given the multifaceted cultural heritage identified with the maze and the popularity of the image in the literature of the time, Góngora's allusion in the Dedication of the *Soledades* to his poems as a labyrinth, and the process of reading the work as a pilgrimage shared by a pilgrim-poet who also mirrors the reader, emerges as a less surprising artistic choice. Nevertheless, the choice is still a singularly effective one in stimulating, what Christopher Collins has called, a type of "enactive interpretation" best captured by the Greek term *enargeia*, "the subjective act of imaging that precedes the active (energetic) response" and involves deployment of the eyes of the mind to visualize a scene. As the West shifted from oral to literate discourse, a process just nearing completion in Góngora's epoch, readers gradually learned to reconstruct descriptive detail, fictional speakers, and narrated events as mental imagery cued and mediated by the written word (*Reading* 122-29). Collins's view of reading as a form of dynamic imaging restores to the reader's mind the ancient role of *theatron* or "viewing place" in which verbal images are created and performances unfold (*Reading* 12). As the curtain rises on the *Soledades* then, Góngora's initial scene in the imaginary *theatron* assumes the shape of a House of Daedalus.

The poet subsequently reminds his audience of this central image in two memorable *mise-en-abyme* representations of labyrinths near the beginning of *Soledad I* and *Soledad II* respectively. As Ellen Esrock has pointed out, imaging hones the reader's "cognitive grasp of the fictional world" and produces affect through the "evocation of the psychodynamics of vision" (192-93). She states that the more striking the image, the more successful is its impact in awakening readers' visual awareness and increasing their ability to grasp the imaginary scenes, objects, and actions (193). Imaging drives the audience's desire to know more, and thus pushes readers to master the challenges posed by the text (194). The fact that Góngora has chosen the maze as the *Soledades'* emblem suggests that he wishes to remind the audience of the complexity of the textual world they seek to enter and inhabit imagina-

tively, and that they can find their way through the labyrinth by a skillful, meditative working ("walking") through of the poems' convoluted syntax, complex linguistic puzzles, and intertwining systems of imagery. In short, he cues enactive interpreters that they must visualize themselves as maze walkers and then put that image into action in reading the *Soledades*.

The labyrinth image that appears close to the opening of *Soledad I* resembles Ovid's description of the Meander River. A goatherd leads the shipwrecked pilgrim to a craggy lookout spot. A panoramic vista of a river valley below catches the viewer's wondering eyes:

Si mucho poco mapa les despliega,
mucho es más lo que (nieblas desatando)
confunde el Sol y la distancia niega.
Muda la admiración habla callando,
y ciega un río sigue, que, luciente
de aquellos montes hijo,
con torcido discurso, aunque prolijo,
tiraniza los campos útilmente:
orladas sus orillas de frutales,
quiere la Copia que su cuerno sea,
si al animal armaron de Amaltea
diáfanos cristales;
engazando edificios en su plata,
de muros se corona,
rocas abraza, islas aprisiona,
de la alta gruta donde se desata
hasta los jaspes líquidos, adonde
su orgullo pierde y su memoria esconde. (1.194-211)

The same aura of mystery and enigma that enshrouds the river valley applies equally to the *Soledades* as a whole, transforming Góngora's audience into solvers of the challenging poetic puzzles placed before them in elaborate rhetorical conundrums similar to the visual riddle nature sets before the bedazzled eyes of the pilgrim. Even the verse form of the work, the *silva*, which combines heptasyllables and hendecasyllables, with or without rhyme, in a loose and erratic fashion, traces an irregular, serpentine shape down the page, providing a visual, textual analogue to the Meander River and the meandering labyrinth, an image reinforced by the fact that, as originally conceived and written (as seen in the *manuscrito* Chacóm), there are no stanzaic breaks in the poem.

This tour-de-force descriptive conceit also cues readers as to how they should approach interpreting the *Soledades* and offers clues regarding the Gongorine aesthetics enacted in the poems. Góngora com-

compares the fertile landscape to an unfolding map, a scene partially concealed by fog and distance, and yet close by, gradually disclosed by the rising morning mist as it evaporates in the warm sunlight. The poet evokes the topos “much in little” with the phrase “mucho poco mapa,” suggesting that the space is small for the diversity contained in it, a notion that holds true for the entire work as well as the view displayed for the mind’s eye. Moreover, despite the dazzling rhetorical performance on the surface of the *Soledades*, laden with generous linguistic ornamentation that conceals ideas and tests the audience’s comprehension, Góngora implies that perspicacious readers who contemplate the latinate, *culto* words a while and struggle through the maze of conceits will find that the fog of incomprehension lifts, revealing a wealth of meaning beneath the surface spectacle. An enactive reading discloses the submerged aspects of the *Soledades*’ iceberg, complex ideas accessed by engagement with Gongorine verse. The “*admiración*” that speaks mutely to the pilgrim and goatherd, who in this instance serve as fictional doubles of the work’s audience, informs readers that Góngora intends for the text to induce them to wonderment before his artistry, which conveys *admiratio* silently when they read the poems in quiet solitude. The poet values wonderment as a desirable aesthetic effect that awakens the reader’s powers of imaging and encourages reflection and thought, stimulating the concentration of mental powers necessary to negotiate the journey through the web of words to arrive at the destination of insight and illumination.

The river mirrors a Gongorine sentence in microcosm in that multiple hyperbata, and other rhetorical devices, produce the twisted, prolix discourse that the poet likens to the meandering course of the stream. An earlier version of this conceit makes the connections between the river’s outline and Góngora’s sentences much more explicit, but the composer substituted this simpler, more oblique passage at the behest of a friend.⁶ Just as the poet’s skill and inspiration control the words and verses in a creative, positive way, so too the river’s life-giving water dominates the valley, rendering the landscape fertile, as the fruit trees attest. Góngora employs periphrasis to celebrate the variety and abundance of nature, comparing the water-nourished landscape to the horn of Amaltheia—a cornucopia. As R. O. Jones affirms, the poet celebrates nature’s bounty and variety throughout the *Soledades*, such that these qualities emerge as major themes of the work. But clearly the concept of a horn of plenty aptly captures an important tenet of Gongorine poetics as well, the identification of beauty, among other things, with multifariousness, whether in art that imitates nature or nature that imitates art. And the *Soledades* are nothing if not copious—in words, conceits, marvels, and in sensuous, sensory appeal.

The poems highlight varied visual and auditory effects. The luminous, twisting stream, the colorful procession of wedding guests and gifts (1. 233-49), the reflection of a sunrise off the burnished capitals of a Renaissance palace (II: 701-05), and the dynamic pageantry of the hawking scene (2. 706-936) bear witness to Góngora's esteemed cultivation of *enargeia* or pictorial imaging in his verse. A sound track accompanies the visual cornucopia, whether alluded to in the hymeneal choruses of *Soledad I* (767-844) or the amoebean songs of *Soledad II* (542-611), which the audience hears in the *theatron* of the imagination, or presented directly to readers through the musicality of the verses themselves, as in the alliteration of "*quiere su Copia que su cuerno sea*" and rhyme of "*despliega*"-"*niega*" or "*adonde*"-"*esconde*." Variety and abundance also characterize the types of genres incorporated into this hybrid masterpiece, which possesses elements of pastoral, epic, lyric, and narrative poetry, along with songs, dances, and dramatic monologues, making the work one that defies facile classification and demands active, creative engagement on the part of the reader.

The audience may also read into the trajectory of the river a metaphor for Góngora's act of poetic creation, which originates in the dark grotto of the imagination and pours outward and downward onto the page, where the inspired work loses the stamp of personal ownership and becomes a textual spectacle for public memory and delectation. Like the waterway, the *Soledades* advance through the construction of silvery edifices, that is, ornate, gemlike conceits, and in a roundabout manner, through layers of embedded clauses, paradoxes, and metaphors, which form rocks and islands in the poetic stream—beautiful, but confounding focal points for readers to wrap their minds, and imaginations, around.

Góngora claims the title of *Dedalus artifex* by painting another aquatic labyrinth in *Soledad II*, in which he details the intricate design of a fishing net:⁷

Dando el huésped licencia para ello,
 recurren no a las redes que, mayores,
 mucho Océano y pocas aguas prenden,
 sino a las que ambiciosas menos penden,
 laberinto nudoso de marino
 Dédalo, si de leño no, de lino
 fábrica escrupulosa, y aunque incierta,
 siempre murada, pero siempre abierta. (2. 73-80)

These lines transform the simple tool of a humble profession into a work of natural artifice that complements the artful nature of *Soledad I*'s Meander River. This small, "knotty labyrinth" displays shifting con-

tours, which change with the moving water and creatures entrapped within the woven threads. The net's imaginary, unfixed walls contain and restrain, yet stay open to the outside world by virtue of the grid skillfully fabricated by the "marino Dédalo." Góngora, too, has crafted a net of words in the *Soledades* that ensnares nature, weaving it into the "laberinto nudoso" of countless conceits and other sophisticated tropes. The loose bounds of the *silva* and the flexible syntax of Gongorine verse constitute a sort of porous structure that enables the poet to capture the vital, dynamic glory of nature and bring home the catch-of-the-day for readers to enjoy. Góngora exalts the virtuosity of his fisherman alter ego and prods his audience to turn a careful, admiring look at his workmanship as well. Immediately after this description, the poet lists a catalogue of fish and other marine life destined for the dinner table that includes aphrodisiacal oysters, snapper, salmon, robalo, and a rebellious eel, embellishing each item in the generous haul with vivid, distinguishing features from the texture of their scales to their magnificent, mythological antecedents. The composer once more upholds the aesthetic principles of variety and abundance as exemplified by both art and nature.

These Gongorine mazes in microcosm activate the unconscious power of the image to unify poems that consist of the merest wisp of a narrative plotline on which the poet has strung a plethora of elaborate conceits, like so many bejeweled ornaments on a Christmas tree. The labyrinth impacts on *Soledades* readers in an almost magical way, generating a "mnemonic matrix," that is, patterns in memory that help the audience conceptualize, organize, and comprehend a text on a more general level (Esrock 175-76, 188-90). But the maze also helps concretize the fictional world of this pastoral masterpiece, enabling the audience to act more effectively as scenographers in staging the mental *theatron* for the reading performance (Esrock 190-93). Collins has emphasized that imaging involves both experiential, and conventional memory, based on traditions or cultural heritage (*Poetics* 129-30). While Góngora's readers doubtlessly accessed literary and other artistic conventions in imaging the labyrinth, they likely also drew directly on gardenist experiences with mazes to map the *Soledades* mentally in terms of imaginary space.

Eugenio Battisti describes formal Renaissance gardens as complex conceptual systems, places of amorous pleasure and intellectual discussion, sites of lavish fêtes and solitary meditation, a space for theaters, botanical laboratories, sculpture galleries, and outdoor cabinets of curiosities (4-6). As noted earlier, long before Góngora composed the *Soledades*, labyrinths debuted as part of this intricate landscape architecture. Like topiary, garden mazes were ephemeral artworks fash-

ioned of natural materials such as bushes and plants shaped into geometric patterns. They could be tall or short, but either way, the trimmed vegetation normally designated a single path that directed the movement of the walkers and focused their gaze. Surprises greeted the labyrinth visitor in the form of statues, grottoes, water tricks, etc., stimulating the senses and the imagination, leading the walker on a circuitous route to the maze center, which often boasted a towering tree or a fountain sculpture, a monument fit for the conclusion of the witty, entertaining sojourn (Lazzaro 51-55). The layout of these Houses of Daedalus, which encouraged slow, progressive, unidirectional movement through detours and digressions occasioned by the varied surprises along the way, suggests readers' experiences as they work their way through the *Soledades*, advancing line by line through the pastoral world, but halting at every turn before the text's puzzling conceits or while admiring imaginary tableaux. In the case of both the garden labyrinth and Góngora's poetic maze, the digressions attenuate the overall sense of plot structure, slowing the forward momentum of walking and reading respectively, and subverting narrative privileging of the journey's / poems' end. The embedded vignettes thus acquire an aesthetic value and independence lacking in more straightforward, linear narratives. In short, Góngora's original aristocratic readers possessed a three-dimensional, schematic frame of reference gleaned from experience with garden labyrinths, which prepared them for the imaging demanded of an interactive *Soledades* audience.⁸

The pilgrim's progress through the landscape would suffice alone to trigger readers' memories of labyrinth walking. For example, the old *serrano* in *Soledad I* invites the protagonist to join the procession of wedding guests on their trip along a grove, or avenue of poplar trees, that constitutes a wall of greenery guarding the village destination and guiding the pilgrim and *serranos* into a leafy, enclosed space created outdoors: "política alameda, / verde muro de aquel lugar pequeño / que, a pesar de esos fresnos, se divisa" (1. 522-24). The view of journey's end, blocked in part by ash trees, and the characterization of the grove/avenue as *política*, hint at the intervention of human artifice in molding the natural world and fashioning loose boundaries that direct the footsteps and the eyes of the travelers, who act the role of people who wander into a maze. The trees shade the path that the party follows, which in turn shadows a slow-flowing stream, "sigue la dulce escuadra montañesa / del perezoso arroyo el paso lento," (541-42):

Alegres pisan la que, si no era
 de chopos calle y de álamos carrera,
 el fresco de los céfiros rüido,
 el denso de los árboles celaje,
 en duda ponen cuál mayor hacía
 guerra al calor o resistencia al día. (534-39)

The inner eye envisions not a wild, rustic forest fortuitously crafted by Providence, but rather an artfully designed garden labyrinth with one clear route marked by dense, cooling, sweet-sounding, protective foliage, and a refreshing stream perhaps contrived by a clever landscape architect to meander along past rocks and trees. Góngora's readers can access their gardenist mnemonic matrix to visualize the scene and project themselves into the mazes imaged by and in the poem.

As if to confirm the accuracy of the mazelike configuration intuited by his audience, Góngora concludes the trip just before the *serranos* enter the village in a locale that evokes the monuments found at the center of garden labyrinths:

Centro apacible un círculo espacioso
 a más caminos que una estrella rayos
 hacía, bien de pobos, bien de alisos,
 donde la Primavera,
 calzada abriles y vestida mayos,
 centellas saca de cristal undoso
 a un pedernal orlado de narcisos. (573-79)

The poet situates his sophisticated, contemporary readers in a familiar picture of themselves in the middle of a garden tableau likely conjured from experiential memory. The path leads to a *glorieta* that with the confluence of roads assumes a starburst pattern, providing another instance of art at work imitating nature. At the heart of this circular plaza lies a fountain that nourishes myriad flowers, nature's adornment. Readers have indeed reached the core of *Soledad I's* labyrinth at this landmark; they are on the verge of the site of the wedding feast, the climax of the first poem.

Soledad II stages another sequence of vignettes in which imagined maze-walking takes the place of motivated narrative to organize the reader's progress through the text and fictional landscape. Here, however, the pilgrim, and audience, glide along in a boat on an aquatic route controlled by the distance of the small vessel's oars from the shoreline, "y de la firme tierra el heno blando / con las palas segando," which then fixes the characters' sightlines for the unfolding optical wonders (689-90).⁹ As the protagonist, fishermen, and readers enjoy

the seventeenth-century equivalent of a mental amusement-park ride, they watch an Italianate villa of translucent marble set in cultivated land appear on the horizon, turn their eyes to the sky to witness a morality play unleashed by a hawking party, as the predatory birds swoop down on an overly audacious crow, and lower their eyes once again to water's edge:

Destos pendientes agradables casos
 vencida se apeó la vista apenas,
 que del batel, cosido con la playa,
 cuantos da la cansada turba pasos,
 tantos en las arenas
 el remo perezosamente raya,
 a la solicitud de una atalaya
 atento, a quien doctrina ya cetrera
 llamó catarribera, (937-45)

In a sense, the directed, shifting gaze of the passive spectators and Gongorine readers substitutes for their inactive legs, "carrying" them on a visual extravaganza that invites thought and *admiratio*. The watchtower's appearance signals their arrival at the fishing village, and at the trip's / work's final destination, even as it concludes the performance of an aquatic labyrinth within the mind's *theatron*.

As Ellen Esrock has noted, imaging positions the reader in the literary work and by means of textual cues, crafts a point of view that may correspond to "the perceptual sphere of a particular character or narrative voice" (196). Labyrinths also deploy cuing devices to position maze walkers, control their gaze, and guide their footsteps (Lazzaro 51-52). The beginning of the *Soledades's Dedicatoria* incites readers to image the verses as a labyrinth and to place themselves at the entrance of Góngora's House of Daedalus. When the poet exhorts the Duke of Béjar at the end of the dedication to set aside his hunting spear, rest beneath the sacred canopy of the evergreen oak, and cool himself by the pastoral spring of inspiration, he also informs the members of his audience, represented by the aristocratic hunter, how they may gain access to the maze's principal path:

templa en sus ondas tu fatiga ardiente,
 y entregados tus miembros al reposo
 sobre el de grama césped no desnudo,
 déjate un rato hallar del pie acertado
 que sus errantes pasos ha votado
 a la real cadena de tu escudo. (27-32)

Encomiastic expressions to Góngora's patron aside, the verses tell readers that those who have an active mind and a body at rest, and who entrust themselves to the poet's guidance through the verses, will be rewarded with a restored, revitalized spirit. The lines urge the audience to activate the imagination and open the eyes of the mind as they cross the threshold from external experience to internal awareness to enter the maze.

Soledad I puts readers into the labyrinth of verses and the fictional pastoral maze by encouraging identification between the elite audience and the shipwrecked pilgrim courtier. Directional signals then pull protagonist and reader along the meandering track of the digressive narrative. A distant campfire cues the imaging readers and the protagonist regarding their first destination, "golfo de sombras anunciando el puerto" (1. 61), the goatherd's hut. Other such directional cues include: the noise of a hunting party that breaks off the discourse between hero and goatherd and ushers the pilgrim down from on high into the valley below (1. 222-32); the sound of a pastoral flute that stops the protagonist midstride, "rémora de sus pasos fue su oído" (1. 237), leads him to join the wedding party and wend his way through the forest; a sea breeze that ends the day and conversation on the fisherman's island, introduces the amorous barcaroles of Micón and Lícidas, and pushes the *peregrino* into the role of matchmaker (2. 512-18); and the description of casting tired eyes long turned upward down to earth again after watching hawks rule the heavens while hunting, "Destos pendientes agradables casos / vencida se apeó la vista apenas" (2. 937-38), which sets the hero, his hosts, and their boat on their way to the end of *Soledad II*.

Expert guides and topographical features complement these cues in leading protagonist and audience along the poems' prescribed path. The pilgrim may not encounter the typical, formal Renaissance garden's lifelike automata or monumental statues to delight the eye, inspire thought, and encourage him to continue on his journey, but he does bump into human counterparts loitering about the bucolic landscape in just the right places at the perfect moments to ensure his proper passage through the maze of the *Soledades*. The old *serrano* of *Soledad I* issues the invitation to join the wedding procession to the hero, which will eventually lead him, and the audience, to the village's celebration, and the elderly fisherman of *Soledad II* shepherds the pilgrim on a tour of his island before sending him off on a trip to the fishing village the next day:

Estimando seguía el peregrino
al venerable isleño,
de muchos poco numeroso dueño,
cuando los suyos enfrenó de un pino
el pie villano, que groseramente
los cristales pisaba de una fuente. (314-19)

In these lines, the protagonist vaguely resembles a puppy dog following his master about the house. Yet as occurs so often in this work, nature provides boundaries of its own that redirect the maze-walker's gaze and footsteps, in this case, barriers in the form of pine roots seeking the diverted water of a spring. Not to be outdone, artifice that exercises the power to control sight and movement also pops up in the landscape. The poetic voice informs readers that a magnificent marble palace freezes the forward motion of boat and passengers, and holds their visual attention: "La admiración que al arte se le debe, / áncora del batel fue . . ." (2. 706-07). On the whole, however, Góngora has etched these features into the landscape with much bolder, more obvious strokes, designing a maze dominated by dramatic verticals in *Soledad I*—hills, valleys, promontories—and sinuous waterways in *Soledad II*, although the reader will find examples of both types of topography in each poem, and a masterpiece alive with the characteristics common to lavish aquatic gardens like that of the Este villa at Tivoli, so reminiscent of the mythic Meander River.

Simon Schama has written that "[t]o see the ghostly outline of an old landscape beneath the superficial covering of the contemporary is to be made vividly aware of the endurance of core myths" (16). Schama refers to the links between physical places and nature myths, but the observation holds true for the imaginary pastoral landscape of the *Soledades*, especially since Leo Spitzer spotted the outline of the labyrinth in Góngora's masterpiece years ago. For the enactive audience of these pastoral poems, the labyrinth stands at the intersection of gardenist aesthetics, literary convention, and mythic traditions. By mastering the maze in the *Soledades*, generations of readers will reach the heart of the poems and Gongorine poetics even as they reconnect with the ancient, elusive, sacred world of myth.¹⁰

Notes

¹For other readings of the *Dedicatoria*, in addition to Spitzer 91-95, see Gaylord; Chemris, McGrady, Beverley 21-25, McCaw 13-17, and Collins chapter 1.

²For general studies on the image of the maze/labyrinth in Renaissance and Baroque European literature, consult Gillespie and Diehl. Gillespie writes of Góngora in relation to lyrical *logodaedalia* of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (308, 322), while McCaw notes the association between maze-like wandering and pilgrimage in the *Soledades* (7-8), commenting: "The *Soledades* is an extraordinary example of the tradition of writing that combines pastoral settings with labyrinthine structures, with the effect of placing the reader into the role of errant wanderer, and with the aesthetic and didactic purposes of demonstrating the beauty of the secular world and providing a moral code whereby to handle the beauty's fleetingness" (155).

Critics sometimes distinguish "maze" from "labyrinth" by emphasizing that the maze is designed to confuse and misdirect, often engendering bewilderment, anxiety, and claustrophobia (e.g. Pennich 3). I have employed the words synonymously in this article.

³Ovid, Book 8, 175-78, at p. 176. Consult Schevill on Ovid in Golden Age Spain; and Waley, Welles 19-37, 39-61; and Collins chapter 3 on Ovid, mythology, and Góngora. Thomas Greene notes the symbolic relationship between the Meander and the labyrinth, and calls the pattern of "an interflow where source and goal are indistinguishable . . . 'the Meander effect'" (1417-20).

⁴Pennich 3-6, 17-22; Jaskolski 1-31, 43-66; and Kern 9-85 provide information on the origin and symbolism of labyrinths in the world of antiquity.

⁵Pennich 17, 24-31; Jaskolski 23-31, 67-84; and Kern 206-41, 358-89 describe labyrinths in the Middle Ages and the emergence of the garden maze.

⁶Dámaso Alonso's edition of the poems presents the earlier version of this passage:

Si mucho poco mapa le despliega,
mucho es más lo que, nieblas desatando,
confunde el sol y la distancia niega.
Muda la admiración, habla callando,
y, ciega, un río sigue, que—luciente
de aquellos montes hijo—
con torcido discurso, aunque prolijo,
tiraniza los campos útilmente;
orladas sus orillas de frutales,
si de flores, tomadas, no, a la Aurora,
derecho corre mientras no provoca
los mismos altos el de sus cristales;
huye un trecho de sí, y se alcanza luego;
desvíase, y buscando sus desvíos,
errores dulces, dulces desvaríos
hacen sus aguas con lascivo fuego;
engazando edificios en su plata,

de quintas coronado, se dilata
 majestuosamente
 —en brazos dividido caudalosos
 de islas que paréntesis frondosos
 al período son de su corriente—
 de la alta gruta donde se desata
 hasta los jaspes líquidos, adonde
 su orgullo pierde y su memoria esconde. (1. 194-218)

Alonso 182 notes that Góngora changed the passage at the behest of famed humanist Pedro de Valencia.

⁷For an analysis of the fishing net or *griphos* conceit in relation to Longinus's concept of the sublime, see chapter 3 of my book.

⁸Góngora did not intend to publish the poems. Originally, they only circulated in manuscript form among aristocrats at court and among the intellectual elite, and were published after the poet's death.

⁹Lazzaro (3-4, 55-68) discusses water as the key component of landscape architecture in the Italian Renaissance garden.

¹⁰Schama describes his research as an archaeological project, "an excavation beginning with the familiar, digging down through layers of memories and representations toward the primary bedrock, laid down centuries or even millennia ago, and then working up again toward the light of contemporary recognition" (16-17). This process is analogous to that of the critic who seeks to analyze the *Soledades* through a process of cultural recontextualization.

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