

# Hedge mazes and landscape gardens as cultural boundary objects

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**Abstract.** Despite their obvious functional and stylistic differences, hedge mazes and English landscape gardens have salient symbolic and structural similarities which make them fruitful objects of comparative analysis. Both invert the norms expected of interior and exterior spaces, of human cultivation and “wilderness”, creating landscapes of semiotic uncertainty. Being at once natural and cultural, both types of space present a “problem to be solved” either by reaching a centre or understanding a layout. Both “play” with the notion of boundary by constructing uncrossable and at times oppressive walls from seemingly fragile plant matter or by hiding their boundaries. At the same time there are important differences which make this comparison of boundary spaces even more interesting: hedge mazes and landscape gardens are distinguishable by their respective structural levels, the presence or absence of a centre, their relation to other parts of gardens and connected human habitations.

Using Juri Lotman’s notion of hybrid and transitional objects characteristic of boundary mechanisms, this paper explores the semiotically dense nature-culture boundary which these mazes and gardens both inhabit and create. The objects of our analysis are 17th-century English mazes and early English gardens dating from the beginning of the 18th century: mazes at Longleat and Hampton Court, and landscape gardens such as Rousham and Stowe.

**Keywords:** gardens; mazes; landscape gardens; boundary; boundary mechanisms; Juri Lotman; pleasant confusion; semiotics of space

Boundaries exists not merely – not even principally – as dividers and solid obstacles which keep insides in and outsides out. As Juri Lotman explained decades ago, a boundary is an ambivalent notion: the outcome of the semiotization of the world, the delimitation into central and peripheral parts, into the realm described as “ours”, and therefore organized and meaningful, and “theirs” – chaotic and hostile (Lotman 1990: 131). However, the boundary is by no means a perfectly clear point of difference, but rather presents itself as a territory: metaphorical (occupied by concepts, texts and genres) and literal (occupied by people). The things and people inhabiting – *constituting* – the boundary, “belong to both frontier cultures, to both continuous semiospheres” (Lotman 1990: 136). These boundary objects, like “our pogany” or “the Russian Byron” (examples of boundary concepts), due to their oxymoronic and ambiguous nature, constitute a culture’s repository of creativity and change.

The boundary is a theoretical notion used to define the semiosphere as an object of study, and – for a given culture – a repository of bilingual and multilingual notions and texts. However, above all else it functions as “a mechanism for translating” or “a filtering membrane”, whose purpose is to “control, filter and adapt the external into the internal” (Lotman 1990: 136). The process of translation takes place precisely by means of the boundary. Daniele Monticelli compares translation enabled by a central meta-language, which aims at totality and leaves the untranslatable outside the boundary of a system, with “the bilingual border-space translation [which] always remains, on the contrary, inadequate and incomplete in two senses: 1) inexhaustibility since the untranslated remainder never dries up, always new and unpredictable results emerge from translation [...] and 2) irreversibility: if we translate back [...] we never get back to the original point, but always to a new one” (Monticelli 2009: 335).

The boundary, by facilitating “translating in case of untranslatability” (Lotman 1997: 10) and supplying both systems with inexhaustible, incomplete “semiotic projections”, or “mirror structures” (Lotman 1997: 10), makes communication far more ambivalent, but nevertheless enables it. At the same time it creates tension which “ensures the dynamic, text generating essence of cultural space” (Andrews 2003: 48), transforming the semiosphere by means of gradual and explosive shifts of meaning (Lotman 2009).

The boundary defines any given semiosphere by creating “the outer limit of the first-person form”, but it is the boundary as well which enables contact with “the other”, thus making possible the transformation of the “I” (Lotman 1990: 131). The relation of the boundary to the semiosphere is analogous to the relation between semiosphere and culture. Similarly to the semiosphere, which “is the result and the condition for the development of culture” (Lotman 1990: 125), the boundary is both the result and the condition for the development of the semiosphere. This concept

also creates the third realm between “ours” and “theirs”.<sup>1</sup> As Wojciech Kalaga (1997: 150) observed in reference to Derrida’s theories: “boundary [becomes] a necessary caveat for the abolishment of the dichotomy which it generates”.

In addition to the three meanings explained above – (1) the means of separation and connection; (2) a cultural repository of bilingualism and multilingualism; (3) a mechanism of translation – a boundary may also be material: “When the semiosphere involves real territorial features as well, the boundary is spatial in a literal sense” (Lotman 1990: 140). It also happens that objects appear in culture which are of a particularly and peculiarly boundary-like nature; one thinks of translators between languages, threshold markers, and doors as only the most ready examples. Semiotic boundary objects not only facilitate communication (of things, messages, and individuals) between distinct semiotic spaces, they also signify the presence of the boundary, reinforce it, and are identified with, and in some cases *as*, boundaries themselves. Interestingly, these objects may be so ubiquitous and familiar (as in the case of doors) that they escape our notice completely, while others may be distinct and uncanny artifacts that are troubling to both their native and other cultures.

This article will discuss two such objects that lie on different ends of the spectrum: the familiar and usually pleasant garden, and the strange and confounding hedge maze.

## Mazes and gardens – historical context

There is evidence of the existence of hedge mazes in antiquity and the Middle Ages, but they gained popularity in Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries (Matthews 1922: 110–112). The first mazes in England were recorded in the 15th century and in the following two centuries both unicursal and multicursal mazes spread across the country (Jacques 1999: 41–43). The best known hedge maze in England is the Hampton Court Maze, planted at the end of the 17th century by George London and Henry Wise – today it exists as a multicursal maze with half a mile of paths.

In the second half of the 17th century, there appeared labyrinth-like spatial formations created by cutting lanes and rides through dense bushes and woods situated at the peripheries of more formal gardens. These were called ‘wilderness’. At the turn of the century they started to occupy a greater proportion of gardens and moved closer to their centres (Williamson 1995: 35–40).

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<sup>1</sup> Daniele Monticelli traces the similarities in the transformation of Saussurian-binarism into more dynamic (triadic) conception of meaning generation in the writings of Juri Lotman and Jacques Derrida. He observes: “If “three” is the mediating number, mediation leads here to unbounded proliferation – an “avalanche”, as Lotman writes (see Lotman 2002: 2654), or “dissemination” in Derrida’s terms” (Monticelli 2012: 328).

Wildernesses were an important step in the development of English landscape gardens, sharing with them such properties as meandering paths, the predominance of natural scenery, and complex, surprising routes through the grounds. It is worth noting that the terms ‘mazes’, ‘labyrinths’ and ‘wildernesses’ were used interchangeably and the existence of the actual spatial features overlapped. The above mentioned Hampton Court Maze was planted in the wilderness garden at the peripheries of the palace grounds.

The first landscape gardens were created in the second and third decades of the 18th century. They did not necessarily possess the qualities which today would prompt us to call them mazes. However, they were perceived in this way at the time. An interesting example of a maze-like structure brought to the centre of a garden is *Patte d’oie* – ‘goose-foot’. This was composed of three radiating avenues resembling the webbed foot of a goose, and was an important feature of one of the first landscape gardens – the garden at Chiswick built by Lord Burlington in the 1720s. Although the feature itself was supposed to replicate the layout characteristic of Roman gardens, groves between the three avenues were interwoven with meandering paths similar to those in peripheral garden wildernesses, this time brought to the centre of the property (Charlton 1968).

Later, landscape gardens also referred to the construction of wildernesses and mazes by meandering paths and many possible routes through places. The Rousham garden created by William Kent is relatively small, but it has been calculated that it is possible to walk through it in 1064 ways without repeating a route (Moggridge 1986: 191). We can see that this was an extension of earlier practices: the wilderness at Moseley Wood, Cookridge Hall near Leeds created in 1696 provided lanes with 65 intersections and 306 different views to admire. One visitor described it as a “most surprising labyrinth which at once delighteth and amuseth the spectator with the windings and variously intermixed walks” (Sheeran 1990: 25–29). In a much bigger garden – Stowe – the illusion of constant change and interrelatedness was created by views from different places in the garden onto its other parts. Hiding and revealing different parts of the garden triggered the experience of anticipation and confrontation similar to that in a maze, when the visitor may only suspect a correct route or a *cul-de-sac* behind the corner.

Already at this point of the historical overview, it is clear that landscape gardens and hedge mazes coexisted in time and to some extent were perceived as similar to each other by their designers and visitors. However, their important and characteristic differences come to light in a closer comparative analysis.

## Hedge mazes and gardens – comparison

Gardens and mazes (both outdoor spaces) exhibit the characteristics of indoor and outdoor architecture. They are influenced by a house (the ultimate interior) which structures their orientation of space, the relations of various elements, and which is mirrored in the fragments of gardens and in the whole design of hedge mazes, which ultimately consist of corridors. Gardens and hedge mazes are also influenced by the natural outdoor environment (the ultimate exterior), which visually merges with the landscape garden and stands in contrast to the highly structured, artificial form of the hedge maze.

Mazes and landscape gardens have special relationships to the notion of their own boundaries. Mazes are constituted by boundaries – it is fair to say that they themselves are structured boundaries, which fold into the interior space of the hedge maze instead of only marking its limits. The boundary walls that create the maze's corridors are continuous up to the very centre of the maze, which is the antithesis of the notion of boundary as periphery. The centre holds a special relationship not only to the whole structure of the hedge maze, being its “solution”, i.e. the ultimate aim of undertaking its challenge, but also with the outside of this structure (often there is a special tunnel leading from the centre to the outside of the maze).

While hedge mazes emphasize and epitomize the presence of boundaries *qua* boundaries, as limitations or constraints on free movement, landscape gardens deny their existence. The boundaries of a landscape garden are hidden behind trees or constructed as ha-has – sunken ditches which mark out the end of the garden, but at the same time make it invisible to the visitor, for whom the garden visually merges with the surrounding countryside. This is not even the sum total of the repertoire of tricks which make the boundary visually non-existent in a landscape garden: designers use natural features of the landscape (such as rivers) as “natural obstacles” and structure the surrounding countryside so that it looks like a garden itself (small buildings and even mock castles and ruins give the landscape the appropriate atmosphere, whole villages may be hidden or destroyed if they do not suit the structure or atmosphere which the designer wanted to achieve). Historically, this was relatively easy for landowners to achieve, as they were usually in possession of the adjoining grounds. These mechanisms are well illustrated by the features of the garden at Stowe, which is surrounded by ha-has and has outside architecture harmonious with the architecture of the garden. There is even a mock castle consisting only of the front wall, which resembles the buildings inside the garden and gives the whole neighborhood a similar historical character. In the garden at Rousham a part of the border is created by the River Cherwell.

As the hedge mazes under consideration here are most frequently found adjoining or even as an integral feature of such landscape gardens, it is important to consider their mutually constructed context and the dialogic aspect of their relationship to one another. While both objects, landscape gardens and hedge mazes, have distinct relationships with their own boundaries – the former effacing what the latter foregrounds – the similar artifice and constructedness they embody tends to highlight the boundary nature, if not the actual physical boundaries, of each.

As an object composed and constituted entirely of and by boundaries, the hedge maze can be seen to act as the visible symbol of the landscape garden's effaced and hidden boundedness and boundary nature. Especially when a hedge maze is a constitutive element of a landscape garden, whether placed at its centre or periphery, the two exist in dialogic relation to one another's radically different manifestation of boundaries. The self-conscious formalism of the hedge maze, the impossibility of it occurring "in nature", stands in sharp contrast to the landscape garden's no less conscious effort to appear "natural". The artifice of the maze highlights by contrast the naturalness of the garden: the heavy-handedness of the maze's goal-orientation, the directness of its challenge to the visitor to locate its centre, is opposed to the gardener's light touch in creating and tending meandering naturalistic paths which nonetheless direct the visitor to the sights and "surprises" intended by its designer.

The notion of boundaries embodied by these artificial outdoor constructs is related to the problematic and uneasy distinction between natural and artificial in both mazes and landscape gardens.<sup>2</sup> In hedge mazes the boundaries are created from natural (living) material, but are cut and trimmed so that they resemble geometric figures and various objects. In the case of hedge mazes the natural processes of vegetal growth and the cultural need to sustain the shape of the maze are in constant mutual tension. This tension also manifests itself in the contrast between the seemingly fragile plant material and the experience of the strong physical barrier it creates. In hedge mazes the visitor is in constant – bodily, perceptual, sensual – contact with the boundary. It is at arm's length at all times and forces the visitor to look for alternative routes in search of a singular, epitomized centre – and then to use either a secret exit leading from the centre directly to the periphery or retrace the correct route to reemerge.

In landscape gardens the boundaries are hidden – they are not supposed to restrict visitors' eyes in any way, but – at the same time – they do restrict their bodily

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<sup>2</sup> This is an important problem for ecosemiotics, understood as "the semiotics of relationship between nature and culture" (Kull 1998: 350). For interesting investigations into the nature of gardens as hybrid spaces merging notions of nature and culture, see Gazda, Gołąb 2008; Larsen 1997; Maran 2004; Wolschke-Bulmann 1997; Zilberberg 1998.

movements.<sup>3</sup> The name ‘ha-ha’ supposedly originates from the cry of surprise at the unexpected encounter with an invisible obstacle. While hedge mazes restrict vision to a few metres in front, behind, and to the view of the sky above, landscape gardens are supposed to free the visitor completely (even if only illusively) from any visual restrictions. Joseph Addison described this experience in the following manner: “in the wide Fields of Nature, the sight wanders up and down without confinement, and is fed with an infinite variety of images” (Addison 1837[1712]: 142). Alexander Pope wrote about the practice of designing a garden: “he gains all Ends, who pleasingly confounds,/ surprises, varies and conceals the bounds” (Pope 1963[1731]: 130).

The concept of a thing which “pleasingly confounds” is the foundation of both objects under consideration here. The paradoxical character of the concept points to its boundary-nature. In the garden as well as the maze, visitors are confronted with a “wilderness” in safety: the threat of losing oneself and one’s way is transformed into the thrill of a game or puzzle with a real and singular solution. The confusion and unfamiliarity of the truly wild are mitigated, softened, and mollified by the awareness and sensation of a boundary separating the cultured space of the naturalistic construction from the real dangers of the outside. Mazes model the world as consisting of boundaries surrounding a stable centre – the truth, the answer, the essential aspect. Landscape gardens create the illusion of absolute freedom and the lack of a centre. Both impressions are deceptive. In both objects the omnipresent boundaries can be physically overcome, and what illusive freedom appears is restricted by various real and symbolic boundaries. While the hedge maze and the landscape garden present different challenges to the visitor, both are constructed around actual solutions which remain comfortably stable: the intervention of the gardener ensures in both cases that the path, whether meandering or confounding, remains stable, and that the same path by which one entered can be sure to lead one out. The visitor can be sure that these spaces contain no shifting corridors or rerouted paths; unlike the real wilderness, these constructed spaces do not rearrange themselves.

Mazes are built so that their different parts resemble one another – every wall is similar: leafy, green and straight – it points to all other corridors of the maze. Visually all the corridors are similar, but they are not all the same: they have positive and negative valences, they constitute the correct routes and dead ends, and their

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<sup>3</sup> It is difficult to research movement in gardens (especially in a historical perspective) as it is rarely the object of representation in art or literature, or being pondered upon in garden treatises. Among some important issues related to it are: ways of supporting and suppressing movement in gardens, different forms of movement implicit in a design, functions of movement as a basic mode of experiencing a garden as well as a form of aestheticizing the experience. For the analysis of those issues, together with the problems of methodologies suitable for investigating them, see Conan 2007 and Kaczmarczyk 2013a.

meaning must be uncovered bodily, through the experience of getting lost and finding one's way again. The point of stillness is represented by the centre – also possessing a definite positive valence – it represents all that is good: truth, knowledge, power, accomplishment. Conversely, the predominant feature of landscape gardens (in the opinion of contemporaries it differentiated them both from mazes and French gardens) is variety. While the maze consists of one element elaborated and reiterated in the forms of corridors and crossroads, the landscape garden perpetually entertains the visitor with its variety of elements, styles and visual plans, creating different patterns changeable with his every move. Yet in both objects the stability of the spatial elements is ensured by the oversight of an albeit invisible hand, lending the “pleasing” counterpart to what would in a real wilderness be an unmitigated and even dangerous “confusion”.

Alexander Pope described the French garden in a way that can be seen to relate to hedge mazes: “Grove nods to Grove, each alley has a brother/ and half the platform just reflects the other” (1963[1731]: 132). By contrast, it was a shared opinion that landscape gardens offer aesthetically pleasing variety. Joseph Addison wrote about the “infinite variety of images” (1836[1712]: 142), Daniel Defoe prized the prospect of the garden “[...] continually changing as you walk over it” (Defoe 1975[1742]: 175). Sir John Clerk advised landowners and landscape architects: “At every step new objects must arise/ and all your Fields and garden plots be such/ As may not only please our wand'ring eyes/ but feed luxuriant Fancy with Surprise” (Clerk 1975[1731]: 202). Variety and surprise was so important to 18th-century design that Pope – in his conversation with Joseph Spence – called creating a garden the “management of surprise” (Spence, Singer 1820: 260).

Mazes emphasize their own boundaries, while landscape gardens hide them; mazes are created by repetition and reiteration of the same elements, and landscape gardens celebrate variety, plurality, and surprise. Yet, while clearly different, both places present and represent puzzles to be solved. For hedge mazes the solution is fairly straightforward: to find the centre, and perhaps the path back out. In landscape gardens the goal is more diffuse and general: to understand the garden and create a mental plan of it, unify it as a one notion, while enjoying the walk.

## Experiencing mazes and gardens

In 18th-century Britain it was important for members of “polite society”, those characterized by a “liberal mind”, to be able to create abstraction from particularities, to relate part to whole, as it was a sign of the capacity to serve political functions (Barrell 1995). In this context it seems particularly important to be able to envisage the whole garden, its plan and structure, while enjoying its various elements. However, the construction of space did not make it easy for the visitor: constant changes of



perspective, hidden boundaries and serpentine lanes could be as confusing as the uniformity of mazes' walls. Alexander Pope (1975[1724]: 209) wrote in a letter to his friend Martha Blount: "[t]he gardens are so irregular, that it is very hard to give an exact idea of 'em but by a plan". As the plan was rarely available at hand, the visitor was left with the feeling of "pleasant confusion" as Pope put it elsewhere.

While similar confusion is created in mazes by the repetition of similar elements, in landscape gardens it is created by introducing various elements and establishing indexical relations between them (Kaczmarczyk 2013b: 53–54). The action of 'pointing to something', which is the foundation of indexical relation, is achieved by creating specific lines of vision through the garden. Different places offer a view onto others, and – as the visitor is moving among them – the matrix of relations becomes more and more dense. In the 18th century these relations were conceptualized as conversations between elements. Pope wrote about "parts answer'ing parts". William Gilpin (1993[1748]: 80) described part of the garden at Stowe: "[The rotunda] makes [...] a beautiful Figure in a Variety of Fine Views from several Parts of the Garden; several Parts of the Garden likewise return the compliment, by offering a great many elegant Prospects to it".

In both cases, what arises from the experience of mazes and landscape gardens is the feeling of uncertainty (beautifully described by Pope as "pleasant confusion"). It is the uncertainty about such categories as natural/cultural, interior/exterior, centre/periphery, and above all about the structure of a given space itself. The last one comes down to two statements: "I do not know where I am", "I do not know what comes next". It creates a feeling of confusion, which is still pleasant, because it presumes a contradiction in the belief that the knowledge of the place can be obtained, the puzzle can be solved. The feeling of being lost is neutralized in many ways: the conviction about the rationality of the puzzle and the presence of the centre, which is at the same time the answer to the puzzle; very often in or next to the maze there is a mount from which the structure is visible. The windows of a nearby mansion may serve a similar purpose – that of being the point of knowledge and power concentrated in the hands of the landowner. Similarly, it is possible to see the landscape garden more clearly when looking from the mansion windows or at a plan, usually displayed in the owner's home.

It seems that a crucial part of the experience of both mazes and landscape gardens is the generation and then neutralization of uncertainty. This is often imposed upon the maze or garden owners by themselves, and is perceived as a playful activity. Joseph Addison found pleasure even in small surprises presented by his own garden, which he obviously knew. He appreciated even the smallest hints of uncertainty and variety: "I am pleased when I am walking in the labyrinth of my own rising, not to know whether the next Tree I shall meet with is an Apple or an Oak tree, an Elm or a Pear-tree" (Addison 1837[1712]: 228).

## Social context

Both spaces are similar in their position on the border between various culturally produced distinctions (inside/outside; natural/artificial; central/peripheral), but they differ in their specific treatment of these distinctions. In the history of the development of mazes, wildernesses and gardens, we can observe the process of a gradual hiding of the boundary, making it less obvious, while still maintaining the goal of creating confusion and surprise. It is worth considering this change in light of the specific historical situation of the 17th and 18th century, especially at the turn of these centuries.

As a result of events of 1688 and 1689 – the Glorious Revolution and the passage of the Bill of Rights – much of the power in England was transferred to landowners and aristocrats. At the same time, changes in the market economy further complicated relations between various interest groups, leading to the slow emergence of what we could now tentatively call a middle class, which was then “a somewhat amorphous group, ranging from wealthy merchants and prominent professionals down to larger-scale farmers and shopkeepers” (Williamson 1995: 17). As the social structure grew increasingly complicated, some parts of society – the great landowners, local gentry, professional classes and wealthy merchants – found new ways to differentiate themselves from the rest of society. “[T]hey sought to play down differences of status and hierarchy between them, emphasizing instead a collection of shared cultural values often referred to as ‘politeness’: easy and affable behavior, knowledge of ‘taste’ or current fashions; an acquisition of a particular set of social skills” (Williamson 1995: 17). Society simultaneously became more open – placing less value on blood relation and lineage – and more closed – restricting positions of power to those who possessed the property and education to understand the boundary objects which they themselves created on their own land. As John Barrell aptly observed, one of the skills needed to be a valuable member of society, capable of comprehending the public interest, was the ability to see the relations between general terms and specific objects, and to abstract from empirical data. In the context of gardens, this means being able to see the general idea behind the confusing, surprising variety (Barrell 1995: 81–83).

How does this shed light on the landscape features we have discussed, coexisting at the turn of the 17th century and in the first half of the 18th century? We can see that the design and creation of these boundary objects, and the experience of confusion and its subsequent enactment, is an elaborate social game. Gardens and mazes are designed to confuse, surprise and even overwhelm so that select members of society may feel this confusion and immediately overcome it in order to demonstrate their intellectual abilities and taste. These boundary objects are

created for leisure activities, but they also have the ability to strengthen social identities through their usage. At the same time, they enable the creation of various divisions within the group – there are owners and visitors, those who control and those who are controlled. The “politics of the gaze” is represented in the topography of gardens: parterres overlooking mazes, mounts enabling the select few to survey the countryside, windows of mansions granting a perfect vantage point to the owner.

These positions of power were exploited with undisguised delight both in the 18th century, and earlier: Pope Clement X “took pleasure in watching the endeavors of his domestics to extricate themselves from the maze of tall box hedges which adorned his garden” (Matthews 1922: 127). William Shenstone, a poet and the creator of the famous Leasowes garden was known to get angry when visitors did not tour his garden in the “correct” order, ceding control of their experience to its creator. Stephen Switzer, an influential author and garden designer, wrote with a hint of almost cruel enthusiasm that a labyrinth should be “so intricate, as to lose one’s self therein, and to meet with so great a Number of steps therein and disappointments as possible” (Switzer 1718: 219).

The game of confusion and delight had a social goal. Its ambiguity protected the identity of the group united by equally ambiguous norms. It was a semiotic game of hide and seek, where the correct identification of the boundary positioned a person as a legitimate inhabitant of the space defined by this boundary. Simultaneously, the process of using gardens and mazes left nobody in doubt about the status stratification within the group. The watchers and the watched, those who planned the confusing surprises and those who experienced and were confounded by them, were clearly defined.

### **Mazes and gardens as semiotic boundary objects**

We have seen that landscape gardens and hedge mazes, by combining and embodying the features of a number of central cultural dichotomies – indoor/outdoor, natural/artificial, expectation/surprise, centre/periphery, sameness/variety, confusion/certainty – certainly lie between these categories as hybrid objects that problematize the boundaries that mark those distinctions. But these objects also play a role as boundaries themselves, and while the landscape garden most obviously acts as a spatial boundary which separates and provides a transition between the house and the countryside, Juri Lotman’s theoretical insights into the semiotic aspects of boundaries shed light on other significant facets of this boundary nature.

Lotman (1990: 133) notes that: “The outside world, in which a human being is immersed in order to become culturally significant, is subject to semioticization, i.e. it is divided into the domain of objects which signify, symbolize, indicate

something (have meaning), and objects which simply are themselves". The landscape garden embodies this primary cultural distinction, between semiotized and non-semiotized objects, perfectly: the plant life of which it is composed and which it celebrates can be seen as the quintessential "natural" object, preceding and indifferent to human cultural meanings. And yet the intentionality of the plants' arrangement in a landscape garden, which again is carefully designed not to look designed, betrays the meaningful projections of the gardener at every turn: Which plants are intended as the focal point of particular vistas? What foliage serves only to highlight more prestigious flora as its background? Which plants are acceptable garden material and which remain uncultivated? To each of these questions could, and should, be added the attendant, "...and why?" The experience of the garden poses similar queries, for while its purpose is enjoyment, relaxation, even undirected pleasure, the structured nature of the landscape garden (though hidden) suggests that even aimless wandering achieves the best results when the expected and the confounding are held carefully in balance.

The hedge maze presents a conundrum with regard to its semiotic nature: like the landscape garden, it is constructed of (what is perceived as) essentially non-semiotized material. It is, ultimately, a large bush. At the same time, the intensity of intention required to construct such an object is immense, requiring years of planning and constant attention to achieve and maintain the shape of its designer's plan. Like the landscape garden, the hedge maze has as its apparent function the pleasant diversion of visitors, their enjoyment of navigating with varying success its identical pathways in search of the centre and perhaps an escape. Yet there is something uncanny about the hedge maze's disproportionate investment of time, energy and intention, into an object which despite all of this attention appears not only rather simplistic but ultimately meaningless. As demonstrated above, hedge mazes comprise a structure built entirely of boundaries, and can be seen as a nest of boundaries folded in on itself for the purpose of its own constitution. Despite having, in most cases, a centre, the notion of a centre is not the central purpose of the maze – it exists for the sake of resisting visitors' efforts to find it, to confound their explorations at every highly structured turn. In this way the hedge maze problematizes and highlights the boundary between centre and periphery, between the boundary itself and the content which it encloses. Lotman notes that all semiotic substructures, despite their variety, "are organized into a general system of coordinates: on the temporal axis into past, present and future, on the spatial axis into internal space, external space, and the boundary between them" 1990: 133). The hedge maze lies troublesomely on this "spatial axis", for while it is easy to identify what lies externally to the space of the maze defining its interior, and distinguishing that interior space from its serpentine and internalized borders-as-corridors, is much more problematic.

The analysis of hedge mazes and landscape gardens uncovers one more interesting fact about the historical process of their development. One sees a startling similarity in the positioning of mazes and gardens between concepts of ‘nature’ and ‘culture’. The primary difference is that landscape gardens intentionally and very meticulously hide their artificiality: they are supposed to blend into the landscape, to become symbolic of nature itself. However, they still betray some connection to mazes. Lotman notices: “Innovation comes about when the principles of one genre are restructured according to the laws of another, and this ‘other’ genre organically enters the new structure and at the same time preserves a memory of its other system of encoding” (Lotman 1990: 137). It seems plausible to suggest that the figure of the hedge maze mediates between the notion of an undifferentiated natural wilderness and the garden as a naturalistic but ultimately constructed and *meaningful* space. From this perspective, the hedge maze is not only a boundary object but one of the translation mechanisms characteristic of cultural boundaries.

Lotman (1990: 131) calls boundaries “one of the primary mechanisms of semiotic individuation”. The boundary, he says, “can be defined as the outer limit of a first-person form” (Lotman 1990: 131). In their function and role as boundary objects, landscape gardens and hedge mazes must contribute to the definition of a cultural-first-person, and their experience and use by visitors of their same native cultural milieu is, in the Lotmanian sense, an instance of that culture self-identifying – of saying ‘I’ to itself. At the same time, both objects are designed for particularly solitary experiences, for quiet contemplation and intrapersonal reflection. From this perspective they can be seen to stimulate perception of “the outer limit of a first person form”, in this case of the individual human visitor. In these highly constructed natural-cultural hybrids, one may be provoked to sense the presence of the semiotic borders erected between the simple and the semiotic, and to appreciate in the light of objects like landscape gardens and hedge mazes how boundaries may be essential to our meaning making processes, yet are always constructs subject to reinterpretation, questioning, and reorganization.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> **Acknowledgments:** This research project has been founded by the National Science Centre in Poland, according to decision no. DEC-2013/09/N/HS2/02252.

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### **Зеленые лабиринты и сады как пограничные объекты в культуре**

Несмотря на очевидные функциональные и стилистические различия, у лабиринтов и английских садов есть явное символическое и структурное сходство, что делает их перспективными объектами сравнительного анализа. Оба переворачивают обыденное представление о внутренних и внешних пространствах, о культуризации и «дикой природе», создавая таким образом семиотически неопределенные пейзажи. Так как оба типа пространства являются одновременно культурными и природными, то оба предлагают «проблему, которую надо решить»: как дойти до центра или как понять планировку. Оба «играют» с понятием границы, конструируя непреходимые и временами подавляющие стены из, на первый взгляд, хрупкого растительного материала или же скрывая свои границы. В то же время между ними есть существенные различия, что делает сравнение пограничных пространств еще более увлекательным: лабиринты и сады можно различать по их структурным уровням, наличию или отсутствию центра, по соотношению с другими частями сада и связанными с ними жилищами.

Используя идеи Юрия Лотмана о гибридных и переходных объектах, которые характерны для пограничных механизмов, автор рассматривает семиотически плотную границу между культурой и природой, на которой располагаются и которую создают эти лабиринты и сады. Объектами анализа являются английские лабиринты XVII века и английские сады, созданные с начала XVIII века: лабиринты в *Longleat* и *Hampton Court* и сады *Rousham* и *Stowe*.

## Hekilabürindid ja maastikuaiad kui kultuurilised piiriohjektid

Vaatamata ilmsetele funktsionaalsetele ja stilistilistele erinevustele on hekilabürintidel ja inglise maastikuaedadel silmatorkavaid sümboolseid ja struktuurseid sarnasusi, mis teeb neist nad paljutöötavad võrdleva analüüsi objektid. Mõlemad pööravad pahupidi sise- ja välisruumidele, inimeste harimistegevusele ja “metsikule loodusele” seatavaid ootuspäraseid norme, luues nõnda semiootiliselt ebamääraseid maastikke. Et mõlemad ruumitüübid on ühtaegu looduslikud ja kultuurilised, pakuvad mõlemad “probleemi, mida tuleb lahendada”, kas siis keskmesse jõudmise või planeeringu mõistmise näol. Mõlemad “mängivad” piiri mõistega, konstrueerides ületamatuid ning ajuti rusuvaid seinu näiliselt haprast taimsest materjalist või siis oma piire varjates. Samas on neil olulisi erinevusi, mis muudavad piiriruumide võrdluse veelgi huvitavamaks: hekilabürinte ja maastikuaedu võib eristada nende struktuursete tasandite, keskme olemasolu või puudumise, teiste aiaosadega suhestumise ning nendega seotud inimelukohtade järgi.

Kasutades Juri Lotmani hübriidsete ja üleminekuobjektide mõistet, mis iseloomustab piirimehhanisme, uuritakse artiklis looduse ja kultuuri semiootiliselt tihedat piiri, millel need labürindid ja aiad paiknevad ja mida nad ühtlasi loovad. Meie analüüsi objektideks on 17. sajandi inglise labürindid ja 18. sajandi algusest pärinevad varajased inglise aiad: Longleati ja Hampton Courti labürindid ning sellised maastikuaiad nagu näiteks Roushami ja Stowe'i omad.