

Call of papers

Intimacy and the Intimate IV

Intimacy and the Psyche: Discourses and Representations of Inner Life in Early Modern Europe

Le Mans University (France), December 3 and 4, 2026

Organizing Teams: 3LAM (Le Mans University), DIRE (University of Reunion Island), PLEIADE (Sorbonne Paris Nord University), HLLI (University of the Opal Coast), TIL (University of Burgundy Europe)

During the Renaissance and humanism era, thinkers, seeking to understand the truth of the human soul, raised the question of rhetoric and exchange, which involves the other, knowledge of the other, and the speaker's adaptation to their listener, if only to persuade them. In this vast process that began in the 15th century, Jean-Claude Margolin identifies psychological approaches. The reflection on language and communication that largely characterized the 16th century reveals an interest in the human being as someone who understands and feels; it is a "living" whole that is brought into play in the act of speaking.

With the development of fictional narrative, we see characters increasingly (and ever more accurately) profiled through character analyses that demonstrate the keen psychological observation their authors possess in their own lives and which they then incorporate into their novels or dialogues (*Guzmán de Alfarache*, *La Dorotea*, *Novelas ejemplares*). We can also add that the art of portraiture becomes more refined, and that the painter captures expressions and glances with color and nuance, seeking either an exact copy or flattering alterations to the person portrayed.

Furthermore, ancient culture accustomed minds to myths such as those of Psyche and Narcissus, each representing, in its own way, a revelation of consciousness. We must also consider the role of imaginative power in discourses on love and religious thought (mystical, theological). Imagination (in communication with memory) reveals an inner world, certainly unsettling at times, but also fertile (*inventio*). Its mechanisms are thus explored to varying degrees, and what we witness is a true plunge into the intimate.

This is how the characters are fleshed out, and their creators imbue them with genius in the service of deception or benevolent strategy, but also with feelings, emotions, and passions that pave the way for descriptions of states of mind stemming from introspection.

Moreover, those in power, particularly ecclesiastical authorities, know how to manipulate certain emotions and sensitivities and, as Danièle Alexandre-Bidon states, referring to Delumeau's work **Fear in the West**, cultivate a psychological culture of fear.

It is difficult not to draw a connection with the supposedly scientific conception of temperaments (Huarte de San Juan), which attempts to classify into predictable categories, characteristic of a certain determinism, a subject whose vast and elusive nature is, on the contrary, perceived by moralists, theologians, and writers. In this respect, Renaissance anthropology has an impact on literature and on the concept of the "person" or "figure."

This conference therefore proposes to examine the dimensions of the psyche through the discourses and representations of inner life in Europe from the 15th century to the dawn of the 18th century. We will strive to highlight the specific nature of such an exploration during this period by studying its sources, forms, and aims. To what extent does it, in the forms it takes during the early modern period, shape the future "psychology," and how does it represent the foundations destined to develop in subsequent centuries, both as new sciences whose object is the deepest mechanisms of the psyche and as a field wide open to diverse artistic explorations?

Possible themes:

- Representations of the psyche in literary and philosophical humanism
- Interiority and sensoriality in mystics and religious figures
- Discourses and approaches to the psyche, or the beginnings of a scientific discourse
- Fictional characters: their modernity and psychological construction
- Life stories (biographies, autobiographies): forms of discourse and psychological dimensions
- Representations of interiority in the fine arts

20-minute presentations

Languages accepted: French, Spanish, English

Registration fees will not exceed 60 euros. Meals and one night's accommodation will be covered.

The conference will be held in person (remote participation is possible subject to approval by the organizing committee).

Proposals should be sent before April 1, 2026 to:

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Sarah Pech-Pelletier : sarah.pelletier@univ-paris13.fr

Publication of the first three editions of the think tank "Intimacy and Intimacy in Early Modern Europe":

Madelpuech-Toucheron, Florence et Pech-Pelletier, Sarah (dir.), « Intime et Intimité au Siècle d'or (espaces, émotions, représentations) », *e-Spania*, 37, octobre 2020 [http://journals.openedition.org/e-spania/36547 ; DOI : https://doi.org/10.4000/e-spania.36547]

Garbay-Velázquez, Estelle, Iglesias, Cécile, Madelpuech-Toucheron, Florence, Pech-Pelletier, Sarah (dir.), *Les lieux de l'intime et le rapport au corps (Europe, XVIe-XVIIe siècles)*, Paris, Presses Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2025

Dumora, Florence, Garbay-Velázquez, Estelle, Iglesias, Cécile, Madelpuech-Toucheron, Florence, Orobitg, Christine, Pech-Pelletier, Sarah (dir.), *Représentations de l'intime dans l'Europe de la première modernité : les formes, les stratégies, les enjeux et leurs transmissions, Savoirs en Prisme*, n° 20 (à paraître début 2026 : <https://savoirenprisme.univ-reims.fr/index.php/sep>)

Please, see the bibliographic suggestions in the call for papers in French.