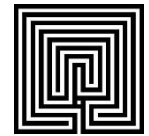


Hidden Treasures: Chapters about Labyrinths, in “Non-Labyrinth” Books



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Introduction

Since the turn of the century, a growing number of publications have accompanied the rise of interest in labyrinths. These publications include a number of chapters to be found in books that are not primarily about labyrinths. Even in today’s world of web-based research, such publications are not always easy to find.

In the course of my research on the use of labyrinths in Higher Education, I became intrigued (and often distracted) by the books I came across: books that were often outside my research area but that might be of interest to others, books that held hidden treasures. I began to compile a list, which has grown erratically over the last few years. To date this includes 34 such chapters, spread across 28 books, published between 2000 and 2016 in Canada, the UK and the USA. I have included in this list:

- Chapters that are about the labyrinth, ranging from metaphor to historical artefact;
- Chapters that are about both labyrinths and mazes;
- Chapters that are not solely, or even primarily, about labyrinths, but where (in my view) there is a significant amount of discussion about labyrinths (e.g. discussion of creation of a quiet space including use of labyrinths).

The themes of the books and chapters are widely varied, ranging from health, healing and spiritual care, to walking, the arts, teaching (at various levels) and exploration of the metaphor of the labyrinth in the practice of academic research. The purpose of this article is to draw the attention of readers to the existence of this diverse body of literature, and to briefly outline the fields covered. This is a list that grows in fits and starts and inevitably, there will be omissions. I discuss 20 of the chapters briefly in the present article.

I should be clear that I am not making any specific recommendations. The accuracy of these chapters on matters labyrinthine is as variable as their themes, but nevertheless each may have something to offer readers interested in their particular field and some are powerful contributions. In most cases, there is a sole chapter of immediate relevance, sometimes within a monograph and sometimes in an edited collection.¹

In developing this article I have made many draft lists of themes, as most of the chapters can be fairly described as exploring more than one key topic. For example, the book *Open Spaces, Sacred Spaces* [Stoner and Rapp, 2008] explores healing, wellbeing, spirituality, community cohesion and service, all through the creation of beautiful open spaces in some very challenging contexts; its three chapters making use of labyrinths are no exception. I have endeavoured below to cross-reference chapters amongst some broad thematic headings, recognising the limitations of this process: my judgment here is subjective and another writer might devise different groupings. I leave it with readers to explore further in any direction they feel drawn to.

Education: children and young people

Sandra Wasko-Flood, an artist and Veriditas-trained labyrinth facilitator, discusses the impact of “labyrinths for creativity and peace in schools” in her work with children and young people in elementary and middle schools in the USA [2011, 144-59]. This work is about freeing creative confidence and making a deep connection between peace and creativity. Wasko-Flood includes accounts of labyrinth-making with children, so that schools then have their own peaceful resource for future use. She provides practical examples of the labyrinth as an inter-disciplinary tool, including a powerful illustration of “peace wishes” with participant responses [2011, 154-8]. Her chapter is one of a collection of essays designed, as the book title indicates, to support teachers and teacher educators in *Cultivating Curious and Creative Minds* [Craig and Deretchin, 2011].

Chris Trwoga develops similar themes in two chapters of his book on *The Power of Outdoor Learning*, in a Forest School context [2013, 54-76 and 77-94]. Together, these two chapters provide 20 detailed lesson plans and project ideas, for children and young people. Each lesson plan includes aim; one-line summary of activity; resource list, with attention to low cost or no cost options; method; reflection. The lessons develop systematically, beginning with "Drawing a Labyrinth" [2013, 57] and heading outdoors to create labyrinths from many materials. In addition to teachers, these practical guidance notes could be very helpful for adult enthusiasts who may be knowledgeable about labyrinths but uncertain about how best to work with materials outdoors for temporary installations. The lesson plans include considerable diversity. Topics vary from "Making a pebble labyrinth for people with disabilities. (Aim: to encourage research and reflection on the needs of others)" [2013, 64-5] to "Number and labyrinths" [2013, 91].²

In *Mathematics Galore* [2000], Christopher Budd and Christopher Sangwin offer an innovative collection of ideas for teaching mathematics. The book is designed to appeal to all levels, from primary school children (and teachers and parents) to university students. Mathematics is related to the everyday and to the imagination, through chapters that include castles, espionage, dance and sundials. Chapter 1 features labyrinths and mazes [2000, 9-36] with a lively variety of stories, puzzles and mathematical exercises.

Open Spaces Sacred Spaces, discussed below, also shares experiences of young people and families, with the introduction of a labyrinth to a troubled community [Brau, Stoner and Waters, in Stoner and Rapp, 2008].

Higher Education: Teaching and the Research Process

Mathematics Galore (above) is one of a growing number of books that now provide specific ideas and approaches for those interested in use of the labyrinth in university teaching. Creativity is a common theme and use of the labyrinth is a new approach for a new era, as seen in the title *Teaching with Joy: Educational Practices for the 21st Century* [2007, edited by Sharon Shelton-Colangelo, Carolina Mancuso and Mimi Duvall]. Chapter 2 of this imaginative book focuses on "teachers' efforts to encourage students to pause long enough to journey inward away from the chaos of everyday life, something rarely encouraged in conventional classrooms" [2007, 3]. In their contribution to this chapter, Shelton-Colangelo and Duvall discuss a Women's Studies programme where students have built two stone circles in a lovely setting on their rural campus. These are a drumming circle dedicated to Sojourner Truth, and a stone labyrinth. The women students are non-traditional entrants to university; the authors report that drumming and labyrinth walking can have a powerful impact, enabling students to find their own voices and share very difficult stories. The holistic approach to teaching exemplifies the goals of this volume, illustrating one way to "foster a more loving learning environment that promotes harmony, self-discovery, and interconnectedness" [2007, 5].

Creativity is also a critical theme in *Engaging Imagination: Helping Students become Creative and Reflective Thinkers* [James and Brookfield, 2013]. In "Playing Seriously: Legos and Labyrinths," Alison James discusses two kinaesthetic approaches to learning [2013, 115-138]. As James explains, working with Lego is a natural leap ahead in the process of using any object, such as salt and pepper pots at the dinner table, to embody ideas, actions, events - anything, in fact, other than salt and pepper [2013, 115]. Both Lego and labyrinth are ways of working physically with metaphor. In the section on labyrinths, James outlines a variety of examples supporting the student learning experience, including Dr Kay Sandor's teaching of nurses at the University of Texas, USA, in relation to wellbeing, and Alex Irving's work with Media Studies students at Liverpool John Moores University, UK (see also Sandor and Froman, 2006 and Irving, 2016).

An outline of a labyrinth workshop which may readily be adapted for use, a brief account of the beginning of a university labyrinth project and further examples of teaching and learning with the labyrinth appear in my own chapter, "The Labyrinth: A Journey of Discovery" in *Creativity in the Classroom: Case Studies in Using the Arts in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, edited by Paul McIntosh and Digby Warren [2013, 209-223]. While each case study in this collection draws on the arts, the teaching involves students from a wide range of academic disciplines including (for example) Economics, Healthcare and Medical Education.³

In an essay that explores her own personal, spiritual and professional development, Fran Grace [2011, 47-64] offers a thought-provoking discussion of her own journey as a teacher in higher education, looking specifically at how she teaches and has taught in the past. She shares a journey of radical change that eventually led to a whole-hearted engagement with contemplative approaches to teaching and learning. Grace is now Professor of Religious Studies and steward of a pioneering “contemplative classroom” at the University of Redlands (California, USA). She has used the labyrinth in teaching (discussed more fully in Grace, 2016) but in her 2011 chapter, the focus is on labyrinth as metaphor for the path she has travelled. The chapter is a contribution to a book on the introduction of meditation in the college classroom, an invitation to exploration that draws on nearly 30 years of reflection, discussion and practice [Simmer-Brown and Grace, 2011, xi].

Metaphors for, in and of Education Research (edited by Warren Midgley, Karen Trimmer and Andy Davies, 2013) is a fascinating exploration of how education researchers use the power of metaphor to illuminate their research questions, research journeys and research discoveries.⁴ In the first chapter, introducing the book, two of the editors use a labyrinth walk as a metaphor to offer a framework for readers: “whilst walking the labyrinth of this volume, we would encourage readers to be purposefully engaged in ongoing reflection with a mind that is open to always discovering something new” [Midgley and Trimmer, 2013, 4]. Chapter 5, by Janice Jones, is a sustained reflection on her experience as a doctoral student, drawing on reflective journals [2013, 66-90]. Jones considers the power of metaphor to shape both the path of the researcher, and the researcher’s own understanding of her journey. Rather than the male-dominated story of Theseus and the hero’s journey, Jones draws on the legend of Persephone, with its three key characteristics: sacrifice, transformation and rebirth. These are qualities inherent in the demanding journey from neophyte researcher, to become one who is acknowledged (and self-acknowledged) as expert in her field, a change that is painfully won through Persephone’s “journey of patience, contemplation and quiet courage” [2013, 74]. The metaphor of Persephone’s journey is illuminated by the twists and turns of the labyrinth path, acknowledging the fear, doubts, resistance and eventual transformation of the researcher who emerges, bearing knowledge, ready to influence the world anew as an agent of change. “The adventure has been all consuming: I am transformed and can never return to that earlier self” [2013, 84].

Walking

Rebecca Solnit reflects on labyrinths, mazes and imagery in the fifth chapter of her book *Wanderlust: A History of Walking* [2001, 64-78]. She discusses her first encounter with the paved labyrinth at Grace Cathedral, San Francisco. Solnit explores the idea of “being real creatures in symbolic space” [2001, 70]: “If the body is the register of the real, then reading with one’s feet is real in a way reading with one’s eyes alone is not. And sometimes the map *is* the territory” [2001, 70]. The labyrinth is a source of physical connection between traveller and story, past and present: “Symbolic structures such as labyrinths call attention to the nature of all paths, all journeys” [2001, 72].

In her book *An Altar in the World* [2009], Barbara Brown Taylor offers ways to reconnect with the spiritual in the everyday. From the experience of encountering others, to the experience of carrying water, each is “an exercise in being human that requires a body as well as a soul” [2009, xvi]. Taylor places labyrinth walking amongst a number of world traditions where walking is a spiritual practice. Her reflections on “the practice of walking on the earth” [2009, 54-68] invite us to consider the role of all of our senses. She comes to the labyrinth as a beginner, and leaves it with a profound dream, an acute awareness of the divine. Labyrinth walking becomes an example of engaging with a spiritual practice through doing it rather than discussing it: “You just begin, and the doing teaches you what you need to know” [2009, 58] and as she notes later, “*Solvitur ambulando...* ‘It is solved by walking.’ What is ‘it?’ If you want to find out, then you will have to do your own walking” [2009, 61].⁵

Tim Ingold’s work also explores walking, as one aspect of *The Life of Lines* [2015]. The author ranges over interdisciplinary terrain in a study that is, as one reviewer states, a “stunningly original series of meditations on life, ground, wind, walking, imagination and what it means to be human” [2015, i]. I found this book both difficult and fascinating and it is not easy to discuss a single chapter in isolation. To begin with a critical concept from an earlier chapter, Ingold argues that to be human is to do with both being and, crucially, becoming. The

process of becoming, which we live as an integral aspect of being human, means that to be human becomes a verb, humaning and humanifying [2015, 115-119].

Humans are line-makers, path-makers, trail-makers: to walk is to draw a line. In his chapter “The Maze and the Labyrinth” [2015, 130-137] the maze is about intentions, choices continually having to be made, with dead-ends as set-backs, as in a quest for shopping in a busy city: “... in so far as the maze-walker is wrapped up in the space of his own deliberations, he is perforce absent from the world itself. In the labyrinth, quite the opposite is the case” [2015, 132]. Here, both labyrinth and maze are places where one may get lost, but in completely different ways, and both labyrinth and maze are conceptual. Ingold distinguishes between walking a maze (with one’s own intentions) and following the path of a labyrinth (where the focus is on a deep and immediate attention to the present). The maze-walker is a navigator from point to point; the labyrinth path-follower is a wayfarer who must watch their step, be attentive to all that is around them: “Path-following is therefore not so much intentional as *attentional*. It thrusts the follower into the presence of the real” [2015, 133].

Readers who facilitate labyrinth events will note Ingold’s use of the word “intention” as very different from the use of the word in setting “intentions” prior to a labyrinth walk. It is a use of language that calls us, in fact, to a close attention, an attention that rewards the reader. The subsequent chapter, on “Education and Attention,” continues with the images of labyrinth and maze to challenge traditional approaches to education. The labyrinth becomes a rich metaphorical vision of difference, of different possibilities for the one who is fully present: “The price of such presence is vulnerability, but its reward is an understanding, founded on immediate experience, that goes beyond knowledge. It is an understanding on its way to truth” [2015, 137].

Spirituality and Community Engagement

Open Spaces, Sacred Spaces [Stoner and Rapp, 2008] illustrates the work of the TKF Foundation, “supporting the creation of public greenspaces that offer a temporary place of sanctuary, encourage reflection, provide solace, and engender peace” [2008, iii]. Three chapters in this book explore the creation of labyrinths, as part of new community initiatives leading to the construction of beautiful outdoor spaces. This book has an unusual and helpful structure. Each project is outlined by one of the two lead authors, followed by further information and reflections from designers and from members of the community involved in initiating and leading the project. Chapters include a much-loved garden created from “waste” ground in a tough neighbourhood in East Baltimore, USA, the “Amazing Port Street Sacred Commons” [Brau and Waters 2008, 35-49]. Writing of young gang members after the death of a friend, the pastor Karen Brau wrote: “... these kids knew - they felt on some level - that the labyrinth was sacred space, and in their suffering, they came to it” [2008, 238]. Chapter 5 discusses the Healing Garden at the Whitman-Walker Clinic of Northern Virginia, USA, supporting patients with HIV/AIDS and their families and friends [Hufford-Anderson, Lindstrom and Waters, 2008, 81-93]. The garden also serves to build bridges with the local community, with labyrinth walks organised by a local artist who serves as the labyrinth coordinator [2008, 92]. Finally, chapter 12 introduces us to “ThanksGiving Place” in Baltimore, USA. This labyrinth garden serves as the spiritual heart of a major community renewal project, an inter-faith initiative with extensive, much-needed senior housing and youth services for local people on the site of a former sports stadium [Sharp and Stoner, 2008, 171-183]. This book is beautifully illustrated, with large colour photographs and several garden plans: it has found a place amongst books I make available for browsing at labyrinth events.⁶

Discovering the Spirit in the City [Walker and Kennedy, 2010] is also rooted in the work of a specific organisation, in this case the London Centre for Spirituality. This publication includes a number of essays and poems, sharing both reflection and inspiration. Antonia Lynn [2010, 16-27] writes about the creation and use of the Fen Court Labyrinth in the heart of the city of London, UK, a place for “prayer in the streets” [2010, 16]. Lynn shares ideas about developing a prayer life in the most busy and urban of environments, such as the night of a glorious full moon, “finding the wild in the city” [2010, 23]. The labyrinth becomes “symbol and tool for an urban prayer life” [2010, 18] and its centre is a metaphor for love, for beauty and for the divine.

Chapters discussed elsewhere in this article also have a strong bearing on spirituality and community engagement. These include chapters in *Sacred Space: Right Relationship and Spirituality in Healthcare* [Wright and Sayre-Adams, 2000, 2009]; *Teaching with Joy: Educational Practices for the 21st Century* [Shelton-Colangelo, Mancuso and Duvall, 2007] and *An Altar in the World: Finding the Sacred Beneath our Feet* [Taylor, 2009].

Health and Wellbeing

In Esther Sternberg's *Healing Spaces: The Science of Place and Well-Being* [2009] the author discusses the modern history of research on stress in her chapter "Mazes and Labyrinths" [94-124]. Her discussion of labyrinths includes a number of factual errors, and the chapter is marred by descriptions of women researchers that strike an oddly sexist note. The chapter however provides a valuable link between Herbert Benson's research on exercise, meditation and the "relaxation response" [Benson, 2000, 2011], and labyrinth walking. Benson's research is of considerable interest to those involved in research on stress and the labyrinth "effect."⁷ In illustrating her theme, Sternberg discusses work by Ann Berger, who introduced a canvas labyrinth at the Pain and Palliative Care Unit at the National Institutes of Health Clinical Center in the USA. Initial obstacles were overcome and the labyrinth has now become a popular resource for staff, for patients and for their families: time to slow down, to trust, and to go forward one step at a time [2009, 121-4].

Stephen G. Wright and Jean Sayre-Adams are Chair and Director of the Sacred Space Foundation in Cumbria, UK. Their book, *Sacred Space: Right Relationship and Spirituality in Healthcare* [2000] is a powerful account of the ways in which they have explored and addressed exhaustion and burn-out amongst those in carer roles, both care professionals, family carers and those working in many related fields. In chapter 4 [2000, 63-114] they explain and discuss labyrinths and labyrinth walking as one of a number of "pathways to the sacred" including the paths of meditation, sanctuary, prayer and relationships. Their approach to labyrinths, and broader aspects of their work, are discussed further at the Sacred Space Foundation's website.⁸

Other chapters to turn to in relation to health and wellbeing, discussed elsewhere in this article, include *Meditation and the Classroom: Contemplative Pedagogy for Religious Studies* [Simmer-Brown and Grace, 2011]; *Open Spaces, Sacred Spaces* [Stoner and Rapp, 2008] and *The Power of Outdoor Learning: 107 Lesson Plans and Projects for Schools* [Trwoga, 2013].

Conclusion

I have highlighted in this article a wonderfully diverse range of chapters about labyrinths, within contemporary books that do not have labyrinths as their primary focus. These books are to be found in many different disciplines, from the teaching of mathematics or forest school learning, to studies that explore the nature and history of walking and the walker. For me, this continues to be a source of fascination and changes in understanding as I am introduced to new ideas and approaches, often from perspectives that I would not usually seek out. Happenstance and serendipity, and a considerable capacity for distraction, have enabled me to add to the collection, and I appreciate the contributions that others have made to date on hearing of this interest.

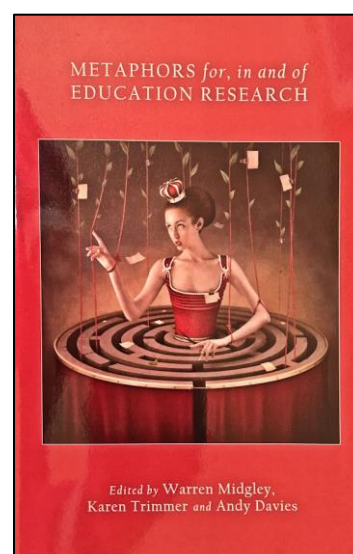
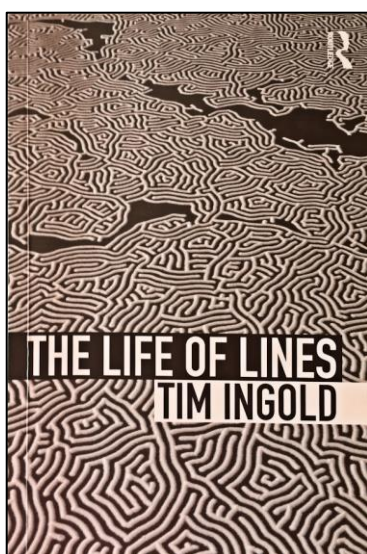
My full list of these "hidden treasures" is online on my website at www.jansellers.com - I hope that this may be helpful to readers and researchers. Evidently, readers are likely to know of more such chapters. My website list will be updated from time to time. Readers are warmly invited to alert me to potential additions, bearing in mind the broad parameters for inclusion: chapters in books, including essays in art or museum catalogues, where the title of the book does not alert the reader to the hidden presence of a chapter on labyrinths or mazes - potentially, a hidden treasure.

Jan Sellers, London, England; March 2017
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The covers of Ingold's *The Life of Lines* and Midgley, Trimmer and Davis' *Metaphors for, in and of Education Research*

Notes:

1. Five books in my list to date include more than one such chapter. Stoner and Rapp (eds), *Open Spaces Sacred Spaces* (2008) include discussion of labyrinths in three chapters, as do Marcus and Sach in *Therapeutic Landscapes* (2014). The following have two relevant chapters: Midgley, Trimmer and Davis (eds), *Metaphors for, in and of Education Research* (2013); Trwoga, *The Power of Outdoor Learning* (2013) and Ingold, *The Life of Lines* (2015).
2. Chris Trwoga's chapters are available for purchase as individual documents through the Somerset Natural Learning Academy (<http://snla.co.uk>). See also his recently published book *The Power of Labyrinths* (2016), not to be confused with his chapter of the same title in *The Power of Outdoor Learning* (2011).
3. For further inter-disciplinary approaches, see Sellers and Moss, 2016.
4. The cover illustration, by artist Annmei, is a modern take on Lewis Carroll's Red Queen, presented as a young researcher. A crowned woman is at the centre of a maze that forms part of her dress, the farthingale of 16th century courtly wear. She is caught up amongst confusing green shoots and post-it notes but prepared for action with a pair of scissors.
5. Though not specifically part of the discussion of labyrinths, this chapter is also notable for a reflection on mindful walking as experienced by wheelchair users, through the teaching of the Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh [2009, 60-61]. The approach uses mindful observation of a walker who is themselves practising mindful walking, at Plum Village, a Buddhist monastic community in France. The example is of a mindful walk, not a labyrinth walk, but the method may well offer a reflective possibility for wheelchair users and others who have restricted mobility where a labyrinth path is concerned. I make this suggestion with two reservations. First, people may prefer to use a finger labyrinth; second, the approach needs careful consideration before use, so as not to infringe on the labyrinth experience of the walker. Bearing in mind the open nature of many labyrinth events, I myself would (a) invite the wheelchair user to observe a seasoned labyrinth walker rather than a beginner, and (b) secure permission for the observation in advance. I can see this is less likely to be a factor in a monastic setting. I would be interested to hear of the experience of others in this regard.
6. The TKF Foundation has launched an extensive research project, in progress at the time of writing, examining the impact of five major new greenspace initiatives across the USA. Some research papers are available online at their website and more is to follow. Such research may well include reference to labyrinths and to labyrinth walking. More information is available through the TKF Foundation: <http://naturesacred.org>
7. Herbert Benson has published extensively on the concept and practice of the relaxation response and on walking, exercise and meditation in this regard. He is additionally cited, on occasion, as a source for research that specifically addresses or makes reference to labyrinth walking. I have endeavoured to follow this up but have been unable to find any publications in this respect, either in books or academic articles, apart from (a) a remark quoted in WebMD (www.webmd.com/balance/guide/labyrinths-for-modern-stresses#1) and (b) a fleeting reference to a labyrinth in research on stress reduction in a virtual world (see Table 2, in D.B. Hoch et al). If readers can offer any clarification, I would be glad to know more.
8. A second edition of *Sacred Space: Right Relationship and Spirituality in Healthcare* is now available (Wright and Sayre-Adam, 2009: see www.sacredspace.org.uk).

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