North Wind: A Journal of George MacDonald Studies

Volume 31 Article 6

1-1-2012

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Kaitlyn Dryer

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Recommended Citation

Dryer, Kaitlyn (2012) "Mapping the Text of Lilith: MacDonald's Labyrinths and Gardens," *North Wind: A Journal of George MacDonald Studies*: Vol. 31 , Article 6.
Available at: http://digitalcommons.snc.edu/northwind/vol31/iss1/6

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Mapping the Text of *Lilith*: MacDonald's Labyrinths and Gardens

Kaitlyn Dryer

Abstract

Readers of fiction follow the plot of a novel as though walking a labyrinth, with no actual opportunity of turning from the written path, unless one is reading a novel such as Chris Ware's *Building Stories* (2012), a graphic novel that defies the conventional reading expectations. However, fiction also has the effect of evoking a fuller gardenlike world as the reader imaginatively fills in gaps left by the narrative. In George MacDonald's *Lilith*, the protagonist Mr. Vane enters a fantastical world where he must often define things in terms of what they are not. The word *not* signals forks in the narrative labyrinth as Vane chooses to do one thing and not another, often frustrating reader. His poor choices lead us to desire greater agency in choosing paths. The two worlds MacDonald describes are not separate but exist in the same space with a different set of dimensions, with Vane's personal labyrinth of choices mediating between the mundane world in which he still lives and the spiritual, allegorical world he strives to comprehend. Through the labyrinth of his text, MacDonald suggests a similar relationship exists for readers between the labyrinth of their lives and the garden he encourages us to believe in and begin to see by reading his novel. MacDonald's relationship to Lewis Carroll highlights the relation between the labyrinthine nature of fiction and the gardenlike rendering that readers of a text produce. While the gardenlike and labyrinthine could be analyzed in any narrative, they are particularly apt modes for analyzing MacDonald's fantasy, which is both deeply rooted in the historical, Christian concepts of labyrinth and garden, and didactic, seeking to change the way its readers perceive their world.

Introduction

George MacDonald's fairy tales and fantasy novels created a foundation for modern fantasy, influencing *The Lord of the Rings*, and inspiring C. S. Lewis to write *The Chronicles of Narnia*. MacDonald published his final fantasty novel, *Lilith*, in 1895. What about MacDonald's fantasy gives it lasting impact?

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In *Lilith*, the protagonist is a rather generic man named Mr. Vane, who has just inherited the ancestral home he barely remembers having lived in as a child. After moving into the house, Vane meets the family's librarian, Mr. Raven, whom he follows upstairs and through a mirror into a fantastical world. This journey, the first of five, serves as the beginning of Vane's spiritual education as he comes to understand his world through the experience of another one. He encounters conflicting—or what seem from his perspective to be conflicting—circumstances, including Mr. Raven's strikingly disparate identities as a librarian, a bird, and the biblical Adam. Mr. Raven's ease of transitioning between these identities enables him to serve as a guide in more ways than one: besides guiding Vane and readers between worlds, he also guides us between identities. Vane's name connotes both his vanity, and his being, like a weather vane, changeable and easily blown off course. His changeability makes him vulnerable, as it is largely outside his control, but it also helps him along the path of accepting his human identity by countering his vain ambitions of heroism.

In the world on the other side of the mirror, Vane encounters Lilith, the angel who according to Hebrew tradition was the first wife given to Adam.[1] Both physically as a temptress and symbolically as a tempting alternative to growing in faith and gradually understanding his identity, she is the antagonist obstructing Vane's journey. Her primary fault is insisting on defining herself rather than accepting herself as she was created. Lilith fixes upon a single identity, believing that she can make it permanently hers. As such, her goal is to murder her only daughter, Lona, whom she sees as a threat to her immortality and unchanging eternal beauty. However, her choice is premature: by cutting off the process of discovering her identity and trying to cut off her bloodline, she misses the ultimate vision of the self intended for her by God, the inherent self that she would eventually have come to know. Yet her powerlessness even to stop transition at the point she has chosen is evidenced by a growing black spot on her side: Lilith cannot preserve the physical beauty that she has chosen over gradually increasing wisdom and self-knowledge. The spot serves as a constant reminder of her error, causing her pride, her conscience, and her body to suffer. With the help of Adam's second daughter, Mara, this suffering eventually leads Lilith toward the hope of redemption.

At the end of the novel, a book/door closes behind Vane and he finds himself pushed back into his own world. The point of Mr. Vane's journey is not that he learn to perceive both worlds simultaneously, but rather that he

return to his own world with knowledge gained from the other and belief in a divine world ordering both of them, a world he has still barely begun to imagine. From a didactic standpoint, his lesson happens for the reader's benefit. Readers imaginatively envision another world while reading—from reading Christian fantasy to entertaining belief in a theological world such as MacDonald proposes. Readers naturally tend to come away from fiction seeing their own world in a new light. MacDonald recognizes and builds upon this educational quality of fiction by using specific techniques to discourage readers from returning without reconsidering their world based on their reading experience. First, he gives readers some narrative distance from the protagonist, prompting us to criticize Vane's decisions and imagine other routes. The choices Vane makes in both worlds often frustrate readers, and they even frustrate Vane himself as he looks back. He narrates everything in the past tense, analyzing his actions and moralizing. Then, as if that were not enough for contemporary readers to swallow, MacDonald has Mr. Raven standing by to criticize Vane and make every attempt to guide him in right paths, which Vane rarely chooses.

The frustration that many readers feel alerts us to the presence of important factors that make fantasy work, such as the relation between the reader's sense of participation or agency and the protagonist's choices. A recent collection of essays edited by Lucas Harriman—Lilith *in a New Light*— has 15 scholars grappling with the frustration the novel envokes. Vane's error-filled journey influences his perception and behavior, leading him to believe in worlds of endlessly rich possibilities that transcend the walls of his mundane world, existing in and through it. Readers operate from a perspective outside of that of their unreliable narrator; nevertheless, they embark on a parallel journey. In the course of the novel, their senses of identity and perception shift to make room for MacDonald's framework of interrelated realities so that, at the close of the novel, they have been introduced to a new way of seeing that they can also use in life.

Gardens and their Rendering

Gardens recalling the paradisical Garden of Eden appear often in literature. In *Lilith* they offer a valuable way of interpreting the relation between Vane's world and the fantastical world that Mr. Raven guides him to explore. In *Saving Paradise*, a study of the evolution of Christian practice and theology, Rita Brock and Rebecca Parker explain that "early Christian paradise was something other than 'heaven' or the afterlife. Our modern

views of heaven and paradise think of them as a world after death. However, in the early church, paradise—first and foremost—was this world, permeated and blessed by the spirit of God" (Brock xv). The history of the garden as a Christian symbol has particular resonance for readers of *Lilith* because the spiritual route that MacDonald presents for Vane and for readers alike involves the same steps toward understanding of identity and perception. Vane must learn to recognize paradise in his own world before he can conceive of resurrection into another paradise.

The second time Vane journeys into the fantastical world, he happens to step out into a garden. There, Vane meets characters from the Garden of Eden story, including Adam and Eve, a little serpent hiding in the branches of a tree, and Lilith. He also meets a group of characters he calls the Little Ones, who still live spiritually and psychologically in the Garden of Eden. At the same time and place, he meets characters who are experiencing Hell, which indicates that the journey between Vane's world and this one is not a simple return to Eden but something more complex. Like Hell, Eden is not a single, physical place that can be universally experienced. Rather, the perspectives and perceptions of those who have or have not fallen define their worlds.

From what evidence Vane records of their perception, we assign Christian significance to the very different ways he and other characters experience the fantastical world. For the Little Ones, the world is in fact the Garden of Eden. They eat good, little apples and avoid big, bad, green ones. The ones who avoid bad apples never grow up. Meanwhile Lilith, her consort the Shadow, and various other characters on Mr. Raven's side of the mirror, perceive and experience Hell. They recoil from things that others find refreshing, like the warm, healing river. From their perspective, the same world operates under a different set of laws and assumptions. C.S. Lewis later described Hell in much the same way in *The Last Battle*. After their deaths, unbelieving characters in Lewis' novel remain trapped in a personal Hell, annoyed by the happiness surrounding them. Vane, for his part, experiences neither Eden nor Hell, but the fallen world, on both sides of the mirror. Because humanity has fallen, Vane can no longer experience the Garden of Eden, but that does not prevent him from coming to believe in its existence.

The characters from the Garden of Eden story are not static beings that once existed but spiritual figures with whom Vane can interact. Nor does Vane ever step into the role of a larger-than-life or better-than-human heroic figure. Vane lacks grand cosmic or divine significance, yet he has personal interaction with figures such as Adam's daughters, Lona and Mara,

and his decisions influence the course of events that take place while he is in their world. Despite his professed dislike for allegory, MacDonald has created in Vane an Everyman. Meanwhile Lona, the daughter of Adam and Lilith, is a vibrant allegorical representation of pure Love. Simultaneously mother and child, Lona cares for the Little Ones and lives with them in a state of total innocence. Adam's second daughter, Mara, whose mother was Eve, can be identified allegorically as "Suffering." Known as the Lady of Sorrow, she weeps for those who suffer, but she also advocates suffering as the path to redemption. Just as Vane could really be anyone, Lona and Mara, while containing allegorical significance, are also very real people. Through Lona, Vane learns about the Garden and gains a sense of how the Little Ones experience it, and MacDonald suggests that love can bring humans closer to experiencing paradise or the world before the fall. Through Mara, Vane learns how to interpret and grow from experiences in a fallen world, and MacDonald suggests that suffering caused by recognition of error is both beautiful and productive, reorienting the self, allowing repentance, and beginning the journey toward a greater paradise than the one that was lost.

While paradise in the sense of the Garden of Eden and paradise in the sense of Heaven are not the same thing, believing in one is a key step on the way to gaining access to the other. In one of MacDonald's primary influences in the writing of *Lilith*, Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Eden serves as a waypoint on the journey to true paradise. Robert Pogue Harrison writes in "Gardens: an Essay on the Human Condition" that Dante has a desire for something beyond what Eden has to offer: "It is a desire for ecstasy, not serenity; for self-transcendence, not self-possession; for heaven, not Eden. As Dante depicts it, beatitude is not a homeostatic state of reconciliation but a dynamic, intoxicating process of self-surpassing" (144). In MacDonald, as well as in Dante, there is a sense of *felix culpa*. For humanity, Eden is not the answer, but rather something essential to understand before Heaven can begin to be conceived of. Upon meeting the Little Ones, Vane immediately loves them. However, faced with the Little Ones' innocence, their stunted growth, and their seeming vulnerability, Vane also wants to change them by improving their minds, their physical abilities, and their range of experience. We recognize, as does Vane in a limited way, that he cannot share their perception and may be wrong in thinking they need help; nevertheless, we see from his human perspective—and even Mr. Raven agrees—that their situation is still far from ideal. For MacDonald, as for Dante, the garden that still exists on earth and can shimmer through Vane's library walls if he looks just the right

way is not a heaven outside the labyrinth but an Eden in and through it.

MacDonald and Carroll

Among contemporary writers, MacDonald was not alone in writing enticing glimpses of a garden into his fantastical world. In 1862, his friend Lewis Carroll had shown him a manuscript called *Alice's Adventures Under Ground*, asking for his opinion before giving it to a young friend. Already the story that would develop into *Alice in Wonderland* contained Alice's journey down the rabbit hole and into another world, its puzzles involving size and identity, the lovely garden, and the nightmarish Queen of Hearts. MacDonald and his family read the manuscript together and praised it highly, encouraging Carroll to add more parts to the story and get it published (Mendelson 33). In response, Carroll added the Hatter, the March Hare, and the Cheshire Cat. Like MacDonald, Carroll wrote from a Christian ideological perspective. The two authors shared a form of Christianity unorthodox in its certainty that everyone, even the devil, will eventually accept salvation and be reunited with God. Carroll's "Easter Greeting," first added to Alice in 1876, places the religious or "solemn" alongside the playful "fairy tale" (58). Unlike MacDonald, however, Carroll does not directly incorporate Christian ideology into his tales. His garden, though enticing, is not Eden; it is just a garden.

Alice in Wonderland is a highly personal tale that even in its most fantastical parts bases its concepts of identity and perception of the world on Carroll's friendship with the actual girl for whom his manuscript was intended, Alice Liddell. "Some of Carroll's jokes could be understood only by residents of Oxford, and other jokes, still more private, could be understood only by the lovely daughters of Dean Liddell," explains Martin Gardner, editor of *The Annotated Alice* (7). Since "The Mad Tea Party" was one of the episodes Carroll wrote upon MacDonald's suggestion that he expand and publish *Alice's Adventures Under Ground*, it is possible that the Hatter's question "Why is a raven like a writing desk?" was something of a private joke between the two authors. Whether or not Carroll had MacDonald in mind when he imagined the Hatter and his unanswered riddle, there are several notable connections between the *Alice* of 1865 and *Lilith*, which MacDonald would publish thirty years later.

The Raven: Guiding Identity through Transition

In both *Alice in Wonderland* and *Lilith*, the main character's journey

begins with great confusion of identity. For both Alice and Vane, the liminal experience of moving between worlds removes them from the certainty and stability surrounding their former social roles and causes them to question who they really are. They then seek to rediscover themselves in the course of the social interactions that follow. Alice expands and shrinks physically and finds herself unable to repeat old songs and lessons. In this new world, the words have changed and given the songs another meaning, which disorients her, teaching her that even what she thought she knew is not a stable means of defining herself. Likewise, Mr. Vane forgets his former title and name and finds his former studies of metaphysics suddenly useless, with the old laws replaced by seeming nonsense. (See the comparison below.)

'Who are YOU?' said the Caterpillar.

This was not an encouraging opening for a conversation. Alice replied, rather shyly, 'I—I hardly know, sir, just at present—at least I know who I WAS when I got up this morning, but I think I must have been changed several times since then.'

'What do you mean by that?' said the Caterpillar sternly. 'Explain yourself!'

'I can't explain MYSELF, I'm afraid, sir' said Alice, 'because I'm not myself, you see.'

--*Alice in Wonderland*, page 67

[Mr. Raven:] "If you know you are yourself, you know that you are not somebody else; but do you know that you are yourself? Are you sure you are not your own father?—or, excuse me, your own fool?—Who are you, pray?"

[Mr. Vane:] I became at once aware that I could give him no notion of who I was. Indeed, who was I? It would be no answer to say I was who! Then I understood that I did not know myself, did not know what I was, had no grounds on which to determine that I was one and not another. As for the name I went by in my own world, I had forgotten it, and did not care to recall it, for it meant nothing, and what it might be was plainly of no consequence here.

--*Lilith*, page 14

The similarities between these two scenes could have occurred coincidentally as each author sought to describe the disorienting psychological effect of liminal experience (moving between selves and worlds). However, MacDonald's knowledge of Alice and close friendship with its author point toward a deeper connection. Alice's conversation with the Caterpillar existed in the manuscript he first showed to MacDonald and his children, *Alice's Adventures Under Ground*. That the dialogue appears, unaltered, in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* suggests that the family found it delightful and effective. When MacDonald later employs the same sort of logical word play concerning identity, he certainly draws from Carroll.

Vane's winding journey toward understanding identity continues

throughout the novel. Roger Schlobin writes that he is troubled by Mr. Vane's continuing lack of orientation: "At both the beginning and the end, if not throughout, Vane is constantly in transition—not being, not becoming, and not been. He never achieves a state of being or a stasis" (84). What Schlobin sees as problematic, perhaps nihilistic, is exactly the liminal state of personality that writer and professor Barbara Hurd describes so ecstatically in her book *Stirring the Mud: On Swamps, Bogs, and the Human Imagination*. Transition is the true state of human identity, Hurd argues, her perspective matching that of MacDonald and of modern social psychologists as well, who propose that individual human identity and perception of the world develop through social interaction. "Who we are inside and what we share with others are both assembled in the practice of everyday life," explains James Holstein, editor of *Inner Lives and Social Worlds* (13). When Vane is taken out of his daily life and placed in new, unfamiliar territory, his first instinct is to seek out others like him. By interacting with other humans he can construct a temporary social role for himself and skirt the uncomfortable issue of whether he has a deeper, stable, inherent identity. In doing so, Vane risks following Lilith's example by refusing transition and trying to remain permanently in a single social identity. During his adventures in Mr. Raven's world, however, Vane interacts with and learns from characters who have drastically different perspectives from his own, and his identity remains in transition.

In addition to Vane's lack of static identity, Schlobin complains about Mr. Raven's "refusal (or inability) to explicate or stabilize" (84), something Hurd assures us we cannot do. According to Hurd, "We are shape-shifters, all of us, liquid mosaics of mutable and transient urges, and we give ourselves headaches when we pretend otherwise, when we stiffen ourselves into permanent and separate identities unsullied by the drifting slop, the very real ambiguities of ourselves and the world" (73). Even in the seemingly unhazardous act of reading a novel, we expose ourselves to the possibility that we and our worlds may change, and that is a good thing. As readers, if our functional identities weren't in flux, ready to mold, at least temporarily, to the perspectives an author creates for us, reading fantasy would be a dull, abstract, and highly irrelevant experience.

Mr. Raven shifts frequently between his human form as a librarian and the bird form that fits his name. He advocates that Vane learn to do the same, explaining that "every one, as you ought to know, has a beast-self—and a bird-self, and a stupid fish-self, ay, and a creeping serpent-self too—which

it takes a deal of crushing to kill! In truth he has also a tree-self and a crystal-self, and I don't know how many selves more—all to get into harmony. You can tell what sort a man is by his creature that comes oftenest to the front" (30). That Mr. Raven includes a serpent-self in his list of every man's selves suggests another layer to the experience of Eden: for MacDonald, the Garden and the characters of the Eden story are active parts of individual human identity in addition to being active but unseen aspects of the world in which we live. While we never see Vane physically shift form in the way Mr. Raven describes, perhaps it is only that on Vane's and therefore our side of the mirror, form is not as fluid as identity. Mr. Raven cannot guide Vane to physically shape-shift, nor can he hand Vane his own perspective or someone else's identity. With time, however, he can convince Vane that his perception of the world, on both sides of the mirror, is at once true and not the only truth. Likewise, *Lilith* cannot hand us the experience of an earthly paradise or any other garden. Though it provides a way of understanding MacDonald's theology, it cannot prove by logic the accuracy of his viewpoint. What it can do is allow us to comprehend through fictional, simulated experience that as readers in the space of fiction, we inhabit a labyrinth. Becoming conscious of our situation in this way makes us more conscious of identity. If we know that our perspective is limited by walls, we realize there is more to be understood than what we are capable of perceiving.

Historical and Narrative Labyrinths

Perspective is limited in a fallen world. A labyrinth of knowledge defines rules and perceptions. Walls obscure our view of Eden. Form and meaning do not always coincide. In his 1893 essay "The Fantastic Imagination," MacDonald wrote, "If I cannot draw a horse, I will not write THIS IS A HORSE under what I foolishly meant for one. Any key to a work of imagination would be nearly, if not quite as absurd" (10). Without ever saying, "This is a labyrinth," MacDonald allowed the labyrinthine nature of fiction to surface in *Lilith* via analysis of Mr. Vane's choices. As fantasy based in a religious ideology, his work reaches beyond itself to reflect on human experience of the world. It implies that the labyrinthine way in which fiction works also applies to the lives of his readers outside of the world of his novel.

A labyrinth, or system of intricate, winding paths with a distinct center, can be identified by its psychological effects: confusion, loss of direction, and desire to reach the center or, more often, to escape. However,

based on the earliest visual depictions, the legendary Cretan labyrinth would have been unicursal, having only one path (See Figure 1.) Angus Fletcher, an authority on allegory and the fictional representation of thought, explains in "The Image of Lost Direction" that a person in the labyrinth "can choose only to keep moving or to stop, moving inwards or outwards; and he can choose to stop at the centre, stay there forever, and refuse to come back out from that point. In effect these two choices reduce to one choice: he must decide whether or not to keep moving" (335). Like someone entering the Cretan labyrinth, a reader has almost no control over the route he takes through the world presented in a novel. He can choose to keep reading, or to stop, and—luckily for him—he has another world to return to when he stops, as opposed to perpetual imprisonment.

Because of the windings of the single path, if a traveler stops midway through the labyrinth, she may lose any sense of backward and forward direction. Alternatively, Fletcher suggests that without a link to something or someone outside the labyrinth, humans are necessarily lost. He also argues for the necessity of a fourth dimension, time, for determining one's progress and position in a unicursal labyrinth. In analysis of narrative structures, the term *labyrinth* must refer both to a single path and one having many branches, because a fictional text often operates as both at the same time. While differences certainly exist between unicursal and multicursal labyrinths, in a sense it makes little difference whether the path forks or not. The path winds back and forth, obscuring the one direction that matters in terms of identity: in or out.

The presence of a center differentiates the labyrinth from the maze, (See Figure 1), or centerless network of winding paths, by lending it particular religious significance and by requiring a change in objective on the part of the traveler. Like a garden, the maze can offer any number of ways to turn next. To a point, the visitor can direct his own attention and his own path. Rather than finding a center and returning from it, the idea is to wander around a bit and then find a way out, a process that does not require any change of objective even if it requires several changes of direction. Unlike the usual experience of visiting a garden, however, both labyrinths and mazes produce a sensation of incomplete access to vision and understanding. Walls divide the traveler from things she could otherwise immediately see and prevent her from choosing a direct route. In terms of Christian symbolism, building mazes or labyrinths as part of a garden means transposing a vision of this world and its uncertainty onto an Edenlike or paradisical ideal (Wright

222). Historically the labyrinth has symbolized the Christian path and the dangers that accompany it in a fallen world. The act of walking toward the center of a labyrinth represents for many Christians a journey of questionings. The center itself is a place of meditation, where travelers feel that they are in some ways part of another world, in communion with God. The traveler then journeys out of the labyrinth as a changed person with a new objective.

Prior to the sixteenth century, most garden labyrinths were unicursal; before its end, "the walls of some labyrinths were allowed to grow taller and thicker, flowering plants were replaced with shrubbery, and the element of choice was added to the now-branching pathways" (McCullough 122). These labyrinths, known as *irrgartens* or "error gardens" operated much like the labyrinth in the text of *Lilith*, with branched pathways allowing visitors choice via forks in the path. The alternative "options" were errors that forced the wanderer to retrace his steps or loop around and return to the main path disoriented. By contrast, the maze built at Versailles in 1674 allowed little possibility of error. (Compare the images in Figure 1, shown below.) Instead of a center goal, the maze contained 39 sculptural fountains based on Aesop's fables, which the wanderer could visit in almost any order (126).

Figure 1: Comparison of Labyrinth to Garden Maze

Multicursal Labyrinth based on the one at Valencia

The Maze at Versailles (Wright 228)

Despite "closely planted trees and thick undergrowth" used to form walls (127), the freedom of visitors to choose the order of their fables made the maze at Versailles more gardenlike and less restrictive than an *irrgarten* in which the visitors must avoid wrong turns.

In our own century we have witnessed a branching-out of narrative labyrinths from the traditional forms used in writing and storytelling to new, interactive forms like video- and computer games that allow the user varying degrees of agency in the outcome of the story. Free from the limitations of a fictional plot that once analyzed and ironed out becomes linear, game design allows "branched storylines for interactive, personalized storytelling" and creates the option of "multiple paths through the game environment" (Kickmeier-Rust 654). Like seventeenth-century garden mazes, these games do not offer the total freedom that a garden would provide. Instead, the walls create obstacles, promote problem-solving, guide users and add interest to the gaming experience, keeping users motivated and preventing a rapid, direct path from start to finish. Like historical garden labyrinths, the narrative labyrinths of novels generally offer only one true path. Forks occur, twisting the route, and even at times forcing it to double back, but the novel cannot branch in both directions at once. While role-playing games cannot provide as many choices as the gamer or reader can imagine, they come closer to creating a garden for readers to explore at will than a book with a single twisting narrative can. What do they lose in the process?

In *The Idea of the Labyrinth*, her study of the ways in which philosophers from Plato and Socrates to Augustine used labyrinths of logic to instruct their students, Penelope Reed Doob asserts that without labyrinths, some lessons cannot be taught: "The path, the choices between paths, the prescribed errors, all are designed to carry the wanderer over just the right territory to achieve something that could not have been reached by a direct route. The architect knows that a certain process is necessary if the wanderer is to get where the architect wants him to go and learn what should be learned" (56). The further literature or other creative endeavors depart from a labyrinthine structure, the less control can be exercised over the effect of the work on its readers, viewers, or participants. In purely gardenlike conditions, without any walls or limitations, the "reader" would receive no direction whatsoever but could explore entirely on a whim, examining things that caught his eye or, perhaps, in the most extreme cases, inventing them to suit his fancy. While tantalizing, such total freedom would not be ideal for the purpose of learning. Certainly there are many distinct possible actions, not

to mention whole ways of thinking and seeing, that would never occur to the reader were he not challenged by barriers of some kind or a central objective. The novel, with its underlying labyrinthine structure, prompts readers to imaginatively render a more gardenlike fictional world for themselves while at the same time guiding them ever into new and unfamiliar territory, opening their eyes and creating distinct learning opportunities.

In *Lilith*, MacDonald gives his narrator, Vane, multiple chances at getting the path right by allowing him five chances to enter the labyrinth he perceives in Mr. Raven's world. Each time he enters, he explores the world, making specific choices and either following or departing from his previous paths. The first four times he returns to his own world, Vane has reached dead-ends. The fifth and final time he returns to his world, a book (which also happens to be a door) closes behind him, indicating that he has found the exit to the labyrinth and the end of the story. Nevertheless, the story does not end for Vane; readers sense that it has only begun. He has a lifetime to continue gaining knowledge of the labyrinth underlying his daily life, its center, its limitations and perils, and the gardenlike heaven he'll discover when he reaches its exit. Readers, like Vane, come away from the book with a sense of both the labyrinthine limitations of their lives and the endless possibilities available in a garden that transcends the labyrinths of individuals, existing in and through the world as we perceive it.

The Labyrinth and Carroll

Lewis Carroll shared MacDonald's Christianity and his unorthodox view of salvation. In later, less popular works than *Alice in Wonderland* such as his 1889 novel *Sylvie and Bruno*, Carroll sought, like MacDonald, to inspire Christian belief through fantasy. *Sylvie and Bruno* begins with a poem, which begins with a question about philosophy particularly relevant to Christian belief: "Is our Life, then, but a dream?" The last sentence of *Lilith* answers that question: "Novalis says, 'Our life is no dream, but it should and will perhaps become one'" (252). By placing the quotation from Novalis at the end, MacDonald emphasizes the reality of decisions and their consequences, while at the same time pointing toward something more that humans cannot completely perceive because of our fallen state. Many times in *Lilith*, Mr. Raven tries to warn or advise Vane and get him to act based on what he can see and Vane cannot. Conversely, in *Alice*, Carroll's Cheshire Cat cleverly avoids giving prescriptive advice, while at the same time teaching Alice a lesson. Frustration with Vane's actions or with the impossibility of

directly conveying information that Vane cannot understand occasionally prompts Mr. Raven to echo the Cheshire Cat's didactic technique.

Alice's first encounter with the Cheshire Cat was added between MacDonald's first reading and the 1865 publication of *Alice in Wonderland* and has a parallel passage in *Lilith*. "Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?" Alice asks the Cheshire Cat, who answers, "That depends a good deal on where you want to get to" (Carroll 88). Mr. Vane asks a similar question of Mr. Raven, "Will you not in pity tell me what I am to do—where I must go?" and Mr. Raven's answer echoes the Cat's: "How should I tell your to-do, or the way to it?" (*Lilith* 45). In both cases, the protagonist looks for guidance and finds the question turned around in a disconcerting way. Without a sense of self and orientation toward a goal, it becomes impossible to ask meaningful questions. In this situation, neither Mr. Raven nor the Cheshire Cat is willing to lend an identity to our protagonists by creating a goal for them. Instead, both Alice and Vane must journey toward understanding identity on their own by meeting others and trying out new social roles based on their interactions.

As the narrative proceeds, both Vane and Alice express a preference for stability over transition and certainty over further questions. Where Alice says, "I think you might do something better with the time . . . than wasting it in asking riddles that have no answers," Vane exclaims, "Enigma treading on enigma! . . . I did not come here to be asked riddles" (*Lilith* 45). Mr. Raven counters both of them. "You must answer the riddles," he tells Vane. "They will go on asking themselves until you understand yourself." (*Lilith* 45). Identity in transition at once begs for and pushes away from the idea of settling down. On the one hand, to be fully human is to be constantly adapting and reacting, and to be fully awake means being aware of that process at work and even sometimes in control of it. According to Mr. Raven's daughter Mara, though, each of us have a name—not the name we were born with but one that signifies who we are—a name that swirls on our forehead until it stabilizes enough to be read by others even if we ourselves cannot tell what it says.

In Mara's view, settling into a stable identity does not mean losing other identities but accepting the deepest and truest of one's selves. The dance of ever-changing identities, if it continues uninterrupted by stubbornness or impatience, guides us to grow into our true identity or name. In his book *Labyrinth: Symbol of Fear, Rebirth, and Liberation*, Helmut Jaskolski explains that returning from the center of the labyrinth means, not

returning to but "creating the greatest possible distance from one's own past." He writes that in labyrinthine dances, "the way back into the world—almost as hard as the way in—is traveled by a changed person, someone who has found a new form of existence, a new way of being"(60). One could argue that in returning to his own world for the last time Vane returns from the center of the labyrinth to the outside and returns changed. Instead, I believe he has finally, in his own world, reached the center of the labyrinth and that his change is just beginning. With Mara's help, Vane is in now finding "a new way of being" and turning to move, with a new objective, in the opposite of his old direction. On Lilith's side of the mirror, several interactions cause Vane to remark that he has wasted his life, spending too much of his time alone with his studies and too little time loving and growing to understand people. These reflections have reoriented Vane and given him a new sense of purpose.

The Writing Desk: Worlds in the Process of Creation

In 1871, Carroll published a second Alice book, *Through the Looking-Glass*, which raised questions about fantasy writing and the role of literature in identity. Once again there are striking parallels between Carroll's work and *Lilith*. Carroll reports getting the idea for travel through the looking glass in 1868 from a young girl who imagined being on the other side of his mirror and looking out, or in, at her proper self (Gardner 180). Carroll describes Alice's journey through the mirror, saying, "The glass was beginning to melt away, just like a bright silvery mist" (184). In two passages describing the same mode of travel between worlds, MacDonald employs similar language: In describing his first passage through the mirror, Vane relates, "I have an impression of having seen the wall melt away" (*Lilith* 11). Later, Vane discovers an account that his father wrote after a similar journey, in which the mirror became "full of a white mist" (42). That MacDonald's language mirrors Carroll's may be the result of communication between them on the subject of mirror travel, direct incorporation of the wording on MacDonald's part, or pure coincidence.

Both authors use the mirror as a door between worlds; MacDonald also uses a book as such a door when, at the end of the novel, a book closing behind Vane puts an end to his travels between worlds. In his essay on *Lilith*, Michael Mendelson interprets this ending as a metatextual hint to readers concerning the relation between fiction and reality, claiming that "by framing the quest romance as a bibliographic adventure, MacDonald makes the

case for romance as an agent of transformation. When the reader is able to approach books as doors into another world, as dialogical opportunities to converse in a new key or rhythm, the possiblity opens that he will understand his own world better" (35). Used as a doorway, the mirror points toward the importance of identity in perceiving the relation between the labyrinth and the garden, between fiction and reality that are both equally true. Like the mirror, fiction serves as a doorway that can show readers something new about ourselves. However, much more than the maker of mirrors, the writer can craft what kind of reflection we will see.

In addition to doorways between worlds, both Carroll and MacDonald describe books that exist in both worlds at once. These books have two physical locations and require knowledge from another world in order to be understood. At first when Alice picks up "Jabberwocky," she believes the poem and its book to be written in a foreign language. Yet when she holds it up to the mirror, she discovers that the words are quite readable and enjoyable, although still nonsensical. Mr. Vane, on peering as far as possible into the volume of poetry that exists only half-way in his world, describes it this way: "Some dreams, some poems, some musical phrases, some pictures, wake feelings such as one never had before, new in colour and form—spiritual sensations, as it were, hitherto unproved: here, some of the phrases, some of the senseless half-lines, some even of the individual words affected me in similar fashion" (17). If books have the ability to transport the reader to fictional worlds, they exist on the boundary line. Composed of a powerful nonsense, they contain neither world. Their structure evokes just enough of each world to form a link between them.

Fantasy novels, like the words they contain, can be a useful kind of nonsense. Colin Manlove explains that "[Vane's] description will be like the half-book that in the [the Raven's world] is found to be whole: it will help to take us from this world to a larger one, and from a text half-understood to one that will reveal the truth" (50). By changing and broadening our range of perception, a novel can actively "create" the world we experience in daily life just as it can "create" a fantasy world. Fiction cannot create in the sense of bringing something into being that did not exist before; what it can do is influence the perspective of readers, causing them to render their perception of reality differently. This is the process we witness at the end of *Lilith* when the book closes and Vane is returned forcibly to his world. In the final chapter when he reports that "Mara is much with me. She has taught me many things, and is teaching me more," we see that his worldview has changed as the

result of his fantastical experience. He now associates the suffering in his life with the character Mara, who acknowledges that suffering is hard yet knows how to make suffering that is necessary also useful. Instead of mourning the loss of the fantastical world or seeking to re-open the book by journeying back through the mirror, Vane integrates perspective learned from his fantastical journeys into his everyday life.

***Nots*: Defining in the Negative**

The novel writer begins with a gardenlike, rather directionless world of endless imaginative possibilities and ends with a skeletal labyrinthine structure he hopes will direct readers to render a fantastical world in specific ways as they read. Fictional worlds feel garden-like in the sense that their characters seem to have several possible courses of action and readers seem to have control over their own perception and interpretation. However, these gardenlike features of fiction as a whole are illusory. A published novel is by nature labyrinthine: its characters are predestined, their choices already written. The reader's senses can only operate within the provided frame based on details that have already been chosen. While her interpretation is her own, the details she perceives and reacts to have been selected for her. While forms of structured narrative like the novel do not allow the complete freedom of a garden, they offer guided freedom. The underlying labyrinth can suggest a gardenlike world more complex and fulfilling than anything contained in the text itself. At the same time, the labyrinth guides us to understand that garden in light of specific messages—it provides a way of teaching not by direct instruction but by designed experience.

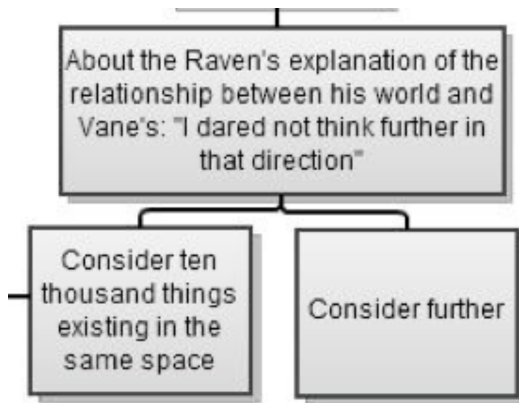
In his study of labyrinths as verbal art, Warner Senn explains that "metaphor, by contenting itself with naming the labyrinth as vehicle, achieves no presence of the object in the text itself" (225). Indeed, the one occurrence of the word "labyrinth" in *Lilith* conveys much less about the narrative labyrinth MacDonald has created than another, seemingly unrelated, word; *not*. The word stands out in *Lilith*'s epigraph, a passage from Thoreau, where it appears an astonishing ten times in under two pages. In the text of *Lilith*, *not* and other negations play important roles in evoking a fantastical world.

Recent developments in the field of textual analysis provide an exciting opportunity for analyzing and learning from an author's word usage, including use of negations. A simple concordance program can accurately accomplish in seconds what otherwise would take hours to do: identifying and compiling all instances of the word *not* along with the essential details

of their context for easy reference and analysis. Running the freeware concordance program *AntConc* on the entire Gutenberg text of *Lilith* reveals a startling 1,038 instances of the word *not*. However, appearing a thousand times in a 95,156-word text does not make the word *not* inherently significant; the potential for broader implications comes from analysis in comparison to other works. In his 2007 Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count program (LIWC), James Pennebaker has created a tool that moves beyond the capabilities of a concordance. Pennebaker's program includes specifically designed categories so that it identifies *no*, *not*, *cannot*, *never*, and other negations as part of the same category of words. Because LIWC categorizes all words used in the text, it allows direct comparison between the percentage of negations and the percentage of all other categories of words in *Lilith*. More importantly, it allows direct quantitative comparison of *Lilith* to other novels, and Pennebaker has compiled results from a massive database of reference texts, making this comparison possible.

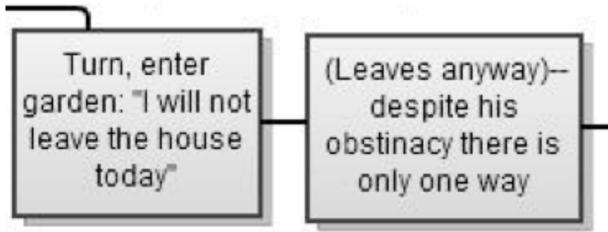
Running the Gutenberg text of Lilith through LIWC reveals a trend of unusually frequent negation use. Negations make up 4.29% of all words used in the epigraph from Thoreau's essay "Walking." Meanwhile, negations make up 2.19% of words used in *Lilith*, as compared to 1.69% in novels on average (Pennebaker 11). Perhaps not coincidentally, Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* also contains more than the average number of *nots*, with 2.15% of all words being negations. By contrast, Thoreau's essay as a whole contains only 1.88% negations. Analysis of the frequency and context of MacDonald's usage of the word *not* yields a clearer view of the structural labyrinth of *Lilith* than we obtain simply by reading.

Lilith's narrator frequently uses *not* to signify inability or to define things in the negative that he is unable to otherwise understand or explain. However, *not* also often signals a road not taken. It can cause a fork in the path, forcing Vane to take one route and not the other, or it can signal his refusal to move forward, favoring stasis. Mapping forks in Vane's path created by the word *not*, we see three distinct impacts his choices at various times create: they can give us a brief glimpse of an alternative path, reveal that the path at that point was straight and that he actually had no choice to make, and return us to a previous question, showing that Vane's path has looped or doubled back on itself. (Examples show below. For a full map of *Lilith's* Forks marked by negation, see Figure 2 in the Appendix on page 106).



As an example of *not* causing readers to glimpse an alternative path, when Mr. Vane declines to "think further" (*Lilith* 35), the mention of not considering further prompts readers to do exactly that. While the only real path for Vane is to stop his consideration with "ten thousand things" and move on, this *not* creates a fork for readers, inviting us to open our minds and fully imagine what the existence of many real and interrelated worlds existing in the same space might mean.

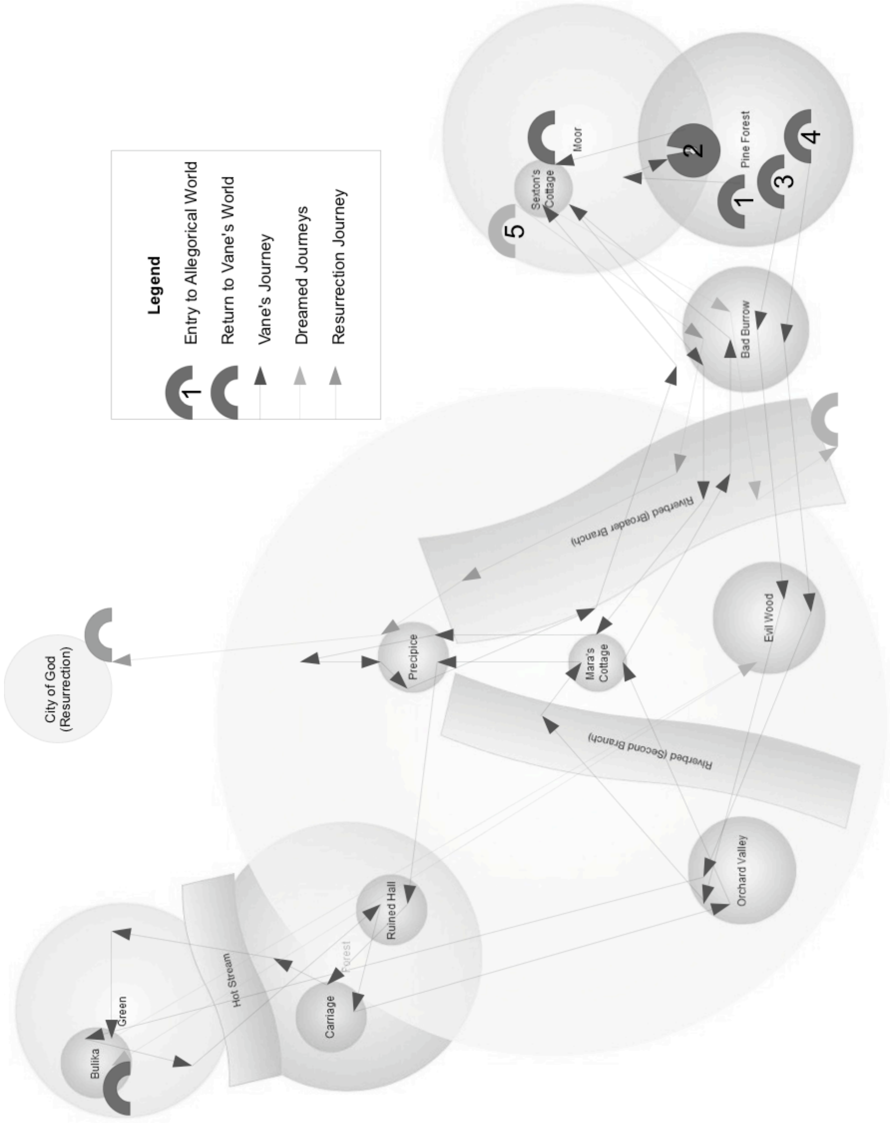
In many instances, the word *not* creates such a fork by leaving readers with a tantalizing clue of what might also be and allowing us a brief glimpse of an alternative path. In other cases, however, *not* produces a curious effect by showing readers a fork Vane believes he has taken that does not actually exist at all. For example, when Vane says he will not leave the house (*Lilith* 19), he does not really have that choice. On the one hand, he must move in one direction or another—must, or the story would end. By moving he accidentally wanders into the alternate world. Staying home, in the sense of stasis, was not a fork but a temporary pause along a single path. On the other hand, even when traveling through Mr. Raven's world, Vane never does leave home. He believes that he has left when he walks into his garden and finds himself back in the pine forest near the Sexton's cottage, but in fact the flowers he finds blooming grow exactly where his piano sits in normal life (*Lilith* 23). Staying home in that sense was never a question. Vane can experience "ten thousand" worlds in the same space, without ever physically leaving his property, although he lacks the ability to consistently control his movement even between two.



Some of the choices Mr. Vane faces he has faced before. At such points when the narrative forks align, his path has doubled back and brought him to a psychological position similar to one he has already faced: The first time he has an option of forgetting or remembering with regard to Mr. Raven occurs on page 18. Remembering gets him into trouble, at least from his perspective at the time, by disrupting his normal life. The second time, remembering would presumably keep him out of trouble but he forgets. While it would seem strange to call forgeting or remembering a conscious choice, the word *not* creates a fork in each case, revealing a missed opportunity. The reader imagines the alternative—first, that Vane could have stayed at home peacefully without ever remembering Mr. Raven's existence or his world; and next, that Vane could have avoided many trials by following Mr. Raven's advice—and gains something by that brief journey down another path than the one the narrative follows. Vane could have avoided his experiences in Mr. Raven's world, but we judge that he is better for having experienced them. Furthermore, the novel would have been pointless without the plot that results from remembering. Vane could have remembered the second time and been better for it, or at least had an easier journey, but his mistake in forgetting makes for a longer novel and probably a better one.

Like the word *not*, other negations like "nothing" and "never" play essential roles in defining paths, circumstances, and perceptions in the negative. An above-average number of negations differentiates *Lilith* and *Alice in Wonderland* from novels in general, suggesting that "nots" and other negations may be particularly useful for defining fantasy worlds. Compared to the average novel, both also use a greater percentage of words that concern motion, space, and time (Pennebaker 11). As with negations, the difference in these categories is slightly greater for *Lilith* than for *Alice*. At the same time as the use of negations creates forks in *Lilith*'s narrative labyrinth, the spatial orientation of Mr. Raven's world to Vane's presents a structural phenomenon that allows characters to take shortcuts through their own worlds and even transcend the walls of their personal labyrinths to gain a view from outside.

Figure 3: The Otherworld Journey of Mr. Vane



Writing Links between Gardenlike and Labyrinthine Worlds

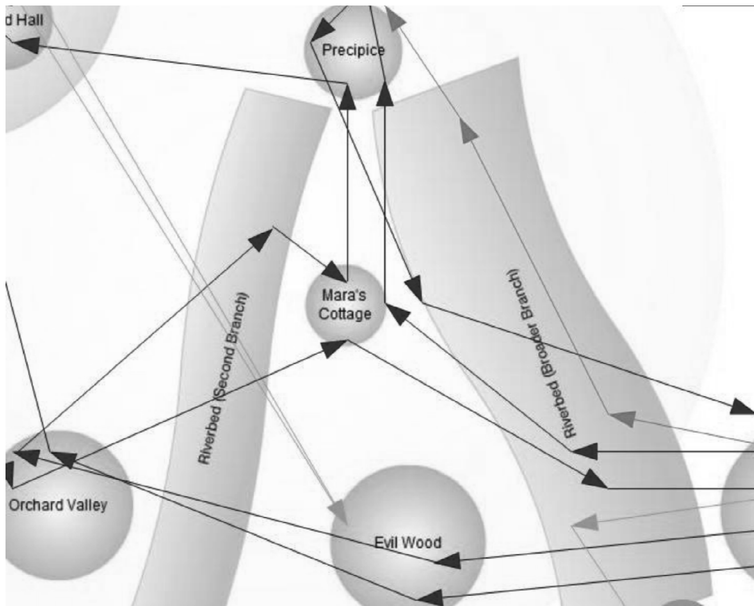
Although Vane stumbles back into his own world through various little-understood gates, he enters Mr. Raven's world at the same spot four out of five times. The fifth entrance, at the sexton's cottage, occurs while Vane is dreaming. Having single entry-point in the pine forest and multiple paths within makes Mr. Raven's world automatically rather mazelike from Vane's perspective. Even Mr. Raven acknowledges his dependence on Vane's house as a convenient passageway. Whereas Vane's world can be entered at multiple locations—his garret, his closet, his fountain, and his library, to name a few—both his garden and his garret exit reliably into the pine forest, making travel in Mr. Raven's world with Vane's house as a shortcut faster and less fraught with peril than travel through Mr. Raven's world alone.

Like Mr. Raven, Lilith also uses Vane's world as a shortcut, a trick that by its necessity indicates the obstruction of her world by labyrithine walls. The walls Lilith experiences on her own side of the mirror are not the same walls that Vane experiences there. In fact the labyrinth that individual characters experience comes into existence due to their own limited perception and the sense of identity each strives to hold onto. Mr. Raven perceives the reality of a garden's open space where Mr. Vane finds walls. Lilith finds a dangerous and nearly impassable barrier between her and her daughter Lona. To reach her daughter and kill her, Lilith must travel through Vane's world. Vane on the other hand, can move easily between Lilith and Lona, even within the world on their side of the mirror. Still, Vane's abilities of perception, action and movement are much more limited than those of Mr. Raven.

Among the many phenomena Vane cannot properly conceive are the flowers adding sweetness to piano music and even a tree growing right where its upper branches form the fountain on his lawn. No wonder, then, that he fails to see the infinite possibilities of experience before him and insists on choosing unnecessarily complicated "right" (usually "wrong") paths that add up to a plot. When the Raven would direct Vane—as the crow flies—by straight paths, Vane finds himself irresistably drawn to other routes, in part through selfishness but largely because of the limited perception which defines reality for him. Even when acting unselfishly out of compassion, pity, or the desire to right the wrongs he has done, Vane cannot access a straight path to heaven. When he attempts, he is gently pushed back into his world, where he must walk in right but nevertheless labyrinthine paths of sorrow and hope in order to reach his destination.

Despite Vane's inability to follow the Raven straight into resurrected life, he follows some of the Raven's advice, learns his riddles by heart, and seeks out his daughter Mara in times of greatest need. In all of these ways he utilizes the Raven as a guide and compass to orient himself within the labyrinth he experiences even without directly following or understanding him. Can it be a coincidence that the center of all Vane's paths, which he approaches from three distinct directions but only once gains entry to, is Mara's cottage? (See Figure 3, below) At the end of the novel, Vane's acknowledgment of Mara's continuing presence with him indicate that he has a sense of the labyrinth's center and a belief in the garden in and through that labyrinth, a garden which he can know only by faith.

Figure 3, insert



Layers of *Lilith*

Lilith reflects MacDonald's convictions about human inability to permanently avoid redemption and the inability of anyone—even God—to lead the individual on a straight path toward that end. The individual will take all the twists and turns of his personal labyrinth, if Mr. Vane is any example. However, as Mark Hawthorne writes in his essay on labyrinths in Pynchon, "One problem with the verbal multicursal labyrinth is that, while the outcome

depends on the moral or psychological nature of the wanderer, the reader follows the wanderer's pathway as a linear progression; the reader, unlike the wanderer, cannot determine progress or make choices to alter the outcome" (12). If written narratives are inherently inflexible, what makes a literary labyrinth relevant for readers and rich to experience?

MacDonald believed that fantasy worlds evoke a more complete and personal rendering than that given in the text itself because of spiritual layers of meaning that the author pulls in unconsciously through imagery. In "The Fantastic Imagination" he wrote: "One difference between God's work and man's is that, while God's work cannot mean more than he meant, man's must mean more than he meant. For in everything that God has made, there is layer upon layer of ascending significance . . . it is God's things, his embodied thoughts, which alone man has to use" (9). From MacDonald's perspective, writers can scarcely understand the power of words and images they weave into story, much less the combined effect of symbols in a completed piece. While the writer works with one level of meaning, or perhaps several, the symbolss he works with are much more complex than the ways in which she uses them. When words cause us to imagine, they evoke objects, memories, people, or images that existed, tied to the text but outside it, before we opened the book.

MacDonald evokes a garden—an alternative world with endless possibilities—by creating a narrative labyrinth. If novels tend naturally toward the labyrinthine, *Lilith* is made significantly so by its cyclical, non-linear format and its Christian ideology that relies on a labyrinth-driven worldview: Humans in a fallen state find obstacles in their way, and if they cannot walk by faith they will have to go the long way around until they learn how. Several characters in Mr. Raven's world, including his daughters Mara and Lona, perceive reality as a garden and operate in it in ways that the narrator, trapped in a labyrinth that is layered over and through that reality, cannot comprehend. Our vision as readers of both their inhibited movement and his frustrating, frustrated attempts at moving about and acting usefully to himself or anyone else point us toward a garden outside the text. MacDonald suggests we may perceive another such world if we allow our own world to become at times liminal and shimmering, as Vane does at the end. Reality, then, according to *Lilith*, is a garden in and through the also very real labyrinth that we and Vane inhabit.

To understand how labyrinths and gardens can be layered in the same space or the same text, we must view labyrinth and garden not as exclusive,

opposite terms, but as two simulateously present, interwoven realities. In her essay on mythology that influenced the writing of *Lilith*, Verlyn Flieger mentions MacDonald's Celtic heritage and introduces us to a poem called *Voyage of Bran*, in which characters converse across worlds. She writes, "The images in the poem are not parallel but incompatible realities with a door between them, but overlapping, co-existing, and uncompeting perceptions occupying the same space and the same time. So it is with the sea and the wood, and so it is with the tree and Vane's chimney" (43). Just because the world appears to be one thing and is another does not mean it is not the thing it appears to be also. Without specific boundaries, the worlds intersect, becoming layered in and through one another. In *Lilith*, parallel worlds can be perceived at once, and are perceived at the same time by Mr. Raven, but our narrator lacks the capacity. In fact, the two worlds that Vane travels through are not solid, uncontestable, unchanging realities, but his perceptions.

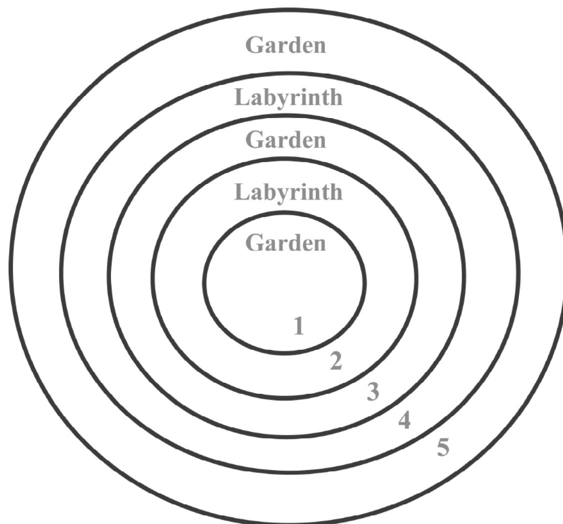
The world Vane experiences after passing through the mirror is not fundamentally the same as the world others on that side of the mirror perceive. Whereas the Little Ones find nothing terrifying or dangerous in a dry lakebed they must cross called the Bad Burrow, Vane sees it overrun with horrible monsters. Mr. Raven at once sees that there are flesh-and-blood monsters, that the monsters are also human sins, and that the Little Ones are not merely blinded by innoncence as it would appear; in their world, nothing physically, spiritually, or even metaphorically dangerous exists in the Bad Burrow at all because no action in their world has created anything so bad. Nor can the monsters perceive the Little Ones or attack them, even when they occupy the exact same space. Like the Raven remarking on the layering of objects in so many of Vane's encounters, Vane now has the ability see both the Little Ones and the monsters at once and witness that two completely valid perceptions can operate in the same place at the same time. Three in fact, counting his own view of both when neither can see the other. Mr. Raven's additional view of each living monster as a sin adds a fourth perception—seeing the sins without seeing the monsters, the Little Ones, or Mr. Vane—and a fifth, his own, seeing all of it in the same space at once, overlapping and even mutually influencing through dialogue and cause and effect, all without negating any of the other perceptions.

If, from a Christian ideological perpective like MacDonald's, eating from the Tree of Knowledge caused the fall, then it was a fall into a labyrinth of knowledge. The knowledge is true, the labyrinth real, but at the same time our walls of knowledge hinder us from perceiving the garden that is also true and existent, in and through our reality. We lack the perspective to see through our walls and the dimensions to transcend them. What better symbolic place for a labyrinth of knowledge than a library, where the novel

Lilith begins and ends? By the end of the novel Vane can catch a glimpse of a shimmering garden world through the walls of his library. This is what MacDonald hopes his readers will also do. To that end, he shows us specific forks in Vane's labyrinth via his choices. Vane takes paths he misjudges to be right; MacDonald gives us a vague foreknowledge of their consequences through Mr. Raven and through Vane himself (as narrator and writer). Like Mr. Raven, many readers would choose a shortcut for Vane, a straight path to the heaven of which he he has a small, faulty glimpse. However, Vane must first live in the labyrinth of his own world, believing that it is also simultaneously a garden but unable to perceive it.

Moving out a layer from Vane's labyrinth into the reader's experience reading *Lilith*, the gardenlike fully-realized fictional worlds we naturally inhabit while reading are actually only a labyrinth on paper. Moving out another layer still, open-ended literature that leaves mysteries unsolved and readers knowing more than the dim protagonist creates a labyrinth off the page that points to a garden yet greater than itself (See Figure 4.) While reading, we are trapped and aware of being trapped in the labyrinth of *Lilith*, following Mr. Vane's errors; after the book closes, the labyrinth outside the text, having kept us mentally engaged and altered our perceptions, continues to invite us toward futher mental acrobatics in understanding the relation between labyrinth and garden worlds.

Figure 4: Layers of *Lilith*



Conclusion

The garden serves as a fitting counterpart to the labyrinth in terms of the ideology behind *Lilith*. The idea of *felix culpa* ascribes a labyrinthine structure to the Garden of Eden in a specific way: whereas Adam and Eve had the illusion of two paths to choose from, taking the forbidden fruit and not taking it, only one of those paths could actualy be taken and lead to other choices. The other "path" was to remain in the Garden, with no distinct or perscribed paths at all and the ability to cross through and over walls of knowledge that they could not see, but to do so without knowing it because from their perception there was nothing to know. The Garden would have been a world of its own, very much apart from the limitations of a fallen world, and free from any concerns regarding movement, perspective, or stasis. In the perspective and terms of a fallen, labyrinthine world, however, not taking the fruit meant stasis and lack of development, including a lack of knowledge of and appreciation for the human situation and thus a lack of ability to truly pray. If we view eating the fruit as the only path that led forward to the twists and turns of full spiritual and human journey, then no matter how devoted to God the first man and woman may have been, they could not have stayed at one place in the labyrinth forever. It was only a matter of time before they took a step forward, a step which in that moment became a step inward or outward along the path of the labyrinthine perception in which they found themselves lost.

Perhaps the idea of *felix culpa* also applies to fiction; the presence of a labyrinth in literature prompts movement toward a goal and encourages learning and development in ways that a garden by itself cannot. What cannot be learned by a direct route, whether because of its abstraction and inaccessibility or because of its overwhelming power, can nevertheless be learned by a circuitous route. Doob writes that "the process of learning is labyrinthine whether or not prior knowledge is involved: one moves in circles, forward and back, seeming to recede but in fact ever approaching by successive approximation the knowledge that is the goal," and that "this knowledge could not be reached so effectively by a direct route, a shortcut, for the process itself determines whether the product will be understood" (89). The labyrinthine dialectical method used by Plato, Socrates, and Augustine finds a new form in MacDonald's fantasy. The underlying structure that the protagonist's choices in a novel create both limits our freedom of perception and movement as readers and causes our imaginations to render an entire fictional world. By drawing attention to this process, MacDonald takes

us on a labyrinthine journey into new ways of seeing.

Endnote

1. Some sources describe her as a woman, created as Adam was, while others describe Lilith as an angel or demon. MacDonald follows the angelic tradition in *Lilith*, as we see on page 148 when Mr. Raven stares as Lilith and says, "Then God gave me another wife—not an angel but a woman—who is to this as light is to darkness."

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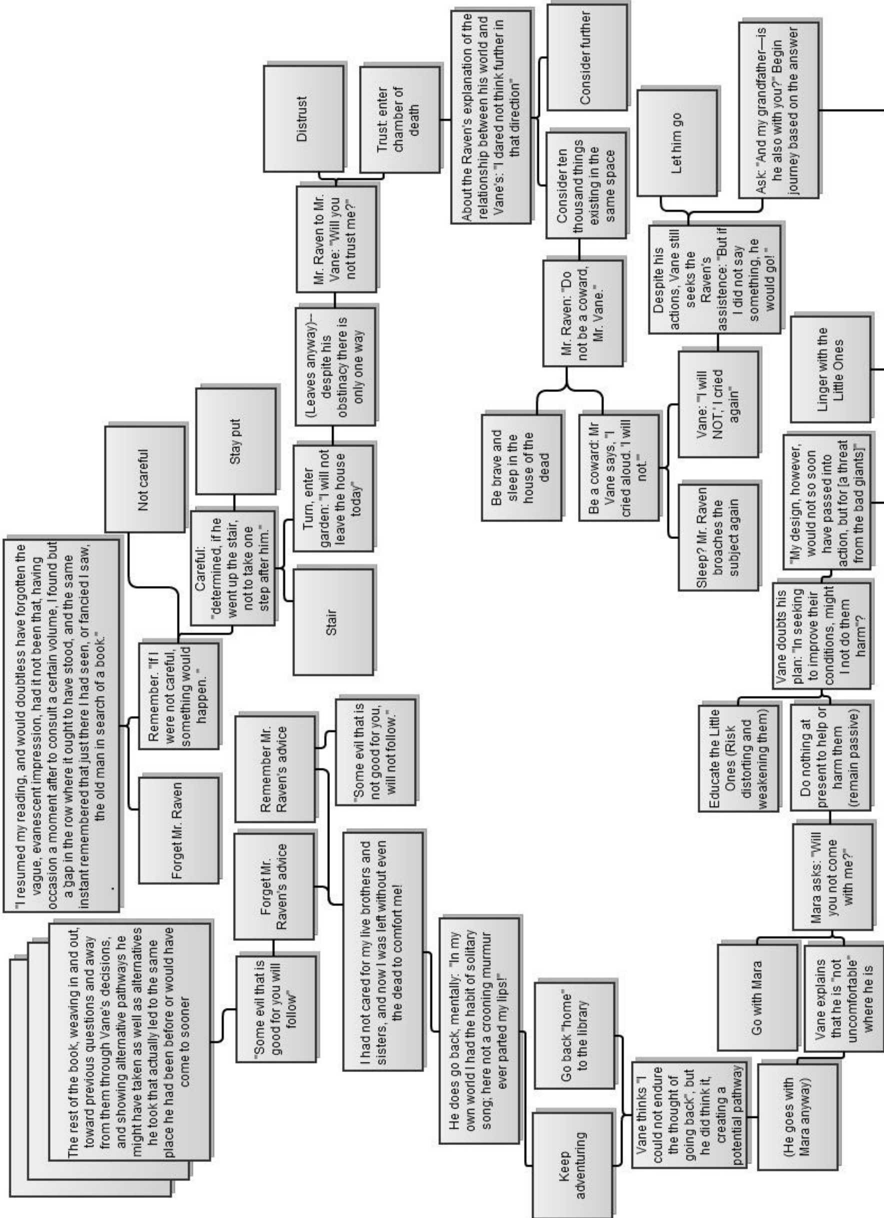
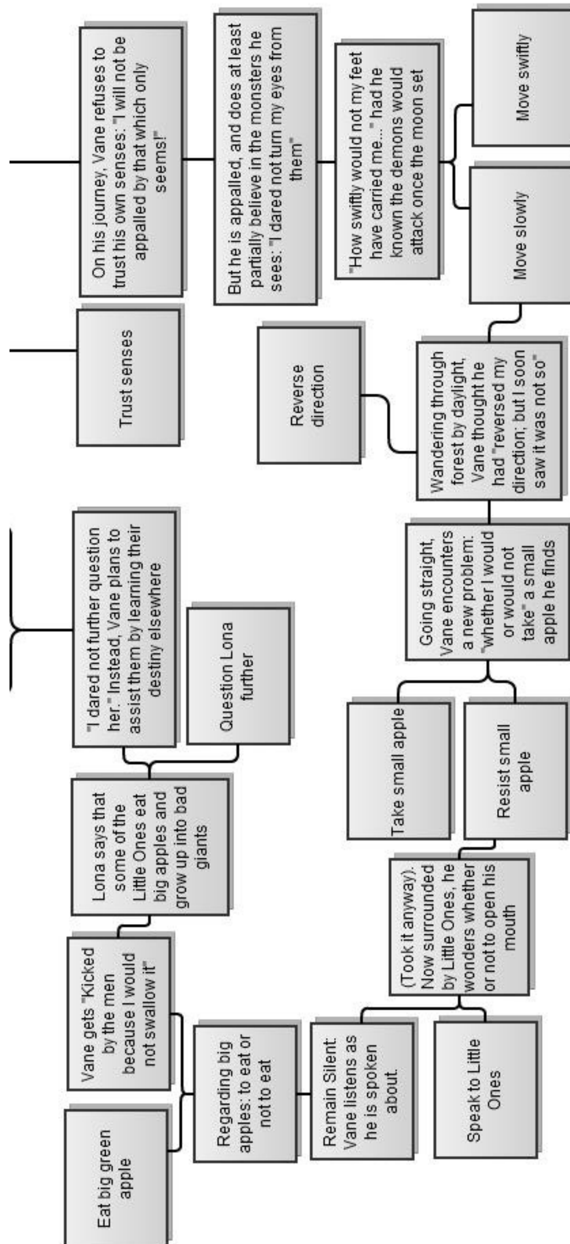
Appendix: Forks Marked By Negation




On his journey, Vane refuses to trust his own senses: "I will not be appalled by that which only seems!"
Trust senses
But he is appalled, and does at least partially believe in the monsters he sees: "I dared not turn my eyes from them"
"How swiftly would not my feet have carried me..." had he known the demons would attack once the moon set
Move swiftly
Move slowly
Reverse direction
Wandering through forest by daylight, Vane thought he had "reversed my direction; but I soon saw it was not so"
Going straight, Vane encounters a new problem: "whether I would or would not take" a small apple he finds
Take small apple
Resist small apple
(Took it anyway). Now surrounded by Little Ones, he wonders whether or not to open his mouth
Remain Silent: Vane listens as he is spoken about.
Speak to Little Ones
Regarding big apples: to eat or not to eat
Eat big green apple
Vane gets "Kicked by the men because I would not swallow it"
Lona says that some of the Little Ones eat big apples and grow up into bad giants
"I dared not further question her." Instead, Vane plans to assist them by learning their destiny elsewhere
Question Lona further