



Connections: Cosmic and Otherwise, Volume I: Souvenirs of the Soul

Ian Stott

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Finding magic in the day-to-day, Connections is a hope-filled poetry collection.

Celebratory and introspective, the poems in Ian Stott's *Connections* ponder broad and personal subjects, including the magic of youth, the threat of climate change, grief after the death of a loved one, and the struggle to find inner peace.

These poems use playful end rhymes and open free verses to describe daily events, working to relay wisdom and guidance for finding meaning. The first several entries center on childhood wonder, implying regret that growing older seems to compromise people's ability to see magic in everyday life. But as the collection continues, its concerns advance, encompassing humanity's collective inability to see Earth's beauty—and human apathy when it comes to preventing impending planetary destruction. The book makes another right turn to encompass the personal subject of spousal grief before returning to generalities; it closes with truisms about living a meaningful life.

The use of end rhymes is consistent with the introductory theme of wonderment in childhood. But this nursery-rhyme feel is most complementary in the book's initial poems, including "Girls with Granny Faces":

*Some folks grow old before their time,
Not enjoying life—such a terrible crime.
They lose the childlike sense of wonder,
Like, "What is lightning?" and "What is thunder?"*

The continuing use of end rhymes throughout the collection detracts from the seriousness of the poems with darker themes, though, as in "Code Blue in the Carpark":

*Not knowing that the same shadow over me was now cast:
A code blue in the carpark on Friday morning.
Upon reflection, there had been a warning
That your body perhaps was shutting down,
But as always you were gutsy, never showing a frown.*

More expansive are the book's experiments with metaphors. "All One Kin," for example, muses, "The conscious mind is the veil of illusion, / Mainstay of all human confusion. / For should that mist lift from our eyes, / Then clearly would appear our false desires." Still, frequent adages undermine the entries, bringing them close to trite territory—even with the title poem, which engages in predictable seize-the-day encouragements and aphorisms that diminish its thoughts on the significance of connections. Striking black-and-white photographs (as of rock formations, tree roots, and moonlit boardwalks) are included throughout the collection; where they appear, the images have clear connections to their respective poems.

The lively poems in *Connections* strive to answer hard questions about everyday life.

NATALIE MARINO (December 23, 2023)

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