

A WIDER SPACE OF MEANING POETRY AS A RESONANT RESPONSE TO DISENCHANTMENT

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ABSTRACT: This critical review discusses Charles Taylor's last book, *Cosmic Connections* (2024). The work is first contextualized against Taylor's intellectual path by asking what philosophical question is answered by the image of poetry as an extra or para-epistemic response to modern disenchantment. The second part of the essay reconstructs Taylor's argument as follows. After describing how Romanticism revolutionized the way moderns enter a resonant relationship with the cosmos by resorting to the notions of "interspace" and "epistemic retreat", he outlines the trajectory of this insight within post-Romantic poetry. While Rilke and Hopkins continue the search for a resonant whole with the converging images of "inscape" and "Weltinnenraum", Baudelaire and Mallarmé take modern disenchantment to its extreme consequences without, however, quenching the evocative power of the lyrical force field. With the "modernist" Eliot and Miłosz, the sense of intellectual powerlessness scales back from the heights reached by the Symbolists, but the search for a believable cosmic order does not go beyond a stubborn faith in the "ethogenic" potentials of human history. Accordingly, Taylor's book ends with an examination of the prospects for an ethical growth of humanity and its dependency on the spiritual goal of uncovering mimetic, narrative, and theoretical ways to strengthen resonant bonds with others and the world.

La nota critica prende in esame l'ultimo libro di Charles Taylor, *Cosmic Connections* (2024). L'opera viene dapprima contestualizzata alla luce dell'itinerario teorico tayloriano allo scopo di chiarire quale sia la questione filosofica a cui risponde l'immagine della poesia come reazione extra o para-epistemica al disincanto moderno. Nella seconda parte del saggio viene ricostruito a grandi linee il ragionamento di Taylor che, dopo aver descritto come il romanticismo abbia rivoluzionato il modo in cui i moderni entrano in una relazione risonante col cosmo ricorrendo alle nozioni di "interspazio" e "ritirata epistemica", delinea la parabola di tale intuizione nella poesia post-romantica. Mentre Rilke e Hopkins proseguono la ricerca di un intero risonante con le immagini convergenti dell'"inscape"

e del “Weltinnenraum”, Baudelaire e Mallarmé portano alle sue estreme conseguenze il disincanto moderno senza però estinguere del tutto la potenza evocativa del campo di forza lirico. Con gli “anti-romantici” Eliot e Miłosz il senso d’impotenza intellettuale diminuisce rispetto ai vertici toccati dai simbolisti, ma la ricerca di un credibile ordine cosmico non va al di là di una fede caparbia nei potenziali “etogenici” della storia umana. Significativamente, il libro si conclude con la disamina delle reali prospettive di crescita etica dell’umanità e della loro dipendenza dall’aspirazione spirituale a trovare vie mimetiche, narrative e teoriche per rafforzare i legami risonanti con gli altri e con il mondo.

KEYWORDS: Romanticism, Poetry, Disenchantment, Resonance, Ethical growth

PAROLE CHIAVE: Romanticismo, Poesia, Disincanto, Risonanza, Crescita etica

1. Self and nature

“Does not science teach us more and more emphatically that nothing which is natural can be alien to us who are part of nature? Where does Mont Blanc end, and where do I begin? That is the question which no metaphysician has hitherto succeeded in answering. But at least the connection is close and intimate” (Stephen 1894, p. 260)

Where does *nature* end and where do *I* begin? And how can we sensibly understand their relationship? These questions are not asked by a teenager puzzled by the collapse of childhood certainties, but by Leslie Stephen in one of the earliest attempts to systematically reflect on the spiritual significance of the modern passion for mountains (Woolf 1950). Where does the mountain you love end and where does your loving self begin? And how can you explain the desire to join your most intimate source of agency and a material reality that is known to be mindless and spiritually inert thanks to the efforts of modern scientists?

Come to think of it, the question posed by Stephen ought to sound odd to our ears. On the one hand, for a modern Western individual there should be nothing more familiar and better demarcated than your own “self”. I am myself and Mont Blanc is undoubtedly the non-self. On the other hand, however, it is precisely a certain way of conceiving of the self as a self-contained entity that gives rise to a chain of hard questions that more often than not have to do with the attribution, if

not of a soul, of an enigmatic intentionality to things that, albeit being outside of us, arouse in us an out-of-the-ordinary resonance. As Stephen himself notes, nothing which is natural should be alien to us, because we ourselves are a piece of nature. It is no coincidence that the term we generally resort to when describing intimate experiences of resonance with the world is “poetic”, and by that we mean epiphanic, revelatory, generative. For those who love nature, nature is never just *natura naturata*, but *natura naturans*, a creative, *naturing* entity.

But if the self is sovereign in its selfhood, why should it be plagued by doubts about its own boundaries? Why should it make room within itself for Mont Blanc, for example? Isn't it enough to find out how to technically build or arrange a world in which to feel at home: a world, if not in your own image and likeness, at least tamed, curbed in its hostility and harmfulness? Why ever feel the need for a more intimate connection with your non-self, rather than being happy to face it from a position of bufferedness?

Evidently, the problem lies in our seeing ourselves as a fragment of nature. If we are so, and modern science, by definition, cannot help but sanction this view, it is hard to understand why we should ever struggle to recognize ourselves in nature, to see ourselves mirrored in it. How can you be both a piece of nature and a subject disengaged from nature? Since you clearly cannot be so, the Gordian knot must be cut through: either you sensibly ascribe to nature a selfhood analogous to that of a spontaneous agent (capable, that is, of being the uncaused initiator of a causal chain) or you treat it as an object inert, devoid of intentionality and interiority, pure extension. If the methodological naturalism of modern science is a variant of monism, philosophical dualisms are not an option here. However, the simultaneous emphasis on freedom and objectivity that characterizes the modern mindset spawns a *de facto* if not a *de jure* robust dualism. This causes the worldlessness of the modern self, and the relevant anxieties.

If we are to judge from the pillars of Western philosophy — for example, Plato's dialogues — there was a time when it was easier to imagine thought, ideas, mind as the most direct way to access the ultimate truth of the cosmic order rather than as evidence of humanity's exile from nature. However, after the Scientific Revolution, a view of nature such as

that, say, of Anaxagoras, in which *Nous* (mind) is the foundation of the regularity of the cosmos, seems out of the question. This epochal transition has been described in various ways, for example as the eclipse of the “ontic Logos” or as the end of the Great Chain of Being. Whatever name we want to give it, it indicates the transition from a kind of knowledge that was also meant to account for and foster harmony between soul and cosmos to another type of knowledge that is happy with breaking down and putting back together again the bits of information that can be drawn from experience for the purpose of enhancing the human ability to control and manipulate natural phenomena (the well-known “resolutive-compositive method”). The effect of this frame of mind on the mental habit of modern scholars is a slippery slope toward disenchantment: knowledge is no longer capable of producing wisdom; the divorce between knowledge and happiness is accomplished.

If there is one philosopher who has spent his whole life trying to shed light on such epochal change, this is Charles Taylor, author of at least three milestones in contemporary philosophy: *Hegel* (Taylor 1975); *Sources of the Self* (Taylor 1989); *A Secular Age* (Taylor 2007). In these long books, he gave a nuanced account of it, showing how modern fractured horizons ended up fashioning the very identity of an ever-increasing number of individuals, influencing their life plans, feeding their desire to have a happy and fulfilling life.

Taylor is only at first glance a simple philosopher. Quite the opposite, he is a sophisticated thinker who nonetheless aims to be understood by everyone. That is why, even in his most technical writings, he never completely breaks with the life world, with common sense, which is both *terminus a quo* and *terminus ad quem* of his recursive work of articulation. As a result, his works are easy to misunderstand and, indeed, have often been misinterpreted by those who, lacking the patience necessary to indulge his disposition to slow down in order to make his readers’ view more stereoscopic, have demanded from Taylor what is generally expected of a modern philosopher and which he is reluctant to provide, namely, a meaningful reduction of the very “mystery” of the human condition (Taylor 2008).

How does his latest book, *Cosmic Connections* (Taylor 2024), contribute, then, to his multifaceted portrait of modern Western, or as he

prefers to say, North Atlantic civilization? What does it add to the picture provided in “Aims of an Epoch” (Taylor 1975, chap. 1), the opening, justly celebrated chapter of his book on Hegel, or to the compelling overview offered in his more accessible *Massey Lectures* (Taylor 1991)?

In short, the interpretive framework has basically remained the same. His goal is to “ensoul”, as it were, the modern Great Transformation by fine-tuning the affirmative genealogy that has enabled him, over six industrious decades, to provincialize Western modernity without diminishing its significance or denying its dangers. His theoretical effort still consists essentially of an “exercise in retrieval” (Taylor 1989, p. xi). That is, he aims to bring forth the spiritual complexity that tends to be pushed to the margins, if not totally obliterated, in modern mainstream self-understanding. To this end, he focuses in his new book on the vision of the tasks and potentialities of modern poetry, which was exemplarily developed in German and English Romanticism and which, directly or indirectly, continued to exert its power of attraction even after it failed to stem the intellectualism built-into the Enlightenment turn.

Although it is essentially a revival of what was already outlined in the final chapters of *Sources of the Self* (Taylor 1989, chaps. 23 and 24: “Visions of the Post-Romantic Age” and “Epiphanies of Modernism”), *Cosmic Connections* is not, however, a book *about* modern poetry. It is deliberately a philosophical book that draws inspiration from post-Romantic poetry to address controversies that cannot be unraveled by strictly logical means. In this sense, it can be pictured as a book that wants to do justice to the inescapable mimetic and narrative aspects of understanding human action in time and space. To sum up: not a book about poetry, but a book that endeavors to show, *along with* poetry, that “Nichts, / nichts ist verloren” (“Nothing, nothing is ever lost”, Paul Celan, “Engführung”, quoted in Taylor 2011, p. 69).

To this end, however, you have to espouse a view of the human symbolic capacities that, while finding their most astonishing realization in human speech, are not just there for keeping the world at a distance. From this point of view, *Cosmic Connections*, as Taylor reminds us in its opening and closing pages, is a companion study to his earlier book *The Language Animal* (Taylor 2016a). After all, modern poetry is relevant

because it constantly tries to force the limits of human language, striving to transcend the boundaries of empirical evidence that modern reason has a priori precluded to sensible knowers. Using Kant's idiom, we could say that, in a post-Romantic horizon, poetry supplants metaphysics in indulging the dialectical urge to overcome the frontiers of sensory experience. In this sense, poetry is a synthetic power that is not intimidated by the multiple epistemic retreats imposed by the cognitive monopoly of modern science.

2. Poetic rituals of reconnection

Enough for contextualizing *Cosmic Connections*. The essentials about the book's theoretical framework can be easily gleaned from its first part (Taylor 2024, chaps. 1–3), where some classic motives of Taylor's philosophy are rearticulated from an original and fruitful standpoint. The theoretically oriented journey within Romantic and post-Romantic poetry only begins with the second part of the book and goes on for about 500 pages. The way in which Taylor's argument proceeds from here onward, though, may mystify the reader. For his approach is not strictly chronological, the selection criteria for sorting out the poets examined are never made explicit, and the digressions interpolated between chapters ("Notes", "Coda notes" and "Explanatory notes") may have the effect of making his case less clear than it should be. Yet, since a logical thread exists, I would like to provide an account from here on that explains the progression of Taylor's argument and the thematic constellation within which his choices become intelligible.

The first thing that he urges us to register is that, after the Romantic revolt against what is taken by its supporters to be the rationalistic attempt to establish a priori what it is humanly sensible to hope for on the basis of the true, the good and the beautiful, poetry becomes the privileged (cultural) battleground where to check the limits of experience and empower human deeper aspirations. Reduced to its essentials, such a terrain is an intermediate space, a "contact point", between subjective preferences and scientific evidence (the "penumbra of experience", Taylor 2024, p. 177), where the meanings and purposes of

human action can emerge and be endorsed or contested. If you wish, we could call this realm the “ethical”. It is the space, in brief, where the diverging ideas of the good life circulating in modern society and the strong evaluations underpinning them may come into collision. Borrowing the notion from one of his pupils, the German sociologist Hartmut Rosa, Taylor pictures the post-Romantic poetic field as a space of “resonance” and, consequently, of attempted sentimental reconnection with the cosmos. Indeed, to resonate with the natural otherness produced by the epistemological split between subject and object is to reappropriate the “non-identical” via self-transformation. The “Anverwandlung” Hartmut Rosa (2019) talks about in his recent work is an assimilation that, rather than proceeding in a single direction (with the self taking over the non-self), is the product of a two-way relation between subject and world that can be expressed symbolically by the oscillating movement of “a←ffection and e→motion” (Rosa 2019, p. 163). In a resonant liaison, self and world touch each other and change simultaneously (in the interspace). Put otherwise, resonance is a responsive relation in which both poles are active and partially independent. Exploiting to the full the symbolic potential of language, poets such as Rilke and Hopkins were able to build a bridge between self and non-self by showing how “Through all beings ranges a single space / World-inner space” (Rilke’s “Es winkt zu Föhlung”, quoted in Taylor 2024, p. 205). And the “closeness” of such resonant space is felt even, if not especially, in moments of despair: “I wake and feel the fell of dark, not day. / What hours, O what black hours we have spent / This night! What sight you, heart, saw: ways you went! And more must, in yet longer light’s delay / With witness I speak this” (Hopkins, quoted in Taylor 2024, p. 168).

In short, thanks to the poets whose work he discusses and by banking on their attempts to live up to the Romantic revolt, Taylor leads the sympathetic reader through a range of “interspaces” and spiritual stances, where the metabiological salencies to which humans are receptive become linguistically palpable. And this occurs via plumbing the depths of things, although “not the depths as they ‘objectively’ are, *an sich*, as it were; but the depths as they are sensed as connected, *as opening to us*” (Taylor 2024, p. 175, italics mine). In this realm, moreover,

there is no way to oversee the landscape: you must explore it sideways—on and thus expose yourself to contingency and possible loss. The central chapters of *Cosmic Connections* are offered, then, to the reader with tentativeness, caution, humility: reader to reader, as it were, in a genuinely horizontal spirit.

To sum up, the impulse ruling Taylor's argument all the way down comes from the Romantic habit of not taking modern chasms as inescapable facts. Hence, the main vector of his argument has its origin in the effervescent spiritual reaction against the three main causes of modern discontent: atomism, primacy of instrumental reason, disenchantment (Taylor 1991, chap. 1). The Romantic revolt, however, only half succeeds. Or better, rescuing the restorative aim of reconnection entails failure as a structural element (what Taylor calls the "epistemic retreat"). For poetic resonance may bring about trust, even felt certainty, self-confidence, but not demonstrable and intersubjectively accessible knowledge. Already Hölderlin's poems, in fact, are infused with an atmosphere of ontological indeterminacy, fragility, uncertainty (Taylor 2024, p. 155), an "extremely tentative tone" (Taylor 2024, p. 99), placing "the 'transfiguration effects' of post-Romantic art" (Taylor 2024, p. 86) beyond people's control. For such art "convinces us through moving us; whereas a cosmology has also to be based on other kinds of reasoning, bringing in considerations from science and history. These epiphanic flashes of insight which are incomplete, no matter how much they may be further elaborated. They are frequently also fragmentary" (Taylor 2024, p. 86). And, "as the century unfolds", experiences of reconnection become, if possible, even "more fragile, easier to dismiss, rarer, and tied to a particular place and a privileged moment in time" (Taylor 2024, p. 129).

While Romantic and post-Romantic epistemic retreat has long-term effects, it should not be mistaken with an endorsement of the Grand narrative of the disenchantment of the world. Although the Romantic revolt produces no small amount of ideological confusion downstream (especially, in politics, where reactionism and radicalism are both options open to critics of the Enlightenment), upstream it handed down a crisp depiction of the moral, spiritual and anthropological flaws of modern dualisms. And, along with an often-dismayed

sense of the relevance of goods lost or at risk of being lost, it spread also seeds of hope in the ethical growth of humanity.

The path trodden by Taylor after the introductory chapters includes three major stages. The first one is axed on the reaffirmation *malgré tout* of the gist of the Romantic revolt that can be sensed in the epiphanies of the resonant whole produced by “poetic” personalities as diverse as Hopkins, Rilke, Proust, Emerson, and Cézanne. In the inscape conjured in Hopkins’ verses and in Rilke’s glorification of the fullness of existence encountered in the *Weltinnenraum*, echoes can be heard of the experiments in reconnecting with nature undertaken with different poetic means by Wordsworth, Novalis, Shelley, Hölderlin and Keats. However, the arc of oscillation between accomplished disenchantment and possible re-enchantment becomes, if possible, even wider and the task of devising poetic “rituals of restoration” (Taylor 2024, p. 297) gets more adventurous both artistically and intellectually. In particular, the interspace expands into an “intertime” as the tension between cosmic and lived time becomes increasingly important in individual experience and brings forth new peaks of fragility and fullness of the human condition.

In his second step, Taylor focuses, instead, on the resilience of the Romantic urge for reconnection even in the most radical lyrical reactions to the experience of modern alienation, including linguistic alienation. For, in an only seemingly paradoxical way, “(re)connecting [...] may include the failure to connect” (Taylor 2024, p. 89). With their wavering efforts at staying afloat in a non-episodic condition of artistic and personal shipwreck, first Baudelaire and in his wake Mallarmé break out from the limits of the Romantic goal of poetic reconnection with nature by taking on, sometimes with a luciferous stance, the *impuissance*, the inability of verses to pander to the nonbinary logic of interspace. Baudelaire’s fascination with evil, decadence, abjection, and the paradoxes of expression which Mallarmé’s orphic inspiration must cope with, end up raising to dizzying heights the benchmark (Taylor 2024, p. 377) by which the success or failure of lyrical striving is ultimately measured. In their poetic radicalism, symbols gradually become detached from their function (and promise) of reconnection by taking over the whole interspace with an aesthetic and existential emptying effect. The romantic

dream of reconnection now hangs by a thread, the thread of an expressive tension that materializes under the guise of a creative restlessness that systematically oscillates between euphoria and dysphoria. And in the background hovers the “oft–returning temptation toward annihilation” (Taylor 2024, p. 157) already experienced by Hölderlin and Novalis. But even when despair seems to prevail and resistance against disenchantment is on the verge of surrender, the lyrical force field is there to prove that “le vague n’exclut pas l’intensité” (Taylor 2024, p. 360) and that even the “metaphysic of *Néant*” espoused by Mallarmé does not exclude, but rather “captures the absence–in–presence of the things” (Taylor 2024, p. 471). In the end, this turns out to be the superabundance of meaning that natural human language struggles to express faithfully.

With “modernist” Eliot and Miłosz, finally, we are faced with two intrepid attempts to reshape post–Romantic poetic epiphanies in an anticlimactic, less subject–centered, and reactively anti–Romantic key. Although the sense of intellectual powerlessness scales back from the heights of drama touched with symbolism, the “picture of a believable cosmic order” (Taylor 2024, p. 485) does not go beyond the negative form of an “empty marker” (Taylor 2024, p. 487), a *dessein en creux* that tells us more about the “hole, the lack it would fill” than about the “higher world where a higher version of our spontaneous aspirations could be fulfilled” (Taylor 2024, p. 488). The outcome is a sort of resonant meta–disenchantment that, especially in Miłosz, is reconciled with a view of ethical growth that is neither lightheartedly optimistic nor fatalistically apocalyptic.

This vision of humanity’s ethical/spiritual growth is discussed at length in Chapter 15. Here, Taylor’s *corps à corps* with Romantic poetry comes to an abrupt halt and Miłosz’s resilient faith in the “ethogenic” potentials (Taylor 2024, p. 544) encapsulated in human history is discussed at length. The result is a both candid and original reformulation of Taylor’s (1989, chapter 4) influential inquiry into moral sources, which reaffirms the primacy of the ethical–spiritual element over the moral codes or procedures doggedly pursued by the main currents of modern moral philosophy.

While it certainly is not the theater of the “magnificent and progressive destinies” (G. Leopardi) envisioned by the Enlightenment

Geschichtsphilosophien, human history can be reasonably seen as the site of a slow ethical growth. The process of achieving this goal, however, is neither linear nor unbroken. Rather, it has a dialectical form, though not in the Hegelian sense whereby each historical stage resolves one tension to create a new one at a higher level. Things, in fact, are much messier than that. In the chaotic impulse towards ethical growth in human history, the steps made by the different civilizations and, within them, by minority groups can become sources of significant ethical innovations. These, however, are never the result of anonymous and impersonal processes, but of the moral creativity exercised by individuals or communities in distinctive historical situations. This is why Taylor speaks of ethical “growth” instead of “progress”. Put differently, there can be no moral advancement without a corresponding spiritual transformation sustained by the *sui generis* “force” of strong evaluations, i.e. of the values shaping people’s deeper identity.

If we are converging toward a common ethic, however, it does not follow that we are moving toward a single universal spirituality or worldview. Moral pluralism and the diversity of goods still are a cornerstone of Taylor’s outlook. Bearing in mind the bloody experience of twentieth-century totalitarianisms, it is important to reiterate that any spirituality, whether secular or religious, offers pathways to personal transformation, via practices, meditation, and disciplines, without which any list of norms and values is bound to remain a dead letter. Disagreement, even irreducible disagreement, is never a good reason for despair. This is a lesson that the beneficiaries of the modern Great Transformation must learn and relearn at every turn of history without giving in to the temptation to expect from technology an easy way out of the labors of ethical growth, which are ultimately guaranteed only by the resilience and moral creativity of people of goodwill.

From this point of view, post-Romantic poetry can be seen as replacing the premodern Great Chain of Being with a contingent three-steps ladder of reconnection (Taylor 2024, p. 88). To begin with we have *mimesis* (“the striking power of art is that it can place you, sometimes imaginatively, sometimes really, in the situation which has this meaning and inspires these feelings”). The second step is *indeterminate epiphany* (“this *mise en situation* enables us to experience and grasp

hitherto unexplored, unidentified meanings, such as Goethe's *Ruh* or the sense of connection in *Tintern Abbey*"). Once reconnection is complete, the longed-for outcome consists of spiritual transformation ("some of these experiences present themselves as transformative, in an ethically important way; that is, they help to realize crucial human potentials").

In conclusion, just a few words about the style in which the book was written. There is something poignant in the patience with which Taylor goes about discussing texts that he evidently loves, having read and reread them in his long lifetime, with a chronic sense that he never got them "right" (Taylor 2016b). This humility and resultant tentativeness account for both the recursive nature of his contextualization efforts and the absence of any kind of magniloquent conclusions in chapters that seem to break off rather than being accomplished, conveying to the reader the sense of an open-ended discourse that solicits, even demands, their own taking stance.

"Philosophy", as Taylor (2008, p. 41) observed in one of his rare metaphilosophical considerations, "is in a sense a perpetual disturbance of the peace". And the same might be said of the "rituals of restoration" (Taylor 2024, p. 297) staged by post-Romantic poets in their quixotic efforts to shake us out of our disenchantment. For their "poetry is like a ritual which makes the connection more powerful" (Taylor 2024, p. 134) and, by enabling such self-enlarging experiences, triggers "a transformation, which realize[s] crucial human potentials" (Taylor 2024, p. 90). As a result, the atmosphere surrounding a book that still demands a lot from the reader is ultimately joyful. After all, "reconnections [...] can bring joy" and not "just pleasure" (Taylor 2024, p. 90). "You experience joy", reminds us Taylor (2024, p. 133), "when you learn, or are reminded of something positive, which has strong ethical or spiritual significance, whereas intense pleasure tends to enfold you even more in yourself". More specifically, "there are moments where, through articulation in a work of art, we can concentrate and thus identify the effect [of beneficial contact with nature surrounding us]: some painting gives us an acute sense of the light over a scene, or a poem intensely concentrates how a given scene, or being in a certain space, moves us. And there is a certain joy which comes from articulating this experience. This joy, the sense of

how important it is, how essential a human fulfillment it is, all come together. The diffuse feeling can be brushed off as subjective, but the concentration is a heightening awareness and a sharpening of focus, and the joy which accompanies it demonstrates how much this articulation is a realization of our nature as human beings, or to use an Aristotelian expression, the human Form” (Taylor 2024, p. 133).

Accordingly, the post-Romantic epistemic retreat is anything but a surrender. Or rather, a retreat in matters of knowledge is not matched by a parallel retreat in matters of recognition. Hence, banking on the evocative force of this word in modern philosophy, it can be claimed that all the poets insightfully discussed in the book display a capacity to mimetically and narratively *recognize* something that has become hard to discern, to distinguish, to identify — in a word: to understand. Thus, it makes sense to see post-Romantic poetry also as a chain of subtle rituals of re-connection *through recognition*. And this might explain the puzzling coexistence of deep reflexivity and epistemic exhaustion, which are both typical traits of the modern mind.

To sum up what I have said so far, poetry is so empowering for many of its readers even these days, precisely because it helps them to re-connect with the world by enacting a resonant, albeit mystifying, restorative ritual of recognition. In this sense, *Cosmic Connections* has the motivating force of a genuine spiritual testament: the last word of a “hedgehog” with the wit of a fox (Taylor 1985, p. 1), as well as the work of a tireless teacher in a time when too many people think that they have nothing meaningful to learn from others.

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