

1990

Dark Matter

Christopher Buckley

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ir.uiowa.edu/iowareview>

Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Buckley, Christopher. "Dark Matter." *The Iowa Review* 20.2 (1990): 50-51. Web.
Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.3882>

This Contents is brought to you for free and open access by Iowa Research Online. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Iowa Review by an authorized administrator of Iowa Research Online. For more information, please contact lib-ir@uiowa.edu.

DARK MATTER

Beneath the music from a farther room.

T. S. Eliot

Why in the world are we
constantly drawn out
past our local orbits,
past street lamps pushing
the night back beyond
a walkway's sleeping roses
and the cul-de-sac?
Why are we once more
none the wiser
unearthed in the fact
that 90% of the universe
is not radiating? All the non-
luminous chaff tossed off
the kernels of light—all that
is really most all of it
as things now add up
and will not appear.

This year I've arrived
at middle age in a moonless month,
and though the heavens are clearer
for that, I'm still seining
among the stars without a clue.
But somewhere, it's out there,
chockablock about the blue
and unfathomable fire
of quasars, dodging
crab nebulae, white dwarfs—
so many black asterisks bobbing
in the dimples of gravity,
the relative bend and sink holes
of space, the sluice gates
of time.

As far as I can see
it's as if the cosmos were
10% music, a leitmotif
or glossy harmony
spun out against the dread-
naught of silence. Life slipped
in somewhere, sparkling
say, on the tenth-notes—
one metronomic pause
between the red-shift of galaxies,
a few white notes, reversed-
out on the black cosmic sheet,
composing the only music
we have ever made sense of.

Mozart, you heard it said,
took dictation from the stars,
progressions of chords, arias and
divertimenti arriving transfixed
in his mind as the constellations
first inscribed by the Chaldeans.

* * *

After dinner, the pinwheel
of the Milky Way uncoils
its spangled shirrtails across
the back lots of a universe
ten billion light-years end to
end—and now when looking out,
I picture that distance
like a luminous clothesline
upon which all blind space is hung,
though we've long been told
that it's all brilliance, all
radiance and a shower of light
when it's done . . .

For now,
our thoughts could be nothing
more than asteroids, circling
the fission of the mind—sand,
boulders, small worlds; the lost,
the faint, the fresh as blood—
silica, carbonaceous compounds,
nickel and iron—everything
we might be or all we'll never
become. Yet, whatever it is
we've done shines often, persists,
and comes back to us like comets
slowly wearing down on their
icy and elliptical tracks.
It all hangs with us, a worry
in the air—spalls of cold light
scudding among the turgid
gravel of the dark.

Perhaps
like bits of smoky celluloid,
negatives with their pale
as paper figures, we wait to be
held up once more against
a brightness to begin again?

Or perhaps it's that we drift
airily around star to star,
their billion silver keys
every brilliance there is to tell—
that jangling all the obsequies
we will ever hear?

Maybe
this is why I go for walks
more often now at night,
whistling some tune
I only dimly recall,
if only for distraction's sake,

for the circumstantial evidence
of my breath with its faint
refraction of star dross
bright in a cloud before me . . .