

## 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.

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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 . . .