

## Foreword

*Look, it cannot be seen – it is beyond form.*

*Listen, it cannot be heard – it is beyond sound.*

*Grasp, it cannot be held – it is intangible.*

Dao De Jing<sup>i</sup>

To physicists, dark matter is thought to make up a large percentage of the mass of the universe. But no one knows what it is; it is only hypothetical, yet something like it must exist in order to explain the phenomena we know in this world. Theoretical scientists would say it exerts strong effects that change cosmic events. I think of it as a kind of “glue” that holds the material universe together in the known (and unknown) relationships. I could say that dark matter is an invisible mystery, the shadow side of what we know and see. By this I mean that unseen forces and influences inform our lives in ways we can only guess at.

*What is hidden*

*in the mist*

*is revealed*

*in the crystal*<sup>ii</sup>

This book is comprised of writings from two people, both long-time friends of mine. On each page, the philosophical quotations are from Jack Sproule, a retired Roman Catholic priest. The poems are the creative work of Leanne McIntosh, a distinctive literary voice. Jack’s words are culled from over thirty years of letters, journals and articles, and Leanne has responded to them in her own thoughts and writing.

Leanne gave this book the title *Dark Matter* to indicate the massiveness and mysteries of hidden things. So, here I am trying to write an introduction to a book that focuses on these mysteries, as a reflector to their creation. Words are so inadequate; yet, they are what we have. As T.S. Eliot wrote,

*Words, after speech, reach  
Into the silence*<sup>iii</sup>

The background for this remarkable work is a many-decades-friendship between Jack and Leanne. This association has proved to be deep and lasting. They met in August 1980, when Jack, new to the Diocese of Victoria from Montreal, arrived at St. Peter's Parish in Nanaimo. Within a couple of months Leanne had been hired by the Parish to be Jack's assistant. Thus began a sharing, a communion of two souls, a relationship not constrained by any habitually imagined definitions. Theirs is a friendship of the minds, of the spirit. Even though Jack is now in declining health, their conversation continues.

Separately before they met and then together, they studied spirituality, to find it in their lives and the lives of others. In this study they forged a friendship of investigation and mutual learning. They listened, they challenged each other. This was the basis of their work together, which continued after Jack moved in 1986 to St. Elizabeth's parish in Sidney, BC, where he ministered until his retirement in 2004.

They both had strong lasting relationships with others – indeed there have often been periods of months when they have not seen each other – but their friendship has been maintained by mutual communications and the intensity of their periodic meetings. They are two people, two friends, who listen and respect and love and share and ponder and push and penetrate

– into the mysteries of their own lives and into creation itself. As occurs in other collaborations between creative artists, scholars and teachers, they have crafted a friendship that is purely human – one that is transformative for both and those that know them. This unusual friendship is outside usual definitions. They are not “bonded” as often happens in conventional relationships. What I believe others witness between them is closeness, intimacy, knowing, caring, vibration, tenderness, proximity, with no attachment whatsoever. This is *presence*. Remarkably, people still respond to the deep resonances that come with Jack’s casual comments. Friends who meet him for coffee comment that they sometimes think for days about things he has said. His presence brings with it his dark matter of knowing and caring.

In the light of day, this book is a conversation into which we, the readers are invited to observe, witness, join. We are invited to share in who they are, separately and together, and to consider for ourselves what they care about.

Together in this book, they craft a new amalgam and teach us their neo-language.

*When we arrive at the shores  
of another consciousness  
we are challenged  
to teach each other our tongues  
so that we can converse  
and have communion <sup>iv</sup>*

As I consider Jack’s philosophy, I try to peer past his reserve to see his personal concerns. As I read Leanne’s poems, I try to be alert, to listen for the beating of her heart, for the sound of her breath. I hear a pulse, a rhythm, a voice in this text. There are teachings, special things, messages, buried in the structure of this

book. This voice is trying to speak, to articulate from the dark matter these hidden influences. And, in this process, I find more of my own hidden nature.

Then, there is the universal story, the unconscious myth, only fragrantly hinted at. They are both on a quest, one that is still ongoing for each of them. Neither of them really knows the mission; they are both in a process of discovery. They are both teachers to each other and both students to each other. They are heroes, explorers, thinkers, philosophers, mystics; their topic is life and relationship. Their living philosophy which they uncover, expound and live is the spirituality of lived loving in ongoing friendship and companionship. This enterprise is human, very human. And yet, it goes on past them, reaching into the invisibilities which, perhaps, we can uncover by opening ourselves to unseen possibilities.

In the theatre, a stage has four walls; the back and side walls are three of them, and the fourth wall is invisible, at the borderland between performer and audience. In dance, the fourth wall is between the movement and emotion and intensity of the dancer; it is the invisible barrier that must be overcome for communion to occur, for the art to take flight and fulfill itself by arising in the hearts and minds of the audience. The value of this intimacy is that the barrier (which is imaginary) is dissolved in the vulnerability, exposure that comes in honest sharing. If I consider the artistry of writing,

*the reader is drawn in  
becomes another actor,  
poem, printed word,  
fully incarnated<sup>v</sup>*

The conception is between Jack and Leanne, both of them reflecting with each other, and their other relationships.

The dark matter is the glue that holds all this in a spiderweb of tension, a pattern of mystery. This structure provides a megaphone through which speaks the disembodied voice that resonates within the guts and heart chamber of the reader, who breathes, full of feeling, with her/his own life. The poem is birthed in the heart of the reader, a new entity each time.

Amidst the philosophy, and the poetry, are a man and a woman, and years of authentic friendship. In their lives, Jack and Leanne are honest and earnest. So Jack's words reflect his genuine contemplation. So Leanne's responses reflect her authentic emotion-thought-feeling. As Octavio Paz asserts, "Each poem is a reading of reality."<sup>vi</sup> So, their words are true, allowing a magical emptiness to receive the voice, which summons the reader to attention, to quietness, to consideration, to depth.

*it is a call and response  
a rise and fall  
an ascent and descent  
from flesh to sky and back again*<sup>vii</sup>

So, as the reader, you are charged with a great responsibility. All you have is what is said and written; but, you must peer through the mist to what is not said. As Octavio Paz asserts, "To read the poem is to translate it and inevitably, to convert it into another poem."<sup>viii</sup> This is the dark matter, and you are part of this; without you, this enterprise would stop. An unread book has no valence, no action – you bring it to life, breathe air and pump blood into it. In Paz' words, "The reader repeats the poet's act."<sup>ix</sup> This breath and blood are your own. The dark matter reveals Leanne and Jack, yes – but more importantly to you, it reveals you to yourself.

The true test of art is whether it expresses the universal. Read this, and decide for yourself whether Leanne and Jack have, with

your help as reader, achieved the universal. For this reader, they definitely have. For me, this is true art, evoking responses in me that prompt spiritual responses. I am stirred in the wellsprings of my deepest imaginings. The courses and sources of my inner life are ignited, inflamed, erupting.

Jack and Leanne would agree – this is now your book, too. Bring your earnest intention to it, and make of it what you will, for yourself, and for your deepest relationships.

Jock McKeen

- i Feng, Gia-Fu and English, J. Chapter 14, *Tao Te Ching*. New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1972.
- i Jock McKeen, verse words created for this Foreword.
- ii Eliot, T.S. “Burnt Norton” in *The Complete Poems and Plays of T.S. Eliot*. London, UK: Faber and Faber, 1975, p. 175.
- iv Jock McKeen, verse words created for this Foreword.
- v Jock McKeen, verse words created for this Foreword.
- vi Paz, Octavio. *Children of the Mire: Modern Poetry from Romanticism to the Avant-Garde*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974, p. 72.
- vii Jock McKeen, verse words created for this Foreword.
- viii Paz, Octavio. *Children of the Mire: Modern Poetry from Romanticism to the Avant-Garde*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974, p. 72.
- ix Ibid, p. 72.