

## *The Nowhere That Is*

*"...in emptiness there is ... no eye, ear, nose,  
tongue, body, mind; no form, sound, color,  
taste, touch, objects..."*

*from The Shingyo Sutra*

In the beginning there was danger  
in brilliant blue and lemon-colored shocks.  
Electricity was really just like tables  
and beermugs, something you could touch  
if you were a daredevil.

Later I was shocked to hear that it took,  
of all people, Ben Franklin to discover it.  
The key was lightning—it really almost killed him,  
which they do not emphasize in the eighth grade.

Then it got stranger. I learned  
there were really two kinds of electricity,  
Positive and Negative, but different countries  
had different opinions about which was which.  
*Different countries? Opinions? What is this?*  
When water swirls down the sink backwards  
*you know you're up North.*

And then I found out that people knew for a long time  
about something called Static electricity.  
Some of them pointed out with great authority  
that Static electricity wasn't like regular electricity,  
but it was something you could see  
if you rubbed fur and silk together.  
*Fur—and silk? What are we talking about here?*

When this whatever we're talking about goes inside a wire,  
it doesn't really go inside the wire, instead—  
I know you won't believe this—there's a field  
*around* the wire. *A field? Of what, exactly?*

It's a field around the nothing where the  
something else is supposed to be and you  
can tell it's there since if it isn't things  
that could happen, don't.

Finally, what a relief, a few remarkable scientists said  
we do not know what electricity is  
we do not know its nature  
we have only James Clerk Maxwell's elegant equations  
based on a blacksmith's son who, confounding  
most of the physicists of his time,  
conducted his experiments with rubber bands,  
pieces of metal and some other scraps  
he found around the lab.

*(cont'd)*

Later, this genuinely humble experimenter,  
after a brilliant lecture on Science  
in the House of Lords, was asked:  
*What's the point?*, a typical question by politicians  
after some science is elucidated for them.  
Faraday untypically replied:  
*I don't know, but you'll be taxing it.*

Electricity is everywhere running  
almost everything, but the fact is  
no one can see, hear, smell, taste, or touch it.  
*Now isn't that something!*

In all our running around apparently making things happen,  
perhaps we are only partially real,  
like shifting characters in someone's larger story.  
And these invisible giants, Electricity and Love,  
and the force that tells us they're here,

are presences that are totally real  
these nothings that are  
somewhere in the  
nowhere  
that  
is