How to Deal with Nothing

hold your hands apart

you think:

there is nothing between them

but you know that’s only

a convenient fiction

there is a small pond of air

between your outstretched fingers

now close your eyes

relax your body

and think of nothing

no, i mean it

don’t think

*who is this idiot poet*

*telling me to think of nothing*

*in the middle of a poem?*

stop all conscious thought

for just long enough

to not read this verse

think of nothing

now think again

stay with me, here

you tried to think of nothing

but even if you cleared your mind

as well as a Buddhist lama could do

your brain was still working

you were thinking

*breathe, lungs*

*beat, heart*

*flow, blood*

you cannot think nothing

as long as you are alive

nothing, again, is a convenient fiction

that means nothing of noticeable value

now, stretch out your mind

further than the reach of your hands

stretch it all the way to Proxima Centauri

the star that is our nearest neighbour

trillions of kilometres of nothing away

luxuriate in the space

the freedom of room

the treasure of emptiness

are you done?

is the furthest reach of your mind

in orbit around a star?

that nothing

through which the tendrils of your consciousness

have traveled at faster than the speed of light

is not nothing at all

it is a sea

without borders

of particles

those particles

from the smallest string

to the greatest dust mote

exist everywhere

even in the deepest vacuum

particles pop into existence

and pop out again

there is never nothing

even the space between the particles

is not nothing

the universe is not an emptiness

begging to be filled

it is stuff

wishing for space

we see it as empty

because our eyes are big

and our minds are clumsy

imagine now

a movie screen

you with your popcorn

and a brain bigger than the biggest computer

you are so smart

that you can watch every movie ever made

at the same time

and all on the same screen

(of course, you only watch the good ones)

while Marilyn cavorts

and Gable plays cowboy

you are watching a cartoon

and you are understanding all of it

that screen is the multiverse

and each movie projected onto it

is a universe

if part of a movie goes black

another movie fills in the blank space

there is never nothing

all the spaces that share our space

(some are next door, not right in our house)

share the stuff of reality,

the seething sea of objects.

some are of a single dimension

others of two

many of three

and so on up to ten

some are as big as our universe

and some are so small

that we have no words to define them

(we make up cute names for them

strings, branes, blobs)

you may retract your mind

leave the Proxima Centaurians to their supper

(they were getting tired of seeing you there

they are not like us, they don’t like peaches)

and as your mind crosses

the Great Nothing

you will feel the warm caress

of the Great Something

and as you return to your parochial home

you will know

that you will never feel nothing again.