

OUT IN THE OPEN, 1989

“Making Salad”

after Eihei Dogen

I rub the dark hollow of the bowl
with garlic, near to the fire enough
so that fire reflects on the wood,
a reverie that holds emptiness
in high regard. I enter the complete
absence of any indicative event,
following the swirl of the grain,
following zero formal and immanent
in the wood, bringing right to
the surface of the bowl the nothing
out of which nothing springs.

I turn open the window above the sink
and see fire, reflected on the glass,
spring and catch on a branch a light
wind tosses about. Here or there,
between new leaves the Pleiades,
like jewels in the pleromatic lotus,
flash. I watch the leaves swirl
and part, gathering light
fresh from Gemini, ten millennia away, fresh
from Sirius—holding each burning
leaf, each jewel within whatever light
a speck of conscious mind can make,
unshadowed by reflection or design,

impartial. Out of the tap, from a source
three hundred feet down, so close
I feel the shudder in the earth, water
spills over my hands, over the scallions
still bound in a bunch from the store.
I had thought to make salad, each element
cut to precision, tossed at random
in the turning bowl. Now I lay the knife
aside. I consider the scallions. I consider
the invisible field. Emptiness is bound
to bloom—the whole earth, a single flower.