

not to touch your ruins.
I won't. And were the mainland museum
open when I went there
I would have seen your art
other than on postcards or cheap gifts:
they moved me very much,
your ebullient blue monkeys and fish.

MR. POPE

*"Do you think I would not wish
to have been friends with such a man
as this?"*

—Charles Lamb

Life on earth,
for Mr. Pope, was not lenient: four foot six, hunch-
backed, grinding migraines,
hard-to-breathe, deep-bone aches
and, most likely, never, *never*,
any sex. That he did not
tolerate nincompoops,
poetasters, or pompous fops,
one can understand.
Not meanness, misanthropy
that drove him to ravage dunces,
but more so sorrow
and some rage. Attacks on the work,
part of the deal ("A very pretty poem,
Mr. Pope, but you must not call it Homer"),
he could take, but upon his body (" . . . a lump,
a toad, a venomous spider,
a monkey dropping filth"),
compounded its pain.
The censure he dealt almost always
earned, rarely the spirit mean,

or just spleen. And towards those
he loved: tremendous affection, generous.
Mr. Pope, thou giant,
your tubercular bacillus-wracked body, now,
a quarter-millennium later, powder,
and I report your verses,
their raging sense
and tenderness, I report
them: breathing, shining black
ink on white paper, intact!
I close a huge, heavy book of your life.
You live outside, above, its pages,
amidst the human therein created.

THE GARDEN

The basic metaphor is good: blend dead,
redolent things—dried blood,
steamed bone meal, dried hoof and horn
meal, basic slag,
dolomite, bat guano—into the dirt,
wait, and live things emerge.
In between, of course, you insert a seed.
So fragile, at first—I examine rows
of lettuce seedlings with a reading glass,
their green so barely green
they break your heart. The only
tools you need are stone-age
but made of metal: I love
the shovel's cut when you plunge
it in: the shiny, smooth cliff-face
and some worms (your garden's pals!)
in the middle of their bodies,
their lives, divided. . . . A rake,
a hoe, peasant tools,
but mostly you pick, pull, pinch by hand,