

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,

the green stains and stinks clinging  
to your fingertips.  
Don't read books about it,  
or not many. Turn the dirt  
and comb it smooth.  
Plant what you like to eat.  
Feed the birds but not so much  
that they get lazy  
and they will eat the bugs,  
who should get their share,  
but not one leaf of basil more.  
It's all a matter of spirit, balance,  
common cruel sense: something dies,  
something's born and, in the meantime,  
you eat some salad.

## FUNDAMENTAL

Acts of God,  
the insurance people, whose business depends  
on fear of them,  
call them: hurricane, monsoon, cyclone,  
whirlwind—when your house bears  
the branches' lash, big winds  
lift and slam the clapboards.  
Little spiders, spirit receptors,  
living in the walls or swinging  
above the sills sense it  
first, are humble. The fiery,  
the fundamental God  
is mad, again. He gets that way,  
decides to smash or flood  
and it's no use to build a sandbag wall  
around your acre, to try to divert  
the torrents via channel  
dug by hand. Or, He says: No water,