

truth but in eliciting the cliches
that they've pre-formulated for you:

"come on, locklin, admit it,
you're secretly jealous of eddie vedder,
aren't you?"

well, do me a favor, okay?
the next time you have to
deal with a used car salesman,
or an insurance salesman,
or a solicitor canvassing
your neighborhood,

notice that he will, invariably
(while crushing your hand in his
more manly one) stare you right
flat square in the eye.

AN INAPPROPRIATE ENTRY

the new delhi hot-air balloon festival
featured an enormous one shaped,
honest-to-god,
like the head of mahatma gandhi,

and the tragic incongruity is:
if there was ever a man
who was not full of hot air,

it was he.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

thoreau writes, "i was never
molested by any person but those
who represented the state ... i
never fastened my door night or
day, though i was to be absent
several days; not even when the
next fall i spent a fortnight in
the woods of maine."

i lock my doors these days,
except when i am sitting just
inside. in southern california and,
i imagine, most places in america,
we check the locks on our
doors and windows every bedtime.

the answers of most people to the crime problem are fairly simple: hire more police; give them more leeway; put more people in prison; keep them in prison longer.

but there weren't many cops in thoreau's day, and there was a continent of wilderness for the bad guys to operate out of, yet he didn't fear the poor or the indians.

also we conveniently forget that the cops in the past created a lot of the problems that they/we now have to live with. they had nearly absolute power and, not surprisingly, in some contexts they abused it nearly absolutely. i can remember when it wasn't safe for anyone to drive through a nearby city because of the affirmative action, non-discriminatory police brutality, until a college football star either was hanged or hanged himself in his cell. the police were acquitted, but the place has been transformed into a model of correct procedures.

there's this private investigator who swims at the same ymca i do, and he must have been harassed by the i.r.s. or some other confiscatory agency because he says, "the only thing i fear more than a man with a gun is a man with a gun and a badge."

I GUESS HE DOESN'T BELIEVE IN UPWARD MOBILITY

our plumber,
a young man of
old world values,

says he'd like his kids
to grow up to be
teachers.

FROM PROPHET TO HISTORIAN

as a young teacher in the 1960s
i would try to interest my students
in coltrane, existentialism, godard,