

and if i had been as good-looking,
experienced, charming, articulate,
rich, and, most of all, as confident
as mike, it might have worked for me.

MANIFESTOS

the alzheimer's association sends me
a packet of notecards bearing
reproductions from monet. i like
them: they are not the most common
prints, but ones like "tulip field
in holland" and "customs officer's
cottage." i don't send back the
hoped-for donation, because i am
saving for my own senility, and i
don't correspond with my friends on
them, because my friends are also
getting a bit long in the tooth
themselves and might take it the
wrong way. instead i just use them
as bookmarks in my current reading:
a motley selection of bukowski,
elmer kelton, a.s. byatt, pat
barker, colin dexter.

the reproductions are unusually crisp:
they look a lot like photographs.

is this what monet was trying
to accomplish?

i thought it was what he was trying
to avoid.

the main thing is that whatever he
thought he was trying to
prove or eschew
his aesthetic goals got him to
put paint on canvas.

SHE COULD PROBABLY HAVE FLIPPED THROUGH MY CASE OF
THE MISSING BLUE VOLKSWAGEN WHILE SNEEZING

i read in evelyn wood's obituary
that the founder of speedreading
could absorb fifteen thousand words per minute.

i figure that a good novella runs
somewhere between twenty and forty thousand

words. thus, evelyn could probably polish off death in venice in about two minutes, maybe, on a particularly robust day, a minute and a half.

the death of ivan ilych — a trifle longer perhaps — let's give her three whole minutes so that she doesn't feel rushed.

the metamorphosis? i doubt she'd enjoy that one much anyway. she might not make it all of the way through. maybe, she'd just toss it on the dust bin about seven seconds into it.

i'm really sorry evelyn never took a course from us. i could have assigned her every great novella ever written and she could have breezed through them with plenty of time left over for pitchers of beer at the 49er tavern, where she could have shared with us her store of profound insights.

THE MORE I READ, THE MORE I WRITE

my one reservation in taking on a graduate seminar in the american renaissance was that the amount of re-reading it would require would interfere with the writing i had planned for the summer. i soon discovered what i should have known from experience: walden alone had me filling up my pockets with poems.

WHEN I ADMIT THIS TO MY DAUGHTER, SHE SHAKES HER HEAD AND SAYS, "YOU'RE AMAZING."

i get a call from my daughter's french teacher asking that she call her about a special advanced placement review session,

so i dial her pager and sit by the phone hoping she calls back right away, as i have to rush off in five minutes to pick up her younger brother.

when the phone rings almost immediately, i'm so happy that i snatch it up and say, "hi, sweetheart!"