

Greats on Greats: Praise and Shade

- If forced to choose, Giacometti once said, he would rescue a cat from a burning building before a Rembrandt. (16) pg 10 RB
- Anthony Trollope said he had read Fenimore Cooper's *The Prairie* at least three dozen times. (24) pg 11 RB
- Monet, visiting London:
This brown thing? This is your Turner? (51) pg 13 RB
- Once, at dinner, with great delicacy Brahms told Tchaikovsky that he did not approve of his work. With equal delicacy Tchaikovsky told Brahms that he did not approve of his. (67) pg 14 RB
- Mallarmé learned English specifically to read Poe (75) pg 14 RB
- An enthusiasm for Poe is the mark of a decidedly primitive stage of reflection.
Said Henry James. (80) pg 15 RB
- As a boy, Tennyson could recite all 103 of Horace's odes from memory. Montaigne claimed he knew those and the rest of Horace as well. (89) pg 16 RB
- Salvador Dali's perception of Jackson Pollock. Fish soup. (98) pg 17 RB
- Once, not knowing which of several houses was Bizet's, Saint-Saëns simply stood in the road singing an aria from *Les Pêcheurs de Perles*. (111) pg 18 RB
- In his mid-thirties, T. S. Eliot was known to wear pale green face powder. One of the Sitwells said it was to make him look as if he were suffering. (124) pg 19 RB
- Boris Pasternak so admired Rilke that he carried two letters from him in his wallet for decades. (138) pg 20 RB
- Working as a publisher's reader, George Meredith rejected *The Way of All Flesh*. Working as a publisher's reader, André Gide rejected *Swann's Way*. (140) pg 20 RB
- At twenty, Bach made a pilgrimage of more than two hundred miles, on foot, to hear Buxtehude play the organ. (153) pg 21 RB
- An illiterate, underbred book. Said Virginia Woolf of *Ulysses*. (214) pg 26 RB
- Petrarch sometimes wrote letters to long-dead authors. He was also a dedicated hunter of classic manuscripts. Once, after discovering some previously unknown works of Cicero, he wrote Cicero the news. (242) pg 28 RB
- The eulogy at Puccini's funeral was delivered by Benito Mussolini. (246) pg 28 RB
- Decades afterward, locked indelibly in Reader's mind the last two pages of *Good Morning, Midnight*. (254) pg 29 RB
- Le Douanier Rousseau: Who is Giotto? (277) pg 30 RB (*not sure if this is intentional shade?*)
- And on the altar, very reverently placed, intensely there, is a dead kitten, an eggshell, a bit of string. (280) pg 31 (*H.G. Wells on a Henry James novel.*)
- By Wagner's lights, Nietzsche's many physical ailments were the result of excessive

masturbation. Cold water being recommended. (285) pg 31 RB