Edward Hopper, Landscape, and Literature

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The art of Edward Hopper, the American realist painter, contains many clues that allow us to trace his interest in literature, which in turn helps to characterize his particular brand of realism. [1] Signs of Hopper's engagement with literature emerge already in his boyhood. Born in 1882, Hopper grew up in Nyack, New York, a town on the Hudson River, some forty miles north of New York City, where he went to attend art school and lived as an adult, until his death in 1967, shortly before his eighty-fifth birthday.

Among the early indications that literature affected Hopper is a plaque that he designed for a Boys' Yacht Club, which he formed together with three pals. Hopper designed this plaque with the names of the members' boats. While the other boys chose female names that were upbeat and innocuous, Edward's choice, *Water Witch* (Fig. 1), telegraphs an effect of reading on his imagination. He took the name for his boat from *The Water-Witch,* James Fenimore Cooper's 1830 novel that tells how the "exploits, mysterious character, and daring of the Water-Witch, and of him who sailed her, were in that day, the frequent subjects of anger, admiration and surprise.... " [2]

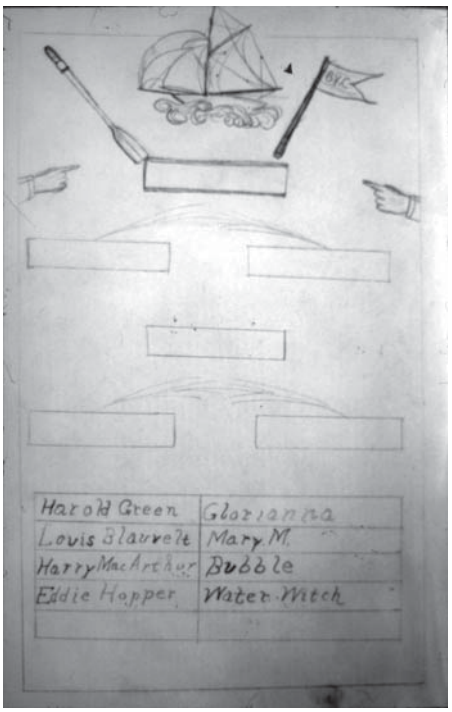

Fig. 1: Edward Hopper, Water Witch on sign, Private Collection.

His boyhood interest led Hopper to build not only a sailboat but a canoe. Later he would remark, "I thought at one time I'd like to be a naval architect because I am interested in boats, but I got to be a painter instead." [3] His interest in nautical life sometimes intertwined with his reading since he also painted seascapes as well as landscapes and interiors, often with one or more figures. His nautical scenes include *Sailing* (1911), which he showed in the famous 1913 Armory Show and was his first sale of an oil painting. A very different boat figures in *The Bootleggers* in 1925, depicting a motor craft of illegal rumrunners during the age of Prohibition. Sailing again figures in *The Martha McKeen of Wellfleet* (1944), painted after several summers of leisure sailing with his friend, Reggie McKeen in Truro, on Cape Cod, where from 1930, he retreated for extended

summers away from New York City.

In 1938, during one of the first summers that Hopper sailed with Reggie McKeen, he was reading through a one-volume edition of the complete works of Herman Melville, a nineteenth-century American classic tailored to Hopper's love of nautical life and his concern with American themes in art. [4] Melville was also appreciated and promoted by Van Wyck Brooks, a literary critic, biographer, and historian, whom Hopper also read and admired. [5]

In 1941 Hopper was to make specific use of Melville's most famous work, *Moby Dick,* an epic novel that recounts the narrator's adventures as he sails on a whaling ship in vengeful pursuit of a great white whale. From a concise and allegorical chapter, *The Lee Shore* (Fig. 2), Hopper took the title for a painting that shows a ship tacking away from an ornate house close to the shore. Melville evoked a ship "that miserably drives along the leeward land" to suggest the soul that must avoid her home harbor in order "to keep the open independence of her sea." In *The Lee Shore* Hopper drew from memory rather than observation to represent a house with a distinctive conical roof and columned porch that recalls riverfront architecture close to Hopper's boyhood home in Nyack. He had reason to imply a desire to maintain independence from Nyack because he had reluctantly returned in 1939 to make sketches on location at the home of the playwright, Charles MacArthur, and his wife, the actor, Helen Hayes. The couple had commissioned a painting of their house, a riverfront mansion just up the street from where Hopper grew up in a much more modest dwelling. He resented bitterly having to tackle this commission, which, as the Great Depression wore on, his dealer and his wife implored him to accept. Hopper viewed the ordeal of this commission as infringing upon his independence. Thus, Melville's metaphoric chapter title, "*The Lee Shore*," seems to have resonated with Hopper, since making this painting reminded him that he had just been forced to return to his hometown to make sketches for the unwanted commission, which he saw as impinging upon his independence.

Fig. 2: Edward Hopper, *The Lee Shore,* 1941, oil on canvas, Private Collection.

Fig. 3: Edward Hopper, *Don Quixote*, 1899, watercolor on illustration board, Whitney Museum of American Art.

Drawings Hopper produced as literary illustrations

survive from his childhood and from the years that he was forced to work as a commercial illustrator, while struggling to win recognition for his fine art. His mother had provided illustrated books and magazines to stimulate her children's imaginations. One of those books, *Masterpieces from the Works of Gustave Doré,* included illustrations for Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," and Cervantes' *Don Quixote* that Edward liked well enough to copy (Fig. 3). [6]

From *The Enchantment of Don Quixote*, Hopper copied only the head of the Don (Fig. 4). Doré must be one of the earliest sources of inspiration for his later depictions of Don Quixote, which eventually included an illustration, an early oil painting, and an etching. Not only did Hopper depict Don Quixote multiple times, but in 1945, in anticipation of a trip to Mexico, he and Jo took weekly Spanish lessons and began memorizing passages from Cervantes. [7]

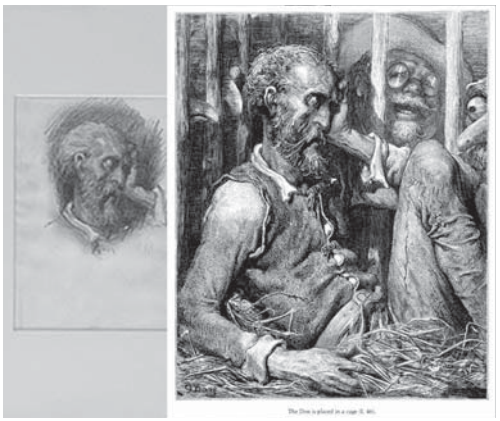

Fig. 4: Hopper sketch after Gustave Dore's The Enchantment of Don Quixote Ca 1899, Private Collection.

Much of Hopper's realism, like that of Cervantes, is itself a kind of fiction. Just as Cervantes posed questions about the nature of fiction itself, Hopper painted seemingly precise locations that he actually synthesized from multiple places to create a kind of meta-realism. For example, his painting *New York Movie* (Fig. 5) of 1939 evolved after more than fifty sketches in several different theaters, including the Palace, the Globe, the Strand. Also *The Lee Shore*, as noted above, combines memories of sailing and vernacular architecture to convey an implicit argument.

Fig. 5: Edward Hopper, *New York Movie*, 1939, oil on canvas, MoMA.

Hopper also paid tribute to his deep respect for literature by producing multiple images of people reading in his paintings, sketches, and etchings. Often these depict his wife reading, as in his caricature of Jo with her head in a book, while he begs her for something to eat. In *Model Reading* (Fig. 6), painted on their trip to Santa Fe, New Mexico, in 1925, he records his discovery that she will more easily hold still if she has a book to hold her interest. Even when Edward did not intend to portray Jo herself, as in oil paintings such as *Hotel Lobby* of 1943 or *Hotel by the Railroad* of 1952, we see a figure reading for which she most likely posed, since she served as his only model. Hopper, himself, known by his acquaintances to

be an introvert, preferred to be lost in reading than to make conversation. Thus, Jo may have found it soothing to read to herself or to read aloud to Edward while she was modeling for him.

Hopper also provided clues to his literary tastes in 1936, when he depicted himself with some of his favorite books in a caricature, which he called *Le Rêve de Josie* (Fig. 7). The man of "Jo's dream," his self-portrait, is lanky and elegantly garbed, wearing a tweedy suit, cape, and a hat trimmed with a feather. He carries a walking stick and, instead of glasses, wears a monocle. In the only hint of awkwardness behind the spiffy image, socks fall down around long, pathetically skinny legs that bristle with hairs. Next to this seated caricature appears a basket containing an assortment of books labeled in block letters, "HENRY JAMES, LAST PURITAN, DU COTE DE CHEZ SWANN, IBSEN, POESIE DE PAUL VERLAINE" .

Fig. 6: Edward Hopper, Detail of Model Reading, 1925 Watercolor on paper, Private Collection.

Fig. 7: *Le Réve de Josie*, 1936, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

The Last Puritan, for its author, George Santayana, was "A MEMOIR In the Form of a Novel." Published in 1935, it held a special appeal for Hopper. He was so eager to read it, his wife Jo remarked in her diary, that he immediately seized it at first sight in the public library at Truro in July 1936. That fall she noted: "Read Last Puritan — George Santayana. What a delectable prologue!" Santayana's only novel, *The Last Puritan*, presents a moral critique of American life in the early twentieth century. The prologue introduces Santayana as the imagined author speaking about his time in Paris. Reading this, Hopper must have recalled his own time there. The conversation shifts to a discussion of the author's gifted student, the late Oliver Alden, a casualty of the war. There is a suggestion that Oliver's life story should be written, "describing: Puritanism Self-condemned. Oliver was THE LAST PURITAN." In the dialogue that follows, Santayana examines what is meant by "Puritanism," and establishes that "there will always be puritans," claiming "Puritanism is a natural reaction against nature." "His puritanism....was a deep and speculative thing: hatred of all shams, scorn of all the mummeries, a bitter merciless pleasure in the hard facts. And that passion for reality was beautiful in him..." This portrayal of Puritanism, particularly the "pleasure in the hard facts" and the "passion for reality," invite comparison with what we know about Hopper's

professed attitude toward painting. In his "Notes on Painting," written for the catalogue of his 1933 retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art, Hopper wrote: "My Aim in painting has always been the most exact transcription possible of my most intimate impressions of nature." [8)]

Beyond the "passion for reality," another aspect of *The Last Puritan* that appealed to Hopper is a shared enthusiasm for Ralph Waldo Emerson, the American essayist, lecturer, and poet who led the transcendentalist movement of the mid-19th century. One critic suggested that someone could write a chapter in Santayana's life called "The Last Puritan and the Ghost of Emerson." [9)] This taste coincides with Hopper's own love for Emerson. The usually reticent Hopper volunteered: "I admire Emerson very much.... I admire him greatly. I read him quite alot. I read him over and over again." Three of Emerson's subjects in his book, *Representative Men*—Plato, Shakespeare, and Goethe—were the only figures in European literature that Hopper ever related to pictures he painted.[10)]

Despite claiming an American identity and that he read Emerson daily, Hopper's use of French in the title and content of *Le Rêve de Josie* is typical of the couple's most intimate communications. French had become their private language during their courtship when it provided the two of them with a point of contact, of cultural focus. Both Francophiles who spent formative and liberating periods in Paris, they quoted French Symbolist poetry to one another. This remained their mode of romantic communication, called upon by Edward for Jo's birthdays and for their wedding anniversaries.

Verlaine's lyrical poetry evoked romance for Hopper and his youthful days in Paris. That same Symbolist aesthetic had figured in his painting, *Soir Bleu* (Fig. 8) of 1914. *Soir Bleu* means literally "blue evening," but refers idiomatically to the twilight hour that captured the imagination of poets— not only Verlaine but also Arthur Rimbaud, likewise a favorite of Hopper. With the very phrase, "blue evenings of summer," Rimbaud opens the poem, "Sensation," in which he meditates on the senses, love, and pain. His "blue summer evening" is a fantasy of escape into the felt touches of the countryside, annihilating speech and thought, but freeing the surge from within of a great indistinct love; it will be like wandering far in nature, happy, as with a woman: "as *if* with," not *with* her.[11)]

Fig. 8: Edward Hopper, Soir Bleu, 1914, oil on canvas, Whitney Museum of American Art.

Hopper quoted Verlaine during his courtship of Jo and she enchanted him by picking up the poem where he left off. He reproduced six lines in French from Verlaine's "La Lune Blanche" underneath a portrait he painted of himself and Jo on a Christmas card for her when they were courting in 1923:

Un vaste et tendre
Apaisement
Semble descendre
Du firmament
Que l'astre irise
C'est l'heure exquise

A vast and tender
Peacefulness
Seems to descend
From the firmament
That the moon makes iridescent:
It is the exquisite hour.[12)]

Hopper continued to associate the exhilaration of romance and passion with France and French literature even though his last visit to France was in 1910. He gave his 1921 etching of a couple kissing — oblivious to the voyeuristic waiter standing nearby— the title, "Two Pigeons (Fig. 9)." He took this title from a popular fable of La Fontaine's that might well have lingered in his mind: the story of a dove straying foolishly, nearly perishing, before reunion with her love, but the whole tale framed by the narrator pointing the moral in nostalgia for his own past love:

Fig. 9: Edward Hopper, *Les Deux Pigeons,* 1920, etching, Private Collection.

Hélas quand reviendront de semblables moments
Faut-il que tant d'objets si doux et si charmants

Alas when will come again like moments?
Must it be that things so charming and so sweet are gone?

While both La Fontaine's and Verlaine's expressions of erotic longing seem in direct opposition to Hopper's identification as "The Last Puritan," he clearly felt an enormous clash between the liberation represented by Verlaine and Paris and the ingrained conservative values of his Baptist boyhood. The debate over Puritanism was more than an intellectual exercise for Hopper; it mirrored a central conflict in his life.

Fig. 10: Edward Hopper, *Two Puritans*, 1945, oil on canvas, Private Collection.

In the autumn of 1945, Hopper made sketches on Cape Cod that ended up as studies for a canvas he called *Two Puritans* (Fig. 10). While in Provincetown on October 17, Jo noted that Edward "made a sketch of branches of elm tree with dripping foliage for his picture — houses, white houses that look like white petunias."[13] This painting with its wan sky recalls his friend Guy Pène du Bois's earlier statement that Hopper "turned the Puritan in him into a purist, turned moral rigours into stylistic precisions."[14] The two Puritans, represented by Hopper as two houses, might also refer to the towering artist and his petite wife, both refusing to be swayed by fashion. This recalls Hopper's friend Charles Burchfield's earlier tendency to make architectural elements suggest human forms. Although Edward had admired Santayana's *The Last Puritan* and had identified with that image, Jo recalled that she had "named that canvas & was very proud of myself, that just the way those 2 houses look, upright, staid, yes purified." Even if Jo did invent the name, *Two Puritans*, Edward accepted it for his picture. Jo also noted that there had only been one house "in the fact but E. put in another - - standing right at side of Route 6, no lawn, close to road with ciel blaffard, palely loitering no sky, they loom tall & pale & purified."[15]

To contextualize Hopper's puritanical self, it is necessary to look again at Hopper's revealing self-portrait caricature, where he refers to his wife as "Josie," which was his nickname for her, a diminutive with connotations of intimacy and affection. In choosing to represent himself as "Josie's dream" as an ironical combination of contrasting values, elegant appearance above and real gaucherie below, he reflects their shared awareness of the popular interest in dreams and the vogue for Freud and Jung. Jo recorded in her diary entry for March 7, 1935, that when they went out to dinner with Edward's patron, Bee Blanchard, Edward and Bee "talked Freud most of the time." Another time, referring to the short stories of Thomas Mann, Hopper commented: "Rough going. Well depressing. Freudian. A great writer of fiction."

In yet another self-caricature, Hopper sketched himself as an infant with a huge, embryonic head, bespectacled and clutching under his arm books labeled Jung and Freud: the pairing recalls Jung's own sixth chapter, "FREUD AND JUNG — CONTRASTS," in which Jung tries to explain the difference between their views. In 1933 Jung published a collection of essays addressed to a general public. His first chapter dealt with the topic of "Dream-Analysis" that Freud had made popular and stated that "Dreams give information about the secrets of the inner life."

What remains is to tease out how Hopper's avidity as a reader often resulted in literature affecting the content of his art. Sometimes, however, Hopper's paintings, especially his

watercolors, such as *Mount Moran*, painted in Wyoming in 1946, seem to be only recordings of his direct observations in as realistic a manner as he was able to achieve. On the other hand, *Jo in Wyoming* (Fig. 11), a watercolor painted on the same trip, takes on issues about the nature of painting itself, about the illustration of a national monument, about his use of his car as a mobile studio, about how he saw his wife as an artist, and about his frequent choice of landscape as a subject, which he sometimes treated like tourist vistas glimpsed by a man on the move.

Fig. 11: Edward Hopper, *Jo in Wyoming*, 1946, watercolor on paper, Whitney Museum of American Art.

One of Hopper's best-known landscapes is his 1925 canvas, *House by the Railroad* (Fig. 12), which became in January 1930, the first painting by any artist to enter the collection of New York's Museum of Modern Art, just months after it opened to the public for the first time. *House by the Railroad* may seem familiar, even to those who do not know Hopper's work, because it inspired so many movies, among them: George Stevens' *Giant* of 1956; Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* of 1960; and Terrence Malick's *Days of Heaven* of 1978.[16] That Hopper's work influenced filmmakers and continues to do so should not surprise since his paintings were also influenced by his own long engagement with the cinema. When he was not reading, he dealt with his depression and inability to paint by going on what he called "a movie binge." Of course, some of the films that he loved were based on literary works.

Fig. 12: Edward Hopper, House by the Railroad, 1925, oil on canvas, Museum of Modern Art, NY.

The broad appeal of Hopper's *House by the Railroad* may rest, however, in the extreme restraint of its sliver of landscape, harshly and dramatically stripped of anecdotal details. The train tracks aggressively cut off the looming Second Empire House with its distinctive Mansard Roof, which was definitely out-of-fashion when Hopper painted it. The composition suggests people bypassing the house, a symbol for small-town America, to travel to the city beyond. Outmoded architecture, overlooked and neglected, looms up as a reminder of discarded customs and values

forgotten as civilization, like the speeding train, thunders into the modern age.

Predating *House by the Railroad,* another solitary house by the train tracks appeared four years earlier in Hopper's etching, *American Landscape,* of 1921. Cows meander home across a railroad track that horizontally bisects the entire plane; in the background a lonely farmhouse stands starkly above the horizon. Already Hopper shows the tracks encroaching on the countryside and connecting it to urban life. His treatment undercut the traditions of pastoral landscape and literature.

Unwittingly, Hopper himself played a small role in the urban assault on the countryside through the drawings he made for farm journals to advertise modern conveniences and lighten work. Hopper's vision of the city, then, is anything but sentimental. In his irony, he resembles Robert Frost, whom he admired, and whose bitter New England pastoral sequence, *North of Boston,* had appeared in 1914, just as Hopper was struggling to get his bearings as an American artist having returned four years earlier from the last of his three stays in Europe.

Years later, Jo painted her husband's portrait as *Edward Hopper Reading Robert Frost*（ca 1955, Fig. 13）. Long before Hopper and Frost met, both men appreciated the American vernacular and chose to comment upon it in a realistic style. Both created what seem at first to be familiar and simple images, but which have more complicated undertones that often lurk around the edges. Both men communicated through figures perceived as lonely or alienated.

Fig. 13: Nivison Hopper, *Edward Hopper Reading Robert Frost*, c. 1955 (lost or destroyed), Private Collection.

Although based in New York City, Hopper spent nearly half of every year in rural New England, where Frost lived and set most of his poems. Although Hopper settled on Cape Cod, he did travel to Frost's Vermont and spent time staying at a local farm, painting some watercolors, such as *Vermont Sugar House* of 1938;[17] the canvas, *Cape Cod Evening* of 1939, painted the year after his second stay in Vermont, invites comparison with Frost's 1906 poem, "Ghost House," included in his first book, *A Boy's Will,* published in 1913.

The poem introduces "a lonely house" of a farm long abandoned, so that "The woods come back to the mowing field" and nature reclaims the space:

Night comes; the black bats tumble and dart;
The whippoorwill is coming to shout
And hush and cluck and flutter about:
I hear him begin far enough away

The whippoorwill also struck a chord for Hopper, who commented about his *Cape Cod Evening* that it was "no exact transcription of a place but pieced together from sketches and mental impressions.... The dog is listening to something, probably a whippoorwill or some evening sound."[18] Frost then, a few lines later, writes:

It is under the small, dim, summer star.
I know not who these mute folk are
Who share the unlit place with me–

Similarly Hopper represents a silent pair in a lonely place. The theme of an abandoned dwelling had already captured Hopper's imagination by 1926, when he painted *Haunted House,* a watercolor of a derelict structure about to be demolished that we now know only from an old photograph.[19]

Frost, as Hopper's "favorite poet," often served as a kind of tonic when the painter suffered depressive moods. He often turned to whose poems, which Jo described as making "sense & the very good sense of an old Vermont Yankee."[20] Jo admitted that she had never heard of Frost until Edward "initiated" her. Knowing of Hopper's interest, she gave him a volume of Frost's poetry for Christmas in 1947. She recorded in her diary that Edward immediately opened the new book and began to read aloud.[21] "I'm a very great admirer of Frost," Hopper would tell an interviewer. "He's very pictorial, concretely pictorial for me. A poem like 'Come In,' or 'Stopping by the Woods in the Snow.'"[22]

The Hoppers also gave a book of Frost's poetry to their Cape Cod handyman, Tommy Gray, for Christmas in 1947. Jo sent along a note about Frost: "He is a delightful person. We have met him. He likes E. Hopper's work too. They are both such good American[s]— & they stand for good sense." She gave Gray the following advice: "Any poems must be read slowly, because each single word counts for so much—no other word would do for the effect he produces—which is often a mood, a feeling for a place, its significance. Never dramatics, highly personal & mighty nice. You give him a chance."[23] Her advice was not dissimilar to that sometimes given by editors concerning Hopper's painting.

Though his paintings and etchings evoke particular moods, Hopper did not even consider himself a narrative painter. He disliked having to work as an illustrator. He was not interested in telling a specific story, especially one written by some author and assigned by some editor. Nonetheless, he liked Ernest Hemingway's short story, "The Killers," so much that when he came upon it published in *Scribner's,* in March 1927, he wrote to the editor, for whom he had been working as a reluctant illustrator. Hopper praise for Hemingway's aesthetic sounds self-reflexive: "It is refreshing to come upon such an honest piece of work in an American magazine, after wading through the vast sea of sugar coated mush that makes up most of our fiction. Of popular prejudices, the side stepping of truth, and of the ingenious mechanism of the trick ending there is no taint in this story."

In its setting and mood of impending violence that creates suspense, "The Killers" has much in common with Hopper's most famous canvas, *Nighthawks* (Fig. 14) of 1942. The world of "The Killers" has echoes in the title, *Nighthawks,* which was given by Jo. "Hawk" is a slang name for one that preys on others. The more innocuous "night owls" would have suggested a less ominous mood.

Fig. 14: Hopper, *Nighthawks*, 1942, oil on canvas, Art Institute of Chicagoig, Private Collection.

For most of his paintings, however, Hopper painted scenarios that were much less anecdotal and more difficult to attribute to literary inspiration. In 1956, Hopper stated, "I look all the time for something that suggests something to me. I think about it. Just to paint a representation or a design is not hard, but to express a thought in a painting is. Thought is fluid. What you put on canvas is concrete, and it tends to direct the thought. The more you put on canvas the more you lose control of the thought. I've never been able to paint what I set out to paint."

As Hopper finished *House at Dusk* in early January 1935, he may have been thinking about the fragility of his mother's health. Originally called *House by Evening Park*, the picture represents an apartment building（perhaps at the edge of Riverside Park on the west side of Manhattan）at the end of day, at the moment just before dark. Behind the building, in which a solitary figure is visible in a lighted window, the woods are already dark. Hopper liked to quote in both German and the English translation from Goethe's "Wanderer's Nightsong," an evocative verse about evening, nature, and death which he described as "an extraordinary visual picture":

Over all the hills is quiet
Over all the dells you can hardly hear a sound
All the birds are quiet in the woods
Soon you will rest too. [24]

Hopper's mother died on March 20, 1935, at the age of eighty-one. Losing his only surviving parent made Hopper more intensely aware of his own mortality. Jo recorded in her diary how Edward continued to suffer at the shock of his beloved mother's death. Death becomes an implicit theme in his painting. The loss of his mother appears to resonate in the melancholy of *Shakespeare at Dusk*（1935, Fig. 15）.


Fig. 15: Edward Hopper, *Shakespeare at Dusk*, 1935, Private Collection.

The picture shows a statue looming over the deserted mall at Central Park, where stark tree branches struggle up in outline against the horizon, which is illuminated by the afterglow of a sunset only interrupted here and there by city structures. Calling the picture *Shakespeare at Dusk,* Hopper identified the silhouetted figure and thus invited comparison with the famous "visual picture" in the Bard's 73rd Sonnet:

That time of year thou may'st in me behold
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
Bare ruin'd choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.
In me thou see'st the twilight of such day,
As after sunset fadeth in the west,
Which by-and-by black night doth take away,
Death's second self, that seals up all in rest.

Meditatively, calling up his own visual idioms and epitomizing his reflections on values lost, finding the germ of the later in the earlier, as he put it, Hopper expresses the melancholy brought home to him by his mother's final lesson. He knew that the world in which she forged her values was gone, enduring only like the statue of Shakespeare, as a monument to earlier times.

Hopper's dark mood did not go away. In the autumn of 1946, he finished *October on Cape Cod* (Fig. 16) that he described as "a house & some fields." Jo described the new painting as "gloomy," noting that Edward had been "feeling very depressed." In her description of this painting in the record book, Jo reveals that Edward's preoccupation in this work was with death — his own, alluded to by the dying foliage of autumn on Cape Cod. She concluded with the quotation: "Peace, quiet, 'no birds sing. Some day you will be quiet too.' — E.H.'s favorite Goethe (strictly off the record)."[25] The quotation, once again from Goethe's "Wanderer's Nightsong," implies a morbid pessimism that Hopper knowingly did not want to publicize, although he loved to recite this quotation in German.

Fig. 16: Edward Hopper (1882-1967) *October on Cape Cod*, 1946. oil on canvas 26 1/4 x 42 1/4 in. (66.7 x 107.3 cm), Private Collection.

Hopper's pessimism continued even as he drove about the United States, traveling in the Midwest as an exhibition juror, then making a drive to the West Coast with Jo in 1941. On the way, he focused on the look of the Midwest. But he had also read novels set there; he particularly admired those by Sherwood Anderson, as the collector Duncan Phillips had first noted in 1926. He

asserted that Hopper's art had literary connections and argued that the artist "wishes to make American realism in painting as rank with the odor of our own back streets and as unafraid of the homelier facts about our national life as the novels of Theodore Dreier, Sinclair Lewis, and Sherwood Anderson."[26] Years later Hopper discouraged an interviewer from comparing him to the American realists, claiming, "I think they're a little too mid-western for me."[27] Once, however, with unusual enthusiasm, he allowed that Anderson was "a good writer."[28]

Even from his studio in New York, Hopper continued to focus on the nation's heartland. His canvas, *Pennsylvania Coal Town* (Fig. 17), was finished in April 1947. It shows a figure of a bald man raking leaves by the side of a non-descript house. The scene brings to mind Hopper's student sketch after Millet's *Man with a Hoe* and represents the closest Hopper ever came to expressing sympathy with the masses. Jo noted that the grey steps were "dark" and that the terrace was "sooty;" she identified the glum, lonely figure of a man with red hair as "a Pole," picking an immigrant ethnic working-class group of that region.

Fig. 17: Edward Hopper, *Pennsylvania Coal Town*, 1947, oil on canvas, The Butler Institute of American Art, Youngstown, Ohio.

Pennsylvania Coal Town evokes Sherwood Anderson's 1917 novel *Marching Men*. Set in the Pennsylvania coal region in a town called "Coal Creek," the novel, which Anderson dedicated "To American Workingmen," comments on the oppressive routine of workers' lives. Anderson called the town "hideous.... a necessity of modern life." Hopper's painting of the man bent over the rake recalls Anderson's description: "An Italian who lived in a house on a hill side cultivated a garden. His place was the one beauty spot in the valley." The novel recounts: "When a strike came on he was told by the mine manager to go on back to work or move out of his house. He thought of the garden and of the work he had done and went back to his routine of work in the mine. While he worked the miners marched up the hill and destroyed the garden. The next day the Italian also joined the striking miners." Hopper suggested the "Italian" ethnicity of the man with the rake by including an unexpectedly elegant object at the front of the otherwise dreary house. He placed a classical terra-cotta urn on a stand: an Italianate garden ornament emphasized and illuminated by the same dramatic sunlight that shines on the man's bald head. When Jo identified the man as "a Pole" instead of as an Italian, she may have conflated the image with a reference to Polish immigrants in Anderson's novel: "In little Polish villages the word has been whispered about, 'In

America one gets much money...'" Or she may have intentionally decided to cover up the source of Hopper's inspiration.

Burton Rascoe, reviewing Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio* in 1919, summarized the author's technique in a way that almost describes what Hopper later achieved in paint; he noted that the writer "frequently suggests rather than depicts; that he respects the imaginative faculty of his reader by refusing to be explicit where overtones of emotion are already invoked in the reader; that he is selective, indefinite, and provocative instead of inclusive, precise, and explanatory."[29)]

Hopper's identification as an American and as a Puritan is also linked to his familiarity with another writer named in that basket of books, Henry James. In 1927, Hopper chose to refer to James when writing an article on the artist, John Sloan.[30)] For Hopper, James epitomized the question of expatriation and its impact on the search for an "American" art. James must have interested Hopper on many other levels. It is significant that in the basket of books in his caricature, he does not specify particular works by James（or by Ibsen）as he does for Santayana and Proust. Leon Edel characterized James as "a veritable bridge from the romantic movement to all that is 'modern' in the literary art of the twentieth century."[31)] It is this tension between the romantic and the modern that so held Hopper's attention. James' emphasis on private life as observed or imagined by the artist is parallel to Hopper's depictions of people in interiors or in the landscape. Both James and Hopper reflect an intimate sphere of existence, the consciousness of the artist who responds to the world around him.

It is not known when Hopper read James' *The American Scene*, published in 1907, but it seems certain that the painter would not have ignored the expatriate novelist's impressions of America made on a visit during 1904-05 after an absence of a quarter of a century. The year of the book's publication marked Hopper's own experience as an expatriate, his discovery of European culture and of cultural difference. He experienced some of the same reactions as James, both in evaluating America from a European perspective and in coming to terms with some of the rudeness of American urban "progress."

Consider the words Hopper used to describe his first impressions of Paris: "very graceful and beautiful...almost too formal after the raw disorder of New York."[32)] He noticed the difference in the people, too, concluding that the French seemed "to live in the streets," while he characterized New Yorkers as businesslike, "with that never ending determination for the 'long green.'" James, too, used negative images to describe New York; in various passages, he described New York's "ugliness," and called the city "terrible," even "horrible."

The curious and rare appearance of skyscrapers in Hopper's pictures of New York corresponds to James' sentiments about these most American of buildings. If they appear at all, Hopper typically cropped skyscrapers in a manner that diminished their impact. For James, the "tall buildings" were: "Crowned not only with no history, but with no credible possibility of time for history, and consecrated by no uses save the commercial at any cost, they are simply the most piercing notes in that concert of the expensively provisional into which your supreme sense of New York resolves

itself."[33]

The architectural subjects that Hopper chose to depict suggest that he agreed with another of James' assessments: "Houses of the best taste are like clothes of the best tailors — it takes their age to show us how good they are..."[34] In his 1928 essay, "Charles Burchfield: American," Hopper wrote: "Our native architecture with its hideous beauty, its fantastic roofs, pseudo-Gothic, French-Mansard, Colonial, mongrel or what not, with eye-searing color or delicate harmonies of faded paint, shouldering one another along interminable streets that taper off into swamps or dump heaps — these appear again and again, as they should in any honest delineation of the American scene."[35] The Victorian houses that Hopper painted in the 1920s were then described as "ugly." Today these same houses are viewed favorably as records of the characteristic style of a particular moment in time.

Hopper's pointing out American architecture's adaptation of the "French-Mansard" roof is consistent with his continuing attachment to French culture, which had made such a lasting impression on him during his young adulthood.[36] He also included Proust's *Amour de Chez Swann*, in the basket of books he depicted in his self-portrait caricature. By delineating Proust, Hopper suggests that he must have enjoyed the novel for its suggestions of his own time in Paris. There are also parallels with his own work.

Like Proust's great novel, Hopper's paintings combine memory and imagination. The passage of time is a theme central to both artists, although it is perhaps less immediately apparent in Hopper's painting. Yet the painter's repeated allusions to times of the day（*Soir Bleu*, *Eleven A.M.*, *Night Windows*, *Dawn Before Gettysburg*, *Early Sunday Morning*, to name only a few）and, later, to seasons of the year（*Summertime*, *October on Cape Cod*, *Summer Evening*, *Summer in the City*）convey this focus on time. His many depictions of trains and railroad tracks also suggest the passage of time, but none more so than *House by the Railroad*. Outmoded architecture, passed by and neglected, looms up as a reminder of discarded customs and values forgotten as civilization, like the speeding train, thunders into the modern age. As she travels, however, the woman Jo posed for in *Hopper's Compartment C, Car 293*（1938）ignores the view of the landscape seen through the window, framed though it is to appear like a painting on a wall. This woman pays no attention, however, for like the artist who painted her, she is lost in reading.

Notes

1）Evidence of Hopper's varied and enduring interest in a wide variety of literature is ample. It is present in his own statements, evident in occasional titles, in his wife's diaries, in comments she recorded in letters and in the precise record books of his work that she kept. Edward and Jo were in the habit of reading out loud to one another—everything from Shakespeare's Sonnets to Paul Verlaine's lyric poetry to *The New Yorker* magazine.

2）James Fenimore Cooper, *The Water-Witch*（New York: A. L. Burt Co., 1830, 1852）, 167. See also Gail Levin, *Edward Hopper: A Catalogue Raisonné*（New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1995）and Gail Levin, *Edward Hopper: An Intimate Biography*（New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995）.

3）Edward Hopper to Arlene Jacobowitz, taped interview, Brooklyn Museum, April 29, 1966.
4）Jo Hopper diary entries for June 11 and July 29, 1938.
5）Van Wyck Brooks, *Emerson and Others*（New York: E. P. Dutton, 1927）, included a pioneering essay on Melville.
6）Edmund Ollier, *Masterpieces from the Works of Gustave Doré*（New York: Cassell Publishing Co., 1887）.
7）Jo Hopper diary entry for June 3, 1945.
8）Edward Hopper, "Notes on Painting," in *Edward Hopper: Retrospective Exhibition*（New York; The Museum of Modern Art, 1933）, 17.
9）Joe Lee Davis, "Santayana as a Critic of Transcendentalism," in *Transcendentalismm and Its Legacy,* ed. Meryon Simon and Thornton H. Parsons（Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1966）, 166.
10）Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Representative Men*（Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1861）.
11）Arthur Rimbaud, *Poésies,*（Paris: Gallimard, 1960）, 16.
12）Paul Verlaine, *La Bonne Chanson*（Paris: 1870）, trans. John Van Sickle.
13）Jo Hopper diary entry for October 17, 1945.
14）Guy Pène du Bois, *Edward Hopper*（New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1931）, 8.
15）Jo Hopper, diary entry for October 10, 1951.
16）See Gail Levin, "Edward Hopper: The Influence of Theater and Film," *Arts Magazine,* October 1980, 123-27.
17）See Robert Frost, "Evening in a Sugar Orchard" of 1921.
18）Edward Hopper quoted in Lloyd Goodrich, *Edward Hopper*（New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1971）, 129.
19）See this photograph and Hopper's *Haunted House* in Gail Levin, *Hopper's Places*（NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985 and second edition, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998）, 7.
20）Jo Hopper to Tommy Gray, letter of December 22, 1947.
21）Jo Hopper, diary entry for December 25, 1947.
22）Edward Hopper to Alexander Eliot and Joan Dye, at Charles French Restaurant, New York, May 19, 1955.
23）Jo Hopper to Tommy Gray, December 22, 1947.
24）Goethe, "Wanderer's Nightsong".
25）Jo Hopper, Edward Hopper Record Book Vol. III, 19.
26）Duncan Phillips, "Brief Estimates of the Painters," in *A Collection in the Making*（New York: E. Weyhe, 1926）, 69.
27）Edward Hopper to Brian O'Doherty, interview.
28）Brian O'Doherty, *American Masters: The Voice and the Myth*（New York: Random House, 1973）, 20.
29）Burton Rascoe, *Chicago Tribune*, 1919, quoted in Waalter B. Rideout, "Sherwood Anderson," in James J. Martine, ed., *Dictionary of Literary Biography, v. 9 American Novelists, 1910-1945*（Detroit: Gale Research Col, 1981）, 23.
30）Edward Hopper, "John Sloan and the Philadelphians," *The Arts,* 1927.
31）Leon Edel, *Henry James*（Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1960）, 41.
32）Edward Hopper to his mother, letter of October 30, 1906, quoted in Gail Levin, *Edward Hopper: An Intimate Biography*, 49.
33）Henry James, *The American Scene,*（New York: Harper & Bros., 1907）, 75.
34）James, *The American Scene,* 110.
35）Edward Hopper, "Charles Burchfield: American," *The Arts,* 14, 1928.
36）Hopper's choice of title, *Amour de Chez Swann*, conflates the titles of two parts of Proust's novel, *A la recherche du temps perdu*（"Remembrance of Things Past"）: *Du coté de chez Swann*（"Swann's Way"）and

its second section, *Un amour de Swann*（"Swann in Love"）which has often been viewed as a separate novel. The former focuses on the young Marcel when Swann is visiting from Paris, while the latter describes the life of Swann as a young man in Paris, including a love-affair.

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