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PhD, History and Theory of Art in the Humanities

AMERICAN SPACE, AMERICAN PLACE: EDWARD HOPPER, PAINTING, AND HIS PERSONAL VISION OF MODERN AMERICA.

Abstract.

Edward Hopper is generally acknowledged as an exemplary 'American Scene' painter and his work is understood to be a reflection of the loneliness of the modern city. This thesis confirms the emphasis of the American subject matter in Hopper's work and considers it with particular reference to the American city, focussing on the depiction of the human figure, especially the female figure. This is central to Hopper's work even when its presence is only implied. This study concentrates on works from Hopper's 'mature' period, which I see as beginning around 1924. The first section is a detailed examination of the human figure in relation to three specific areas: the female nude, the solitary figure, and Hopper's couples and groups, with the emphasis on their American context. The second section of the thesis focuses on the depiction of the human figure in relation to the American city, predominantly the Greenwich Village area of New York City, through the detailed study of specific environments: the office, the automat and the diner, the theater/movie theatre and the apartment building. Hopper's figures are considered in light of various art forms, notably Film Noir and the depiction of the female figure in advertising and the American 'pin-up', particularly in relation to the influential role of Hopper's early career as a commercial illustrator. They are also assessed in terms of the personal life of the artist, and the affect that his marriage had upon his perception and depiction of the female figure. Hopper's depiction of light is of crucial importance across his oeuvre, which instead of being examined specifically, is discussed where pertinent. These elements combine within his paintings to reveal his portrayal of the human condition, and by tracing the development of his images through the reductive process of composition employed in his mature works, his very personal vision of modern America is revealed. This culminates in the depiction of sunlight in an empty room: his ultimate enigmatic 'statement' of being.

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Finally and most especially I want to dedicate this to my husband, whose love and support is endless and who has continually been my sounding board, and to my little Katy, whose smile has made every day worthwhile.

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AMERICAN SPACE, AMERICAN PLACE: EDWARD HOPPER, PAINTING, AND HIS PERSONAL VISION OF MODERN AMERICA.

Introduction.

In my study of the work of the American artist Edward Hopper, I have chosen to concentrate on a small aspect of his oeuvre: the depiction of the human figure, and in particular the placement of the human figure within the distinct environments of the American city, which in Hopper's work is predominantly New York City. Essentially then, I will focus on his representation of the female figure as this is, in my approach, the most potent area of his work. However, this discussion of the representation of these figures is widened to include his depiction of the male figure, especially where the presence of the male figure has a direct impact upon the representation of the female figure, intimating a dysfunctional relationship between them, or where Hopper's perception of the role of the female figure affects the depiction of the male.

I have therefore chosen to ignore many of the artist's architectural paintings of small town America, his seascapes, lighthouses, or military paintings, other than where there is a psychological relevance to my subject. The focus is primarily upon his paintings from what I regard as his mature period, which dates from 1924 until his death in 1967, and predominantly his oil paintings. The reason for this, perhaps rather narrow view point is that the human figure, the female figure in particular, is central to Hopper's work. The human figure is a constant element throughout his painting, significant by its presence and as significant by its absence. Hopper's view of the world is strongly influenced by the human perspective; the place that the human figure inhabits within its own environment both physically and psychologically, and how that definitively American environment is perceived by the artist. Hopper paints the human condition; the daily routines and environments of the human figure. He observes the human figure at work, at play, in the privacy of his/her own home and, most importantly, this vision is represented primarily through the depiction of the female figure.

The second most important element with which I am concerned is the indigenous nature of Hopper's work. He has not painted *any* figure, within *any* environment but has chosen, quite deliberately, to depict American figures within a distinctive American environment. The oil paintings from Hopper's mature period discussed here reveal his observation of contemporary American life; his awareness of the enormity and

anonymity of Manhattan, and of city living, the monotony of urban existence, and the isolation of the individual within a twentieth century metropolis. Hopper incorporates specific references to elements of the city to evoke the *Americana* of his vision by representations of Brownstone apartment buildings in Manhattan, the locale of Washington Square (his home), the movie theatre, the diner and the automat, and the implied and direct references to the New York Elevated Railway. These elements combine with his depiction of the human condition to create a vision of the plight of the human figure within the mechanisms of modern America.

In order to discuss Hopper's expression of the American condition within his paintings it is necessary to consider the significance of his education, the influences, and the ideology of his artistic position. It is acknowledged that Hopper is indebted to the teaching of Robert Henri (1865–1929),[1] and so it is therefore appropriate to explore the legacy of Henri's teaching and philosophy, especially as Hopper admitted that 'Henri was the most influential teacher I had...Henri was a magnetic teacher...I was in the life and portraiture class of Henri.'[2] Hopper was positive in his praise of Henri; he acknowledged Henri's 'courage and energy' that contributed to Henri's catalytic role in shaping the course of art in twentieth century America. Hopper also maintained that 'no single figure in recent American art has been so instrumental in setting free the hidden forces that can make the art of this country a living expression of its character and its people.'[3] Hopper did, however, acknowledge that Henri's influence was difficult to visualise in his work because his influence related to his general philosophy. Hopper explained this philosophy as, 'art is life, and an expression of life, an expression of the artist and an interpretation of life,' and as I discuss throughout, this is an ethos that can be traced through Hopper's mature works of the human condition in the city, as he depicts modern America from his own viewpoint.[4]

Henri's philosophy was developed through an understanding of the transcendentalist writer Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–82), and during his period of education at the *Académie Julian* in Paris (between 1888 and 1890), where he trained under Adolphe-William Bouguereau (1825–1905) and Tony Robert-Fleury (1837–1911), he read Philip Gilbert Hamerton's (1834–94) *Human Intercourse*. Hamerton, the English painter and essayist, was also influenced by Emerson, and wrote that:

> to me he [Emerson] taught two great lessons. The first was to rely confidently on that order of the universe which makes it always really worth while to do our best, even though the reward may not be visible; and the second was to have self-reliance enough to trust our own convictions and our own gifts, such as they are, or such as they may become, without

> either echoing the opinions or desiring the more brilliant gifts of others. Emerson taught much besides; but it is these two doctrines of reliance on the compensations of nature, and of a self-respectful reliance on our own individuality, that have the most invigorating influence on workers like myself. Emerson knew that each of us can only receive that for which he has an affinity, and can only give forth effectually what is by birthright, or has become, his own. To have accepted this doctrine with perfect contentment is to possess one's soul in peace.[5]

This passage could have been written about Henri by one of his own students, as he was keen for them to express their artistic individuality, especially to promote the basis of an indigenous American art.

Hamerton's quotation expresses two central ideas which underlie the importance of Emerson and the ideological progression from Emerson, through Henri, to Hopper. Firstly, the 'reliance on the compensations of nature' and secondly, the importance of a 'self-respectful reliance on our own individuality'. These two ideas are both important for an understanding of Henri's philosophy of art, which contributed to Hopper's development as an artist. Henri said that 'the great artist has not reproduced nature but has expressed by his extract the most choice sensation it has produced upon him,' and obviously felt that 'nature' was important to an artist, not in so much that the artist could directly reproduce its forms on canvas but, instead, convey in his work the effect that nature had upon him.[6]

The result of this attitude, as it was taught by Henri, is apparent in Hopper's paintings. In Hopper's later paintings he uses trees, hills and specific times of day (night time, evening, or early morning) to represent on canvas the particular effect those elements of nature had on him as an artist. For example, in a statement printed in the Catalogue for his retrospective exhibition in 1933, Hopper wrote that, 'My aim in painting has always been the most exact transcription possible of my most intimate impressions of nature.'[7] Possibly the greatest evidence of this is in his many paintings of the sea—a subject to which he returned time and time again—fuelled by his interest in boats and sailing, but which falls outside this study. Hopper praised Henri as a great teacher, but not as an artist, and Henri's style is not as apparent, or as easily distinguished in Hopper's student paintings as that of William Merritt Chase (1849–1916). However, Hopper did work in the darker tones recommended by Henri, which he believed were more conducive to the representation of atmosphere and can be witnessed in his early self-portraits (see figure 1, for example) and works such as *[Nude Crawling into Bed]* (c.1903–5) (figure 2).[8]

The individuality of the artist was important to Henri for two reasons. Firstly, Henri encouraged and nurtured individualism in his students, which is why his students appear to be very diverse stylistically, in the same way that Henri's own work is stylistically different from his own mentor, Thomas Eakins (1844–1916). Henri was not taught by Eakins directly, as he had resigned from the Philadelphia Academy of Fine Arts earlier in the same year that Henri enrolled. Eakins' 'philosophy', however, was continued by his former pupil and assistant Thomas Pollock Anshutz (1851–1912), who became a close friend and mentor for Henri. This individualism encouraged by Eakins, once instilled in Hopper, allowed him to continue his own artistic path irrespective of the fast changing movements and styles in twentieth century America.

The second element of Henri's beliefs in individualism was that he believed it was important for America to break away from Europe artistically and create its own indigenous style. This did not mean that American artists could not borrow or learn from Europe, but that they should use their acquired knowledge and skill to establish an American art appropriate to American life in the twentieth century. Robert Hughes, in *American Visions* (1997), catalogues the development of the individual nature of art in America in detail, but for the purposes of the discussion it can be assumed that in nineteenth century America there were two dominant trends in painting. The first favours the development of what we might call an American style, subject matter and iconography, and the second embraces the more international approach that is inspired by European art. From the eighteenth century there had been a constant ebb and flow between these two trends within American art, and therefore no adherence to what would be considered 'academic' painting within Europe. However, paintings that were produced in Europe, painted by European artists, or American artists trained in the *atelier* of a European 'master' and rendered in the European academic manner of the day, were more attractive to the contemporary American market than work of indigenous origin.[9]

Henri followed in the footsteps of such artists as Winslow Homer (1836–1910) and Thomas Eakins, who emphasised an indigenous American subject matter in their work. Perhaps the greatest stylistic influence of Henri's early career was that of Impressionism in the 1880s, and most particularly that of the American Impressionists Theodore Robinson (1852–96), Childe Hassam (1859–1935) and John Twachtman (1853–1902), who had all absorbed the influence of French Impressionism through an American perspective. The work of these three American Impressionists was also responsible for introducing impressionist works to an American audience. However, by the mid 1890s,

Henri had rejected the influence of Impressionism within his work as he felt that it had become too sentimental and academic.[10] However, this did not prevent Hopper experimenting with Impressionism during his visits to Paris and after his return to the United States.

Henri was both a reformer and a radical. He believed in the continuing progress of art which often brought him into conflict with the juries of exhibitions, the academies and art schools. He championed avant-garde art and theories and encouraged his students to observe the realist work of Gustave Courbet (1819–77) and Édouard Manet (1832–83), and their parallels with Homer and Eakins, as well as the paintings of Frans Hals (1582/3–1666), Diego Velázquez (1599–1660), Rembrandt Van Rijn (1606–69) and Francisco de Goya (1746–1828).[11] This influence appears in the works of the Philadelphia artists in 'The Eight', John Sloan (1871–1951), George Luks (1867–1933), William James Glackens (1870–1938) and Everett Shinn (1876–1953), who adopted a darker palette for their paintings which was based on the tonalities found in the works of these masters. Henri also encouraged his students to study the work of Henri Matisse (1869–1954) before his work was known in America, as he admired his draughtsmanship.[12]

Although Henri encouraged his students to consider and study the work of particular European artists that he felt were influential, he never failed to stress his belief that Americans needed to establish an artistic vernacular. As he said:

> the people of America [must] learn the means of expressing themselves in their own time and in their own land. In this country we have no need of art as a culture; no need of art as refined and elegant performance; no need of art for poetry's sake... I want to see progress....[13]

This is not to say that they should reject European or academic art, but embrace it, learn from it and create from its influence and an art that was imbued with distinctly American values. Henri went to Europe to study on several occasions. On more than one occasion he accompanied students from the New York School of Art, formerly known as the Chase School, to Europe. It was on one such trip that Hopper travelled to Europe and met up with Henri in Holland.[14]

Henri's energetic propagation of the creed that the artist must be a social force, one whose 'work creates a stir in the world,'[15] and his sense of the dignity and importance of an art in touch with contemporary life, were the impulses which led to the emergence of a new school of American Realism that came to fruition in the Ash-Can School. It is

this legacy that we see in Hopper's painting. Henri's influence was pervasive. Hopper found in Paris that he was most impressed by the work of Manet, where he was attracted by the strong tonal structure and the social transaction of Courbet, where the appeal lay in the 'weight and materiality of paint'.[16] Hopper also subscribed to Henri's belief that America needed to establish an art that reflected its own identity and experience, as Hopper declared in 1927 that 'now or in the near future, American art should be weaned from its French Mother.'[17]

Hopper is generally acknowledged as a definitive 'American Scene' painter, or his work is understood solely as a reflection of the loneliness of the modern city. Both approaches are valid interpretations but are, however, generalisations of his working style and fail to embrace the wider aspects of his entire production. Hopper denied any affiliation with the American Scene painters and in a conversation with Brian O'Doherty in the nineteen sixties, was quoted as saying:

> The thing that makes me so mad is the "American Scene" business. I never tried to do the American Scene as Benton and Curry and the Midwestern painters did. I think the American Scene painters caricatured America. I always wanted to do myself. The French painters didn't talk about the "French Scene", or the English painters about the "English Scene".....The American quality is *in* a painter—he does not have to strive for it.[18]

Certainly, he is considered to be one of the major Realist painters of the twentieth century, and consequently, this has led to much of his work, notably his illustrations, etchings, and works completed before 1924 being almost completely ignored by critics.[19] He had to wait until he was in his early fifties before he achieved public recognition for his work as an artist, and also the first large-scale display of his work, which was held in the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1933. It was Alfred Barr Jr., the Director of the Museum of Modern Art at that time, who was the author of the introduction to the exhibition catalogue who first referred to Hopper's work as 'typically American'.[20]

As I have noted Henri, as tutor and mentor, encouraged Hopper, as he did with his other students, to search for an indigenous American art, and Barr's words confirm that Hopper has achieved this aim. Hopper's friend and fellow artist Charles Burchfield (1893–1967) also paid tribute to his 'American-ness' when he wrote about Hopper in the same exhibition catalogue. He claimed that 'Edward Hopper is an American—nowhere but in America could such an art have come into being'.[21] As Lloyd Goodrich wrote in 1927: 'It is hard to think of another painter, who is getting more of the quality of America into his canvases than Edward Hopper'.[22]

Perhaps this definitive 'American-ness' is the key to his inclusion in the 'American Scene' group. A year after his retrospective exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, *Time* magazine published an article on the new generation of painters in December 1934. The article was entitled 'The American Scene'. The artists discussed within the text were primarily Regionalists, such as Thomas Hart Benton (1889–1975), John Steuart Curry (1897–1946), Grant Wood (1892–1942), Charles Burchfield, and Reginald Marsh (1898–1954), yet Hopper was listed among the group and as Schmied states, it was as if his inclusion could be 'considered to be self-evident'.[23] Lloyd Goodrich, a former Director of the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, included Hopper under the classification of the 'American Scene' in his work on the artist which was first published after Hopper's death in 1970.[24]

Perhaps the 'American Scene' itself is as difficult to define as is Hopper's place within it. The phrase 'The American Scene' was coined by and became the title of Henry James' (1843–1916) travelogue of his return to America after a twenty year sojourn in Europe, predominantly spent in the United Kingdom. His work was published in 1907 and has a somewhat unfavourable view of his native country, partly due to the dramatic changes it had undergone during James' twenty year absence. Yet *The American Scene* still has the ability to conjure up the spirit of a young and vibrant country in search of its identity; and yet the identity of the 'American Scene', or a cohesive attempt at a definition of it, is elusive as it encompasses a wide variety of artists and artistic styles.

In general terms the 'American Scene' can be defined as having an emphasis on specifically American subject matter, and on the autonomous character of American art, both of which come to prominence after the First World War. In this sense the 'American Scene' does not only include artists like Hopper, but the Precisionists, whose preoccupation was with all aspects of modern technology such as Charles Sheeler (1883–1965) and Charles Demuth (1883–1935); the Social Realists, whose primary concern was in depicting areas of the modern American city that highlighted the need for social reform, such as Raphael Soyer (1899–1987) and Ben Shahn (1898–1969); and finally, those who had a more romantic vision of New York City, like Kenneth Hayes Miller (1876–1952) and John Sloan (1871–1951). All of these artists worked on definitively American themes in their art and yet they were stylistically very diverse. The 'American Scene' can also be seen as a much narrower band of artists and their work, in which it applies solely to the Regionalist painters, whose work to the greatest

extent becomes very local in content, and as a result their work was largely marginalized by the late nineteen thirties.

There is no doubt that Hopper's work can be seen in terms of the 'American Scene', at least within its wider context. His paintings, particularly from 1924 onwards, focus on a series of central rural themes based on his use of visual motifs, small town America, and the New York City that he observed closely. Hopper's dogmatic statements about his non-affiliation with the 'American Scene' seem to come from a more personal desire to maintain his individuality. His persistence in maintaining the personal content in his paintings which he claimed to do throughout his mature career (from c.1924 until his death), is exemplified by his comment on *Sun in an Empty Room* (1963) (Figure 3). When asked to define what he was intending to express with this particular painting, he replied simply: 'myself'.[25]

To define Hopper's work in these terms is, however, limiting. His paintings ultimately depict the 'American Scene', or daily American life as he perceived it. They also explore the American psyche and Hopper's experiences of the human condition within the modern American city. Hopper's paintings portray the scenery, architecture and the daily life of the people that he observed around him within the modern American city. From 1924 he established a mature style of working that he continued to use with little modification until his death. Hopper worked on American subject matter in a realist style that defines a singular vision of modern America. In his paintings, he created some of the definitive images of America particularly as perceived by a foreign eye; the vastness of the landscape, the indigenous architecture, particularly in small town architecture, and distinctive city images. Such distinctive images have been used in other media and perpetuate their use as American icons.

It is interesting to note that the American era depicted within Hopper's paintings appears to remain constant throughout his mature works, which serves to give his works a timelessness and silence. The timeless quality and stillness of his paintings will be discussed in detail below, but it is perhaps important to mention that Hopper's paintings appear to be forever 'trapped' in his vision of 1930s America. Even in his paintings from the 1960s the artist does not give any sense that the decades had moved on. His paintings from the 1930s are similar in style to those of the 1960s. That is not to say that there is no development, or progression, in his work from the beginning of his mature period from around 1924 until 1967 when he died, as there are also subtle, but significant changes which are discussed later, where more appropriate.

Although Hopper's work has come to be perceived as quintessentially American, just what is it about his work that is American, or can be defined as such? The American quality is irrefutably there, within the specific architecture, the city street, the landscapes and yet it is also an elusive element that is difficult to analyse. Certainly, Hopper did not claim to seek American subject matter; he painted what he experienced around him. It seems that what most interested him in what he experienced around him is what can be expressed as the human condition, and thus as a precise and unswerving observer of contemporary American life he has unwittingly, and without premeditation, permeated his canvases with a distinct American quality.

Hopper's friend Charles Burchfield notes this seemingly subconscious inclusion of American subject matter in his piece on Hopper for the 1933 exhibition, when he wrote:

> It is my conviction anyhow, that the bridge to international appreciation is the national bias, providing, of course, it is subconscious. An artist to gain a world audience must belong to his own peculiar time and place; the self-conscious internationalists, no less than the self-conscious nationalists, generally achieve nothing but sterility....[26]

Certainly Burchfield's words confirm the unconscious reference to the 'American Scene' within Hopper's painting that has earned him the title of being the quintessential 'American Scene' painter, but he also acknowledges the totally individual style of his painting of his mature period that has made his work so distinctive.

Burchfield, as early as 1933, saw the unique elements of Hopper's work that would allow his painting to be seen as defining America and in a sense definitive, and yet Burchfield was also aware of the many facets of Hopper's paintings that go beyond the simple definition of the 'American Scene'. He defined Hopper, and his work, in 1933 with these words:

> He is the pure painter, interested in his material for its own sake, and in the exploitation of his idea of form, color, and space division. In spite of his restraint, however, he achieves such a complete verity that you can read into his interpretations of houses and conceptions of New York life and human implications you wish; and in his landscapes there is an old primeval Earth feeling that bespeaks a strong emotion felt, even if held in abeyance...[27]

Burchfield's words reveal his realisation that there was more to Hopper's work than the 'American Scene'. He describes Hopper as a 'pure painter' who achieved 'a complete verity' that can be observed in his paintings. Hopper closely observed his surroundings and fellow humanity and this is the *veritas* that Burchfield saw in his paintings.

In his mature years Hopper painted from drawings and sketches. He carefully planned the elements of his oil paintings, yet they were all executed in his studio in his apartment in Washington Square, New York or at his summer house in Truro, Massachusetts. To achieve an indigenous American art Hopper moved away from the *plein air* painting style inspired by French Impressionism that had so influenced him during his European trips taken between 1906 and 1910 and the immediate years following his return.

Having acknowledged the relationship Hopper's work has and the place that it has within the 'American Scene', I now want to examine what makes his work so distinctive and so unique, and then discuss how it reflects Hopper's psychological realisation of twentieth century America. To achieve this, his work needs to be considered in wider terms than that of the 'American Scene' alone. To see his work solely as that of an 'American Scene' painter is limiting and fails to appreciate other important elements at play in his work. Hopper's work by its nature defies 'compartmentalisation'. It is distinct from his contemporaries. Hopper was slow to develop the style that is now considered to be characteristic as he did not reach this consistent style until about 1924; but once established, his style and range of subject matter appear to vary little for the remainder of his life.

It seems unusual that in a period of increasing revolutions in artistic concepts and styles, that even though his contemporaries were varying their viewpoints with surprising regularity, Hopper remains consistent, never revealing the slightest response to the current movements.[28] Neither can Hopper be categorically placed within the realm of the Regionalists or the American Scene painters, although his work bears a relationship to both. Hopper's distinctive representation of the human condition within this American landscape, particularly his view of the female figure within the modern American city, is developed from a combination of elements from his formative period as an artist and from contemporary American culture.

The examination of the individual treatment that Hopper gives his American figures, particularly the female figure, will be addressed essentially in two sections. The first part of this thesis concentrates on the treatment of the figure itself, in three chapters, which examine Hopper's nudes, his solitary figures and the depiction of his figures where they occur in groups or as couples. The second half of the thesis then examines Hopper's representation of the figure within specific environments of the American city, which are derived predominantly from Manhattan and the local area around Washington

Square. In each chapter I have built the discussion of Hopper's work around three or four images and have concluded each chapter with the analysis of one definitive painting which I feel encapsulates the ethos of Hopper's oeuvre within that subject area.

The first chapter concentrates on Hopper's treatment of the nude female figure. Although Hopper only depicted four female nudes in his mature oil paintings, and no male nudes at all, this is an area of vital importance. The aim is to establish, firstly, the importance of the human figure within his paintings and, secondly, to introduce the various influences that affected his depiction of the female figure throughout his mature painting and to establish why there is such a distinct change in his working style with the human figure around 1924.

Hopper's nudes are variously affected by the training that he received from Henri and the strict Northern Baptist upbringing of his youth in Nyack. These nudes must also be considered within the special and distinct history of the depiction of the female figure, particularly that of the nude within the tradition of American painting. As my argument concentrates on the depiction of the female figure in Hopper's mature paintings it is important to establish the change in Hopper's working style circa 1924 and why this change occurs. This I discuss by examining Hopper's images of nudes from his period as a student at the New York School of Art (Chase School) between 1901 and 1906 and more importantly the development that occurred in his depiction of the female figure during his time at the Whitney Studio Club between 1923 and 1924 and the influence of European artists such as Matisse.

In addition this chapter discusses the biographical content that influences Hopper's depiction of the human figure which in turn is considered in relation to the diary entries of his wife, Jo Hopper, which reveal the more intimate details of the relationship between the two of them. Such details of their relationship, and in particular the animosity that existed between them over what Jo Hopper referred to as 'matters of sex', are discussed in relation to Hopper's nude female figures.[29] Hopper's nudes, and in later chapters his clothed female figures, are considered in terms of the intimate relationship between Hopper and his wife and how it affects this depiction. His nudes represent his notion of the 'ideal' female, particularly as an object for the male gaze, and this is particularly pertinent in relation to his marriage as his wife became his sole model. This chapter also introduces the idea that the human figures in his mature paintings may represent Hopper and his wife. This is developed in the following chapters.

Chapter 1 concludes with a detailed analysis of Hopper's painting *Girlie Show* of 1941 (figure 4), which introduces the role played by the 'type' of the *femme fatâle* which he employs in his mature paintings. The particular psychological role of the *femme fatâle* is discussed here in relation to the work of the Norwegian artist Edvard Munch (1882–1944), who also explored the female figure as a result of his personal relationships with women. The importance of the *femme fatâle* is also discussed in later chapters where the influence of the cinematic genre of Film Noir can be observed in Hopper's mature paintings.

Chapter 2 considers the symbolic use of the solitary figure in Hopper's paintings post-1924 and which has come to be seen as one of his definitive images of the loneliness and isolation of twentieth century America. This repeated use of an isolated figure within the American environment is a reflection of the introspective nature of the artist, as well as defining his vision of the human experience within modern America. The symbolic isolated figure, who is predominantly a female figure, is representative of the expression of the inevitability of the human condition in Hopper's work. Hopper's solitary figures indicate a psychological state that appears in his work as being endemic in modern American society; essentially the crisis of the human figure.

These figures are observed in relation to Hopper's early career as an illustrator. They are considered in terms of both the style of depiction that was employed by illustrators and the negative effect that illustration work had upon Hopper's own psychology and sense of himself as an artist. Hopper's experiences as an illustrator and commercial artist influenced his choice of subject matter, and as a result the thematic areas of 'the office', 'the restaurant' and 'the cinema' can all be seen as derived from his early career.

The chapter concludes with a close observation of *Sunday* (1926) (figure 5) as an example of Hopper's vision of the human condition and the plight of the human figure within the twentieth century American city. As a realist painting, *Sunday* has a close relationship to the work of realist writers, such as Sherwood Anderson (1876–1941), and in particular his book *Winesburg, Ohio* of 1919, which is based around twenty-three thematically related short stories. These *vignettes* explore life in a fictional small town, which was in part loosely based upon Anderson's hometown of Camden, Ohio, and they are unified by the central character George Willard, the reporter for the local newspaper, who appears throughout. Anderson's primary interest is in the exploration of the various aspects of human existence experienced by the characters within their situations which

are revealed in each *vignette*, just as Hopper explores the nature of human existence in America through the figures that he portrays in his paintings.

The parallel between Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio* and Hopper's paintings is also revealed in the sense of alienation experienced by both Anderson's 'Grotesques', as he called them, and the figures in Hopper's paintings. Certainly, as Anderson explores the actions of his characters to relieve their alienation through their attempts to communicate with other characters who are part of their daily lives. Within Hopper's mature paintings he portrays the same sense of alienation and the same futile attempts at communication between figures in paintings like *Room in New York* (1932) (figure 6) and *Hotel Lobby* (1943) (figure 7).

However, Hopper's depictions of human existence exceed that of Anderson in *Winesburg, Ohio*, as he not only confirms the dysfunctional nature of his 'Grotesques', like Anderson, but ensures that they are unable to communicate and, are therefore, trapped and isolated within the alienating environment in which they have been placed. This complete breakdown is displayed in paintings such as, *Automat* (1927) (figure 8), *New York Movie* (1939) (figure 9), *Morning Sun* (1952) (figure 10) and *Excursion into Philosophy* (1959) (figure 11), among others, and discussed within the confines of the next chapter where it relates directly to his depiction of the human figure where he places two or more together.

Chapter 3 examines what could be defined as Hopper's dysfunctional couples. The solitary and contemplative figures which appear in the paintings discussed in the last chapter also occur in Hopper's mature paintings where he has placed two or more figures together. In these paintings Hopper creates a sense of tension, anxiety, and dislocation between the figures that he depicts. Essentially, the alienation and tension that he creates stems from the implied narrative element that is contained within his mature paintings that allows the viewer to speculate upon the nature of the depiction as if the painting is a movie 'still' capturing just one frame of action from a greater narrative whole. This observance of the troubled and tense relationships between his figures is explored as a representation of the personal experiences of the artist, using Jo Hopper's diary entries and Hopper's caricatures.

The sense of tension and dislocation between the depicted figures is also enhanced by the artist's use of space. He manipulates our sense of a three dimensional space on a two

dimensional surface with the space created between his figures, which is delineated by the objects placed between them, and the portrayal of 'empty' space across the canvas. Hopper's painted space is employed to distort his human figures and the space which they inhabit, resulting in a further sense of alienation. His spatial arrangements create isolated figures within a surreal environment and are discussed in relation to Gestalt psychology. The chapter concludes with an analysis of the painting *Hotel Lobby* (1943) (figure 7) in which Hopper has depicted a group of figures to explore the dysfunctional relationship of the older couple and the special alienation that takes place within painting that contains several figures.

Chapter 4 shifts the focus of the thesis. Instead of an examination of the specific representation of the female figure it moves to observe Hopper's depiction of the human figure within particular environments of the American city. Hopper repeatedly used subject matter that was familiar to him and so the city that he depicts is essentially New York, and in particular the area around Washington Square in Manhattan. Each of the next five chapters examines a particular aspect of the American city and the treatment of the human figures within that space.

This chapter also examines how Hopper is initially influenced by the Impressionist use of light that he employs in Paris and the effect this had on his future paintings of the American city, his rejection of French style and subject matter in search of an indigenous American style, and the transient nature of modern America as he continually returns to subjects that represent entry and exit routes to the city: the tunnel, the railroad and the bridge in particular.

The chapter also examines Hopper's personal response to the American city and its individual nature. Hopper's New York exists mainly in the early morning, in paintings like *Early Sunday Morning* (1930) (figure 12) and at night, as in *Drug Store* (1927) (figure 13), and generally depicts the city from either street level or as if seen from the Elevated Railway. The chapter concludes with a close analysis of the painting *Nighthawks* (1942) (figure 14) which is considered to be one of his definitive images of the American city.

In chapter 5, the emphasis remains on the female figure, but it is also widened to include some male figures, as the differences between Hopper's depiction of the female and the male figure within the office space reflect his male white middle-class opinions of the female within the work space, and of the position of the female figure within society as a

whole. Hopper's depictions of the office space are considered in relation to the influence that his earlier career as an illustrator had upon his mature oil paintings.

The influence of illustration can be seen primarily in two respects. Firstly, it gave him a source of subject matter, one that he had depicted on several occasions for publications such as *System* (figures 15 and 16). Secondly, the office is seen as a personal expression of Hopper's own experiences in the office during the time he spent as an illustrator, which he clearly found confining and restrictive of his individuality as an artist. The male figures in Hopper's paintings of the office, particularly in the example of *Office in a Small City* (1953) (figure 17) can be seen as a reflection of Hopper's personal experiences in the city office. Hopper's office scenes should also be considered in relation to literature or drama on the same subject, like Herman Melville's (1819–91) short story *Bartleby, The Scrivener* (1856) and Elmer Rice's (1892–1967) play *The Adding Machine* (1923).

Finally, this chapter discusses the influence of the cinematic genre of Film Noir which becomes a persistent concern throughout Hopper's observations of the human figure within the space of the city, in particular where he presents the female figure as the *femme fatâle*. It is the specific lighting techniques of Film Noir that are considered in relation to Hopper's use of theatrical lighting in his depictions of the office. The chapter concludes with a detailed analysis of his 1940 work *Office at Night* (figure 18).

In chapter 6, Hopper's female figures are considered from the perspective of their placement within the American space of the diner or automat. The female figure can be seen within this particular space to be influenced by both Hopper's illustration work on the same subject and his incorporation of the elements of popular culture into his work; namely the influence of the pin-up image and the result this has on the presentation of the female figure within society and his paintings.

As a commercial artist, Hopper would have been acutely aware of the cultural and social developments that were propagated by advertising and this could perhaps explain his ability to perceive his figures in terms of the pin-up image or other advertising icons. His mature oil paintings display their awareness of advertising, for example *Drug Store* (1927) (figure 13), *El Palacio* (1946) (figure 19) and *Gas* (1940) (figure 20). Again, this chapter looks to links between Hopper's paintings and the cinematic genre of Film Noir and his observation of the interpersonal relationships that he implies between his figures.

This piece concludes with an analysis of the definitive image of the American eatery; the *Automat* (1927) (figure 8).

Hopper's mature works acknowledge the dominance of twentieth century consumer culture, as has been discussed in chapter 6, but advertising is not the only contemporary cultural debt that can be detected in Hopper's understanding of the human figure within the space of modern America. He was also very interested in the movies and the theatre, as well as their audiences, which are featured in his etchings and paintings, for example the definitive painting *New York Movie* (1939) (figure 9) where he pictures a bored usherette standing at the side of a relatively empty movie theatre, which is considered in detail at the end of the chapter 7.

Chapter 7 considers Hopper's paintings that are influenced by, or are based on the subject of the theatre, and the movie theatre. It is not only his subject matter that is indebted to movie culture, but also more formal aspects of his paintings. The similarities between Hopper's paintings of the subject of the theatre or movie theatre, in particular, and other thematic areas of his mature works and the cinematic genre of Film Noir are considered in detail. The comparison of Hopper's works with Film Noir is focussed around the stylistic elements that they have in common, such as the alienating and disorientating effect that is achieved by their stylistic use of light, the dramatic angles of composition, and the specific treatment of the female figure as the dangerous, yet, alluring *femme fatâle*.

The specific spaces of the American city that have been so far considered have all focussed on the placement of the human figure, particularly the female figure in public spaces. In chapter 8, the emphasis moves to the private space of the apartment building. Hopper's representation of the figure within this private space allows a discussion of the role of the artist and the viewer as voyeur. It also allows the female figure to be discussed in terms of the female as the subject of the gaze of the male artist/viewer and essentially the voyeur.

The discussion continues the allusion to common elements between Hopper's mature oil paintings and contemporary film. The space of the apartment building is seen in terms of the Alfred Hitchcock film *Rear Window* of 1954, which explores the nature of voyeurism within the American city and in particular the private space of the apartment room. The plot of this film is located in one such apartment interior room, and like Hopper's paintings of apartment interiors the action of the hero is confined to one room.

It is Jeffries's ability to watch the daily activities of the other residents (who are also only seen within their private interior spaces) that reflects the voyeuristic nature of Hopper's apartment interiors.

The chapter concludes with a discussion of the painting *Room in New York* (figure 6) of 1932 which focuses on the troubled relationship of a young couple placed in an apartment interior. Hopper employs cinematic devices such as *mise-en-scène* which add to the dislocation of the relationship of the couple and of their placement within the depicted space. Again we can see this painting in relation to Hopper's personal relationship with his wife.

These chapters define Hopper's treatment of the human figure within the modern American environment of the city, with particular emphasis on the female figure. My intention is to establish Hopper's place as the definitive 'American Scene' painter, but also to acknowledge the other contemporary cultural references that are present in his work, such as his references to advertising and popular means of presentation of the female figure, like the pin-up and the movie genre of Film Noir.

However, within his paintings the human figure is central to his psychological portrayal of the American psyche, and his portrayal of the human condition within modern America, which has led to his being referred to as a 'philosopher-painter'.[30] It is the sense of the eternal confinement of the human figure within the definitively American city spaces, created by Hopper on canvas, that reveal his perception of the plight of humanity within modern America. The culmination of this vision is revealed in Hopper's paintings at the end of career which indicate his view of the futility of human existence which can only end in death, as described by his painting of an empty room. *Sun in an Empty Room* (figure 3) has to be seen as the ultimate in Hopper's vision of the human condition and as the inevitability of death.

His understanding of the female figure has also to be considered within the artist's own personal view of the female, both within these contemporary cultural areas and modern American society, as well as his own experiences of the female, from his mother and grandmother to his tempestuous relationship with his wife. These more personal viewpoints are particularly pertinent to the artist's view of the female as a sex object and especially to his vision of the female figure as *femme fatâle*.

[1] B. Rose, *American Art Since 1900*, New York, 1967, p.115.
[2] B. Perlman, unpublished interview with Hopper. 3rd June 1962. Quoted in G. Levin, *Edward Hopper, The Art and the Artist*, New York, 1980, p.17.
[3] E. Hopper, 'John Sloan and the Philadelphians', *The Arts*, 2, April 1927, pp.174–5.
[4] Ibid, p.176.
[5] Quoted in W. I. Homer, *Robert Henri and his Circle*, New York, 1969, p. 4
[6] R. Henri, 'A Practical Talk to Those Who Study Art', *The Philadelphia Press*, 12 May 1901.
[7] E. Hopper, 'Notes on Painting', in A.H. Barr Jr. *Edward Hopper: Retrospective Exhibition*, New York, 1933, p.17.
[8] B. Perlman, unpublished interview with Hopper. 3rd June 1962. Quoted in G. Levin, 1980, p.19.
[9] W. H. Gerdts, *The Great American Nude, A History in Art*, New York and Washington, 1974, p.29.
[10] W. I. Homer, 1969, p.83.
[11] Ibid, p.145.
[12] B. B. Perlman, *Robert Henri: His Life and Art*, New York and London, 1991, p.87.
[13] Quoted in R. Hughes, *American Visions*, London,1997, p.325.
[14] Hopper had been in Paris since October 1906, but on June 27, 1907 he left Paris to travel to London, then on July 19, 1907 he travelled on to Holland. He visited Amsterdam and Haarlem, where Henri was conducting a Summer School for American students.
[15] R. Henri, *The Art of Spirit*, (1923), Philadelphia and New York, 1960.
[16] R. Hughes, 1997, p.423.
[17] Ibid, p.423.
[18] Extracts from this conversation are reproduced in Brian O'Doherty, 'Portrait: Edward Hopper', *Art in America*, 52, December 1964.
[19] The only exception to this being Gail Levin's book *Edward Hopper as Illustrator* of 1979, and then her *Catalogue Raisonné* of 1995.
[20] *Edward Hopper: Retrospective Exhibition*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Articles by Alfred H. Barr Jr., Charles Burchfield and Edward Hopper. 1933. Quoted in W. Schmied, *Edward Hopper: Portraits of America*, Munich and New York, 1995, p.7
[21] Ibid, 1995, p.7.
[22] Ibid, 1995, p.7.
[23] Ibid, p.7.
[24] L. Goodrich, *Edward Hopper*, New York, 1983, p.62
[25] W. Schmied, 1995, p.106.
[26] Ibid, p.10.
[27] Ibid, p.10.
[28] E. Lucie-Smith, *American Realism*, London, 1994, p.120.
[29] Jo Hopper diary entry for October 12, 1944. Quoted in G. Levin, *Edward Hopper, An Intimate Biography*, Los Angeles, California and London, 1998, pp.179–80.
[30] I. Jeffrey, *Edward Hopper, 1882–1967: Hayward Gallery, London 11th February to 29th March 1981: A Selection from the exhibition Edward Hopper, the Art and the Artist, held at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York from16th September to 25th January 1981*, London, 1981, Introduction, p.5.

Chapter 1.
Hopper and the Great American Nude.

The female figure is a central area of Hopper's oeuvre, just as the representation of the human figure is at the forefront of Hopper's expression in his work. Clearly, the human figure was of vital importance to his painting, as it appeared in many variations; as solitary figures, emotionally awkward couples, or as an implied presence where the human figure is conspicuous by its absence. It seems then, that the representation of the human figure, in particular the female figure, is an integral part of Hopper's painting. His depiction of the figure might be said to come to maturity in the mid 1920s, which increasingly seems to identify what we might view as exemplary. Therefore, I find it necessary to establish why there appears to be a watershed in his images of the female figure around 1924, and why once he had established a 'style', he continued to paint with very little variation until his death in 1967.

Before examining any of Hopper's female figures and nudes in detail, it is important to reaffirm the primary role of the nude, both male and female within the tradition of Western art. The nude has become synonymous with supreme aesthetic expression and its history can be traced through its periods of dominance; through the art of the Classical world, the Renaissance and from 1700 onwards in Western Europe. It must be acknowledged that the female nude is a problematic subject area in Art history.[1] It is little addressed before Kenneth Clark's *The Nude*, of 1956, which is now considered to be critically limited, and John Berger's *Ways of* Seeing from 1972, which concentrates on the distinction between 'naked' and 'nude'. Even though these are both problematic, and even flawed texts, they show that the issue of the depiction of the female figure is a contentious one and which has been addressed more recently by female art historians like G. Pollock, L. Nochlin, M. Pointon and W. Chadwick, for example, who tend to address the issues from the point of an oppressive male view. Little or no attention is given to the specific area of the female nude in American painting until William H. Gerdts' *The Great American Nude, A History in Art* (1974) and John Pultz' *Photography and the Body* (1995).

The area of interest in this chapter is the specific nature of the American nude and it needs to be seen separately from that of its Western European counterpart. Although this is not an attempt at an history of the nude in American painting, to understand the special nature of the nude in American art, one must firstly understand the origins and

reasons for the special American attitude to the nude. The reasons why there are relatively few images of the nude in American art until the twentieth century involve complex religious and cultural attitudes, which reflect the prejudices and taboos placed upon the nude human figure.

Hopper's own depiction of the female nude and the human figure in general can be seen as very much developing out of this Colonial American attitude to the human form. Although as an art student he painted the nude, the nude human figure rarely appears in his mature oil paintings.[2] There are no male nudes, and only a few examples of the female nude. The reason for this can be attributed to Hopper's strict upbringing in a predominantly female household, plus the fact that after his marriage in 1924 his wife became his sole model. The special nature of the nude in American painting is indicated by the lack of specific discussion of 'American nudes' in academic texts, for example Clark's rather limited history of the nude does not include any reference to them at all. It is not until Gerdts' text that we really have a detailed examination of the particular nature of the nude in American painting. However, certain elements must be discussed to explain the specific nature of development, which leads to the particular representation that we find originating from the twentieth century.

The main point to consider is that images of the nude in Western European art derive from a tradition that can be traced back to the classical period, and yet North America is a comparatively young nation, and established itself almost as a reaction to, or as a complete rejection of European cultural and aesthetic aspirations as well as religious concerns. For the early Colonial settlers the issue of the nude in art was particularly problematic because it was functionless within a developing culture that was predominantly concerned with what was serviceable and functional in life, and because the naked body was seen to be indecent.

It is important to note that it was sexuality that was implicit in the portrayal of the nude in art, particularly with the female figure, that was one of the factors that had led the first settlers to depart from what they perceived to be the degenerate civilization of Europe and seek a new life in the New World.[3] Where nudity does occur in seventeenth and eighteenth century colonial painting it is generally to represent the semi-naked native American Indians, and to enforce the difference between the cultures through the juxtaposition of the nakedness of the tribesmen and the seemingly elaborate dress of the European settlers. This served to emphasise the primitive and uncivilised nature of the

native American Indians, highlighting their savagery and therefore, in effect, enforcing the cultural, religious and moral sophistication of the settlers.

This cultural attitude deeply affected the development of American art. The strong religious views held by the Colonial Americans not only affected the art that was produced, but that which was on display, and also the training of American artists. It is only towards the end of the nineteenth century that academies, such as the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, under the influence of Thomas Eakins (1844–1916), began to use the nude model. Prior to this art students could only study from engravings of old masters, and casts, or make the journey to study in Europe, as Benjamin West (1738–1820) and John Singleton Copley (1738–1815) had done. Even Eakins met with controversy over his use of the male nude model and eventually left his teaching position at the academy as a direct result of the opposition he received to his teaching methods involving the live male nude model.[4]

Perhaps the most interesting development in the portrayal of the human figure is in the diverse nature of its introduction as an acceptable image in America. The puritanical nature of much of American culture was unable to accept the image of the naked human figure because of its connections with classical immorality and vulgarity, and its roots in European culture, from which America wished to sever its ties. However, by the mid-nineteenth century the nude, or semi-nude was introduced in acceptable terms, in the form of images widely viewed by the public; on banknotes and certificate engravings.[5] In this guise, the depiction of the human figure, usually as a virtuous allegory where the female figure was at least semi-nude, was exceedingly generalised and for the most part inspired by poses and models from old masters; it became a national symbol or icon, and therefore publicly acceptable. Perhaps more strangely is another outlet for the representation of the female nude, which was in the decoration of fire engines. In such decoration, the nude becomes a popular image that is accepted, when it still met with disapproval in fine art. For more detail on this specific area of representation look to J.I. Smith's article 'Painted Fire Engine Panels'.[6]

The acceptance of the image of the female nude upon the side of a fire engine serves to highlight the less conventional areas (in comparison to the traditional representation of the nude figure within Western European painting) in which the representation of the human figure became acceptable in America, and the areas in which this portrayal became a specific and indigenous area of American artistic production. As a result it highlights the more unusual areas, which I wish to consider more carefully, particularly

in respect to the production of images of the human figure in the twentieth century and more specifically in respect of the human figure in Hopper's paintings. In particular the almost completely indigenous invention of the pin-up in twentieth century America which is considered later in chapter 6 in relation to the consumption of the objectified female figure.[7]

To paint the nude, or to receive what was considered to be a classical, or traditional art training, American artists would make the pilgrimage to the established centres of European art to see the work of the acknowledged masters at first hand and to enrol in their *ateliers*, a practice which continued into the early twentieth century. To this end Hopper was no different; he made the trip to Europe three times (1906–7, 1909 and 1910), making Paris his focus, although he also travelled briefly in Spain, Holland, Germany and London. Hopper, like many of his predecessors and contemporary students alike, felt that this European sojourn was imperative to his artistic development, as it would enable him to see the paintings of the European masters at first hand.

Hopper also differs from many of his compatriots in this respect as he did not involve himself in the heady existence of the art student in Paris, nor did he enrol in the studio of an established artist. As in much of his life, he chose to work alone, disassociating himself from the art culture and society of Paris. Hopper did not socialise much outside the sheltered existence of the Baptist mission in which he lodged on the first occasion he stayed in Paris. His only real acquaintances on his first visit were Patrick Henry Bruce (1881–1936) and his wife Helen, and Guy Pène du Bois (1884–1958), all of whom he knew from the New York School of Art. Hopper claimed that Bruce introduced him to the work of the Impressionists, particularly the work of Alfred Sisley (1839–99), Pierre-Auguste Renoir (1841–1919) and Camille Pissaro (1830–1903),[8] but that he met 'nobody'.[9] When he said that he met 'nobody', I assume that he is referring to members of the Paris Avant-garde, as he later remarked that he had 'heard of Gertrude Stein, but I don't recall having heard of Picasso at all.'[10] It would have been possible for Hopper to have gained an invitation to the social circle of Gertrude and Leo Stein through the Bruces,[11] and yet he does not seem to have been interested in this side of life in Paris, and is perhaps more indicative of the more traditional, and perhaps even backward looking approach to painting of which Hopper has been accused.

However, the significance of the European experience on Hopper's work is perhaps more important for what it *failed* to achieve, as it is for this reason that his work remains so individual throughout his mature working period. However, he portrayed the human

figure in a manner that is characteristic of his painting as a whole and he remained unaffected by the fast moving trends and styles that developed around him, continuing to depict his vision of modern America consistently, in his realist style.

This is not to say that his work is either stagnant or dated, because it has influences and inspirations that are contemporary and that move with the twentieth century, his art remains as fresh in the sixties as it had been in the 1930s. Although Hopper's paintings may not have altered much in style they did become more refined and the reductive approach that he applied to his compositions increased over time. This will be explored in much greater detail below and in chapter 3. The reason for this development and freshness of approach, to the treatment of the human figure in particular, can be attributed to the direct influences upon Hopper's work.

It is upon these influences that I wish to concentrate, as I feel that they are central to the particular issue of Hopper's depiction of the human figure in his paintings, and one of the first areas to consider is Hopper's 'American-ness' and its relationship to his religious upbringing. The Baptist upbringing that he received cannot be overemphasised, as it played such a dominant role in his formative years. This influence was not even broken when Hopper made his first voyage to Europe, as his mother arranged his accommodation in advance for him, even though he was twenty-four and had been studying in New York, at the Art School since 1899. She arranged lodgings for him in the Baptist mission in Paris, at the Église Évangélique Baptiste, located at 48, Rue de Lille.[12]

It is perhaps more significant that Hopper tried to return to the same lodgings when he returned to Paris in 1909. This strong attachment to religious faith, and the significance of it, in terms of his life, is a continuance of the strength of the religious trend that I have tried to indicate in the development of American art as a whole, or at least as it relates to the representation of the human figure. Hopper was able to benefit from the teaching at the New York School of Art, that of Henri in particular, and a vital part of this was the life class, which was still a relatively new phenomenon in an American art school. Is it possible to attribute a significance to the miniscule number of nudes in Hopper's mature paintings to the severity of his Baptist upbringing? It is clear from Hopper's paintings that the human figure is an important element in his compositions, but although he included many semi-nudes, *Sea Watchers* (1952) (figure 21 for example, there are no male nudes and only a few female nudes in his oil paintings.

Hopper's painted figures in this context has led observers to criticise the quality of his draughtsmanship in the human figure. If we look back to his training, his early studies of the human figure display a competence that is belied by his later paintings. It is important to note that Robert Henri's teaching, as was Henri's own training, was based around the anatomy of the human figure. Hopper developed artistically out of the mould that placed great stock on the anatomical drawing of the figure. Rockwell Kent (1882–1971), who was studying at the New York School of Art (formally known as the Chase School) at the same time as Hopper, acknowledges Hopper's gift for draughtsmanship, as he nicknamed him the 'John Singer Sargent of the class'.[13] This was because he could regularly produce high quality drawings, which were indicated by the little red dot Henri ascribed to student works that commended his approval,[14] and was generally acknowledged as the best student in his class at the New York School of Art at that time, evidenced by his ability to win prizes and scholarships, and eventually the opportunity he received to teach at the school. Hopper's early interest in the figure, and his ability to paint it, is displayed in the many illustrations now housed in the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. These many and varied illustrations now carefully catalogued by Levin in her *Catalogue Raisonné* (1995), display the importance of the human figure for Hopper.

In Hopper's drawings from his period at the New York School of Art, and from shortly after, we can see his growing interest in the nude figure and by careful observation of these drawings, we are able to trace his artistic evolution and increasing skill in its representation. As he progresses, his rendition of the human figure becomes much more detailed and skilful, and his use of shadow and modelling is much more highly skilled and defined. As he developed artistically, his female nudes become much more carefully represented and more detailed. In particular *Standing Nude* 0-42 (figure 22) and 0-44.1 (figure 23),[15] both from the period of 1902–04, are a part of a group of nine canvases from the same period. They reveal a greater degree of technical skill than some of Hopper's earlier student work and reflect his growing competence with the representation of the female nude. It is probable that these works were painted in Henri's life class as they indicate Hopper's increasing skill in his use of shadow and modelling in the rendition of the torso, legs and the arms, in particular; especially as some of this group of works contain the small red dot that was Henri's indication that he considered the work worthy of praise.[16] Hopper's work reveals here the teaching of Henri, which stressed the importance of anatomical drawing. It is this heightened detail that becomes so apparent by its absence later in his mature paintings.

The attention to the anatomical detail of the human form is illustrated by observation of drawings that Hopper produced at the Whitney Studio Club in the early 1920s. Hopper rendered the nude during this period in a manner that he would never repeat. These drawings reveal Hopper's early artistic relish of the physical quality of his models. They are thickly drawn and smudged, or are linear and lightly sketched. One, *Reclining Nude* (c.1923–4) (figure 24) suggests a knowledge of the work of Henri Matisse (1869–1954), unsurprisingly, perhaps, as Henri had encouraged his students to observe Matisse's work from around 1910, long before he was known in the United States.[17] Henri's enthusiasm for Matisse's work appears to be due in part to Henri's role as the champion of innovation and experimentation in art, and also because he praised Matisse's draughtsmanship.[18]

Matisse's nudes were inspired by the same reverence of the anatomical structure of the human form. Flam maintains that Matisse's nudes, painted and sculpted, were formed from a method of modelling that was a 'combination of tactile and visual notations, which defined surfaces that followed the underlying thrust of the anatomical structure.'[19] It can be assumed that Hopper was able to see Matisse's *Blue Nude* (1907) (figure 25) when it was displayed in New York, certainly by the date of the drawing in question, between 1923 and 1924, as there was an exhibition of his work at the Brummer Galleries, New York in 1924.[20]

It is interesting that the influence of Matisse's work, in particular his *Blue Nude,* should occur at such a definitive period in the work of both artists. For Matisse, the year 1907 and the painting *Blue Nude* represented a new direction in his work, and during the period between 1923 and 1924 Hopper reached a watershed in his portrayal of the human figure. In 1907 Matisse altered his mode of working; in contrast to his earlier works he no longer used a model for his sculpture *Reclining Nude I* (figure 26), but instead he worked from memory and imagination. *Blue Nude* (figure 25) was inspired by a new enthusiasm and inspiration felt by Matisse when he returned to work on *Reclining Nude I* (figure 26) after it had been damaged by accident the previous day.[21]

Both Hopper and Matisse painted from memory rather than life, in that having decided upon the subject of a painting they made sketches and drawings which they then used as the basis for the subject in the studio, as the basis for their approach to the subject. Hopper's time spent at the Whitney Studio Club signifies the last few occasions that he painted directly from life, whether the human figure or a landscape. That is to say that he no longer painted *in situ*, instead he would execute numerous preparatory drawings

which he would in turn refer to for the execution of his final work. In the same vein, his wife Jo Hopper was his only model from the date of their marriage until his death in 1967 and he adapted his representation of her body to create the figures seen in his paintings. Both Hopper and Matisse felt that the art comes from within, that this inner sight will lead to a 'true' representation, as Matisse says 'the painter, must sincerely believe that he has painted only what he has seen'.[22] This is the equivalent to Hopper's beliefs and the result we can see in his work, and this is why there is such a dramatic difference between the first working of an idea in the preparatory sketch and the final work. The composition changes and develops into the concept that was in his mind.

This is demonstrated by the preparatory sketches for *Girlie Show* (1941) (figures 27 and 28); the figure modelled by his wife Jo changes from a posed figure that appears rather self-conscious, to the confident and rather extrovert figure of the finished painting. The only difference between their modes of working was that Hopper maintained the use of preparatory sketches from life as the mental 'springboard' for his compositions. When speaking of *Bonheur de Vivre* (1906) (figure 29), Matisse said that 'There is an air of resplendent artifice and a delicate yet extravagant disproportion. Observations from nature' are forgotten, 'The new condition of painting was quiet and detached; it was *cool* in a way that empirical and impulsive painting could never be.'[23] This suggests a quiet, careful and methodical mode of working. Gowing claims that Matisse needed harmony and peace in his life and that this desire for tranquillity finds itself into his work, as it does with Hopper.[24] The desire for simplification in interpretation and composition that defined Matisse's mature work is reflected in the work of Hopper post 1924. Matisse justified this simplification when he said 'It is only that I tend towards what I feel; towards a kind of ecstasy...and then I find tranquillity.'[25]

Both Matisse and Hopper looked to art, and their own art in particular, for what could be described as the undisturbed, ideal bliss of living, which for both of them is a peaceful, quiet solitude that exists apart from all else. They both felt that painting should also embody this separate existence; painting represents for them a state of ideal detachment. As Hopper's introspective nature is reflected in his life and art, so we find it also with Matisse. Gowing states that this artistic intent also ruled the rest of his life, as 'He [Matisse] sought in art, and in life as well, hermetic conditions of private self-preservation.'[26]

There is much about the *Blue Nude* (figure 25) that is not radically different from what has come to be seen as traditional in Western art. The pose of Matisse's female figure in

Blue Nude is similar to that employed by the familiar 'sleeping Ariadne', who is a common motif in Roman art; one who is associated with Aphrodite, the Goddess of erotic Love.[27] Such a pose, where the nude's legs are bent and drawn up towards the body, and where she is portrayed with one arm raised above her head, has signified sensuality or lust in Renaissance painting and beyond.[28] This motif had persisted into nineteenth century art, and its use is demonstrated in some of Jean-August-Dominique Ingres's (1780–1867) *Odalisques* (figure 30), which Matisse admired, and the academic painter Alexandre Cabanel (1823–89) had adapted a similar pose for his *Birth of Venus* (1863) (figure 31).

Matisse's adaptation of the pose for his *Reclining Nude I* (figure 26) and *Blue Nude* (figure 25) could therefore be acknowledged as a realisation of his desire to create a modern equivalent of the ancient Venus. Hopper's drawing *Two Nudes, Seated and Reclining* (c.1923–4) (figure 32) is an adaptation of this established motif, as the nude farthest from the picture plane reclines with her legs drawn up towards her and the nearest nude, is seated facing away from us with her arms raised above her head. Matisse's *Blue Nude* has a Cézanne-like blue tonality and deliberate awkwardness. It is the first major painting Matisse executed after Cézanne's death in 1906, and could be in some way a tribute to his work and also represent a statement of intent to establish a new direction devoid of Academic salon conventions. The artistic significance of this painting was also acknowledged by William Carlos Williams (1883–1963) who felt compelled to write a piece for *Contact* in January 1921, entitled 'A Matisse'. Williams responded to *The Blue Nude* as a demonstration of the avant-garde environment of which he was a part, and his words document his emotions that it evoked as a cultural statement for his fellow Americans.[29]

The Matisse *Blue Nude* (figure 25) establishes the symbolic emphasis of his work around 1907. For him this nude, as a woman, represents, or has become symbolic of a more primitive or earthly intensity than that conveyed by contemporary Salon nudes. 'She' is a metaphor for the dynamic growth, the delightful colours, the fertility of the oasis that Matisse perceived in Africa;[30] and as such is a modern Venus. As a modern Venus, the painting can be appreciated as Matisse's response to the popular Salon nudes of the time. Matisse did not disguise his antipathy to the academic Salon nudes of artists such as Cabanel, in fact it is well documented, and indeed as Flam rightly maintains, the harsh ugliness of the *Blue Nude* was conceived as a response to such academic salon painting.[31] The significance of Matisse's *Blue Nude* is as a work which appears to represent a watershed moment in Matisse's representation of the nude; it becomes

influential in the stylistic development of Hopper's nudes, as he graduated from works, such as *Standing Nude* (figure 22 and 23) to his *Reclining Nude* (figure 24).

In fact there are several connections between the work of Hopper and that of Matisse, and more importantly their styles and ethos, as their basis for working has much in common. Matisse's work, like that of Hopper's, found itself opposed to and at odds with that of its contemporaries. Matisse achieved with *Blue Nude* (figure 25) the African primitiveness that Pablo Picasso (1881–1973) was striving for in *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* (1906–7) (figure 33). Indeed, Picasso was noted to be impressed with this painting for this reason.[32] Instead of pursuing the primitive or cubist stance, Matisse established his own individual artistic direction.

Both Hopper and Matisse shared a single-minded purpose and attitude to work. They are both conspicuous by their decisions to work in styles that were in complete opposition to virtually all other contemporary painters. For most painters of the modern period, the question of representation and form were of more significance than the luminosity of the painting. However in both Matisse and Hopper luminosity, or at least depicted light, is a vital concern. For Matisse, the impression of light was the ultimate goal in his painting and its representation on canvas outlasted the more figurative elements in his work, whereas Hopper's mature works, or those of his last years could be seen as a fusion of the luminosity and the representation, most notable where Hopper has poignantly depicted a space devoid of human existence (for example *Rooms by the Sea* (1951) and *Sun in an Empty Room* (1965), (figures 34 and 3). This concerted effort towards artistic individualism in Hopper's work could also explain his claim that there was no connection between his work and that of groups like the Regionalists, or the 'American Scene' painters, and why he moved away from exhibiting with other Henri students, like John Sloan (1871–1951), George Bellows (1882–1925) and Guy Pène du Bois.

Both the works of Hopper and Matisse develop through what we could discern as an increasing purity of the representation of the human figure. In his *Reclining Nude* (figure 24), Hopper has simplified his figures by excluding any of the shading or toning he used to shape or mould his earlier nudes, such as those demonstrated by figures 22 and 23. The reduction of the female figure to this extent calls to mind the work of Matisse, in particular the drawing for *Le Luxe II* (1907–8) (figure 35). The figures in both the Hopper and Matisse drawings are constructed by a single outline. There is no shading in these drawings, no toning nor shaping; these are flat line drawings created with a single

line. Hopper adopted this 'flat line' style in this drawing executed at the Whitney Studio Club. He employed the same type of reduction in detail to the image that Matisse used in the drawing for *Le Luxe II* (figure 35).

The only area of the drawing that has been given more attention by Hopper in *Reclining Nude* (c.1923-4) (figure 24), is where he has indicated the texture of the hair on the model's head and in the underarms. This complete paring down of the figure to the basic outline indicates an elimination of any extraneous detail in the construction of the image. In figure 24, this female reveals the progression of Hopper's process of simplification and reduction of his figures to the barest essential details, a process that he continued to apply to his mature paintings.[33]

In contrast to *Reclining Nude* (figure 24), we can examine Hopper's drawing *Two Nudes, Seated and Reclining* (c. 1923–4) (figure 32), which is assumed to be from the same period, as substantially different in working style: i.e. Hopper carefully *re*presents the models from which he worked. He has taken great care over the modelling of the bodies, in particular the back of the seated female, as the shading carefully describes the contours of her back. The overall result of these drawings is a celebration of the female nude in all of its sensual glory. It is the detail of the sensuality, and of the curved and fleshy female figure, that Hopper later rejects from his mature paintings in favour of the generalised blocked, geometric figures that relate to the sparse settings of the architecture around them. This would indicate then, that this drawing although dated as being produced during the same wide period, actually precedes *Reclining Nude* (figure 24), at least in its ability to reveal Hopper's development of his working style at that time. Perhaps it should be acknowledged that after his marriage in 1924, his wife took responsibility for the cataloguing and recording of his work. The variation in the dates ascribed to these two drawings, so different in their style, might be attributed to this fact. The dates cover a period of at least a year, which reflects Hopper's distinct development from one style of drawing to another.

Certainly it must be accepted that there is a distinct change in the representation of Hopper's figures between 1923 and 1924. It is difficult to be more precise than this period of one year, to define this moment of development in representation, but as his works executed before his marriage in 1924 were ascribed dates after his marriage, it hinders the specific location of this moment of change and explains the loose dating of works pre-1924. It can, at least, be located to the period around 1923–4, when he was attending the Whitney Studio Club. This year can be seen as Hopper's coming of age as

an artist. It was clearly a defining period within his career as an artist, as well as in his personal life. It is around this date that the paintings that he executes, particularly those involving the human figure, reach what can be considered to be his 'mature' style. It is at this point he paints the oil paintings that are now recognised as definitive 'Hoppers'. Of this one year period, spanning 1923–4, perhaps 1924 is the most significant, although this crucial change in his circumstances began in 1923 when he sold his first painting since *Sailing* (1911) (figure 36) was purchased from the Armory Show in 1913.

On 23 December 1923 he sold a watercolour, *The Mansard Roof* (1923) (figure 37), which he painted in Gloucester, Massachusetts, to the Brooklyn Museum for $100.[34] His work was also included in several exhibitions during 1924; he exhibited one oil painting *New York Interior* (c.1921) (figure 38) in the '119th Annual Exhibition' at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia[35], four watercolours at the 'Fourth International Water Color Exhibition', at the Art Institute of Chicago[36], one oil painting *New York Restaurant* (c.1922) (figure 39) at the 'Annual Members Exhibition' at the Whitney Studio Club,[37] and in October and November of 1924 he exhibited some of his most recent watercolours at the Frank K. M. Rehn Gallery in New York. Of all the exhibitions he was involved with that year, this was the most significant, as he sold all of the eleven watercolours that he had on display, and he also sold a further five. The importance of these sales was that it enabled Hopper finally to retire from illustration and commercial work completely, and concentrate on his painting.[38] The other most significant event in his life in 1924, was his marriage to Josephine Verstille Nivison on July 9th, at the Église Évangélique on West Sixteenth Street, New York.[39] The culmination of all these events was that by the end of 1924, Hopper was a full-time artist, married, with his wife as his model, and he had entered what I have suggested can be seen as his mature period of his painting, which reflected a distinctive style which although he continued to refine and pare down, remained essentially the same until his death in 1967.

Having established this defining period in the artist's life around 1924, and following on from the discussion of his early nudes painted at the Whitney Studio Club, it would be useful to consider those from his mature period. The importance of these paintings of the nude, although they are few in number, is that they reveal a particular view of the female by a male artist. Although it pre-dates *Morning in a City* (1944) (figure 42) and *A Woman in the Sun* (1961) (figure 43), *Girlie Show* of 1941 (figure 4), is perhaps the most significant of all Hopper's paintings on this subject, as it shows a woman who is giving a blatant display of her sexuality. Hopper's other women, clothed and nude,

often exude their sensuousness, but are not such an obvious display of female sexuality as is experienced in *Girlie Show* (figure 4). This painting is also quite different as Hopper has defined the space in the title of the painting; the figure is a stripper in a show, and as a result, this painting is discussed individually at the end of this chapter, because this woman, the setting in which she is placed and the atmosphere of the painting are quite distinct from the other females that Hopper painted. This is not to say that there is no overt display of female sexuality in Hopper's other women, as will be revealed later in discussion on his paintings like *Office at Night* (1940) (figure 18), *High Noon* (1949) (figure 44) and *Excursion into Philosophy* (1959) (figure 11). However, in *Eleven A.M.* (1926) (figure 41), *Girlie Show* (1941) (figure 4), *Morning in a City* (1944) (figure 42) and *A Woman in the Sun* (1961) (figure 43), they appear almost brazen in their display. The title alone of *Girlie Show* (figure 4) reveals this.

Both *Morning in the City* (figure 42) and *A Woman in the Sun* (figure 43), reveal a female nude standing facing out of a window, and in *Eleven A.M.* (figure 41) the figure is seated in an armchair facing out of a window. The females within *Eleven A.M.* (figure 41) and *Morning in the City* (figure 42) are clearly portrayed within an urban environment, as Hopper has indicated the existence of other apartment buildings through the windows in the compositions. As will be discussed in much greater detail in the chapter 8 on Hopper's representation of the apartment building, the particular closeness of existence within the city, allows the figure to see into the windows, and therefore the interiors of the private space of others, and by the same logic, allows others the same view into the painted private space. Therefore, these female nudes could be seen to be brazenly displaying themselves to the view of 'unseen' others, not least of which the viewer. However, the composition of *A Woman in the Sun* (figure 43) differs from the other mentioned paintings, as this figure is not placed in an interior in an urban environment. Hopper has clearly indicated the green rolling hills outside the window. However, Hopper was definite about his intention with the composition and the type of woman he wished to portray as his record book reveals; Jo Hopper noted that he called this figure a 'wise tramp'.[40]

The woman in *Morning in the* City (figure 42) is standing, looking out of her apartment window and is effectively displaying herself to an unseen audience, hidden behind the window blinds of the other apartment windows. This unseen audience also includes the viewer. However, she does hold something in front of her body, which could be a white towel, or a piece of clothing, but it covers her breasts and the area of her stomach, effectively hiding them from the view of anyone who should be looking in through the

window at her. In a sense, in painting her in this way, Hopper allows her to tease an inferred voyeuristic audience with the allure of her naked body, while allowing the 'real' unseen audience, that is the viewer, to observe her voluptuous curves from the side, and slightly behind.

This painting, executed in Hopper's Washington Square studio, represents a solitary nude female figure looking towards the window in the room in which she stands. Levin states that there are twelve preparatory sketches for this painting, most of which were bequeathed to the Whitney Museum of American Art by Jo Hopper. These sketches, two of which are reproduced here (figures 45 and 46) and in Levin's *Catalogue Raisonné*, reveal Hopper's process of exploration and development for this oil painting.[41] Jo, as always, was the model and the sketches show his process of reduction as he develops his composition in the sketches, from the straight sketch of Jo, to the finished work. One of the preparatory sketches even reveals his consideration to place his solitary person seated on the bed, as he actually does in *Summer in the City*, of 1949 (figure 47), where he painted a couple in a similar interior space to that in *Morning in a City* (figure 42). The similarity is not that surprising, as both of these oil paintings were executed in his Washington Square studio which was a part of the Hopper apartment, as were many of his oil paintings of private interior spaces from his mature period.

Hopper kept a record book which gave detailed descriptions of the oils used, the size of the canvas and where it was made, when the painting was completed and when it was delivered to Rehn (Hopper's dealer), but it also gives in some cases fine detail about the completed painting itself. The particular entry for *Morning in a City* (figure 42) is highly detailed and perhaps helps to indicate some of the particular interests that the artist had in the painting. As it was Jo Hopper who maintained the record book, one could perhaps argue that it reveals more about what she saw in the painting. The record book entry reads as follows:

> Finished April 3, 1944. Painted in N.Y. studio on Washington Square, N. *Girl* has red hair, bland figure, white towel, dyed fingernail. Brown *bed, doors* & end of desk with green blotter, all in shadow. Blue green *walls*; carpet & *blanket* on bed darker green. Natural color monk's cloth curtain in shadow. *House outside* same color; green *window shades* (in this house). Strip of pink outside edge of window (side of wall to house) where sun strikes old red brick. Slight tinge of this pink reflected on girl's breast & very faintly on thigh. ½ window sill in light is white, other half grey (stone). Blue suit covering back of chair & pink hat on seat—in shadow at left. (Notice detail of undersheet of bed in part shadow.) Early A.M. *sky*. Cloud over house tops, bit of pink, merging into dull blue. Back in studio.[42]

This demonstrates the paramount importance of the colour of the composition and the fall and the treatment of the light, and how Hopper's interpretation of the light affects the tonality of the painting. The final painting would appear to have a limited range of colour and yet the words of the record book demonstrate that even though the colours appear to be rather subtle, for the artist they had a greater importance.

What is most significant about the use of colour in this painting is the way in which Hopper uses the colours to link one area of the canvas to another. Browns are used in the lower portions of the canvas to link and balance the details of the furniture, from the desk, through the bed, to the door frames on the right of the composition. The natural colour of the 'monk's cloth' curtains frame the window in the composition and link them to the building that can be seen through the window. By using similar tones, Hopper has fused the exterior elements of the painting with the curtains in the interior space. He uses pink in the same way; as a highlight in the morning sky, seen above the buildings through the window; along the exterior strip on the outside vertical of the window frame; he then draws the viewer's eye back inside the room to the female nude, who is the focal point of the painting, with the touches of warm pink upon the side of the figure's face, her ear, and the underside of her left breast.

There is also a subtle extra element, as he has also included a pink hat in the bottom left corner of the painting. This element of pink is almost lost in the dark shadows of this area of the canvas. The hat signifies the connection between the figure and the world beyond her window. Hopper has used the colour pink to link the female figure to the space outside the interior space, and in the same sense, the hat enhances this connection between the space inside the room and the world outside, as the female figure would wear the hat as part of her attire when out in public. In this way Hopper aids the viewer's eye in moving around the elements of the interior space and then out through the window to the exterior space that is just visible through it. Hopper is able to direct the gaze of his viewer around the composition in this way, both by the use of the related colour areas, and by the geometrical balance of this painting.

The composition of this painting is dominated by its vertical elements. Although, the painting is in landscape format, the strength of the verticals pull the sides of the painting in towards the centre. The inward focus is the nude female figure. The window frame, the walls of the interior and the suggested doorways on the right of the painting give height to the interior and to the painting, stressing this vertical nature. The building visible through the window and the bed, becomes the visual opposition to this vertical

dominance, yet their counteractive nature is watered down as they too have vertical elements. The building outside contains windows which sit neatly within the frame of the window of the interior and whose frames echo those of the larger window through which they can be seen. The dark bed frame, though almost lost in the shadows of the base of the painting, echoes the verticals of the walls and doorways against which it is placed.

The dominance of these vertical elements gives the entire painting a rigid and frozen appearance. The angles of the walls and the corners of the room seem sharper as they are emphasised by the areas of light and shadow. This emphasis of the angularity of the edges of the interior and the furniture, serve to enhance the severity and the rigidity of the image. Hopper has placed his female nude within this angularity, and consequently the curves of her body, particularly her buttocks and her breasts are all the more sensuous for being placed within this setting. By placing this woman standing in the centre of this image, Hopper has made her a part of the geometrical composition of the interior space in which she is seen. Not only has he painted her standing still in front of the window, he has made her psychologically a part of the static nature of the composition, as her stance is reflected in the uprights of the vertical elements of the room.

The female figure stands directly in the early morning light, and yet the light that comes through the window enters at such an angle that it hits the bed and the wall to the right of the figure. This suggests that the light that falls on the face and left side of the woman's body comes from another window, which is outside the picture frame. As this canvas was painted inside Hopper's studio, as were so many of his oils, one might suggest that this is the case and that there is another window just outside the confines of the painting. This is confirmed by looking at *Summer in the City* (1949) (figure 47), which was also painted in the New York studio and has a similar, if more sparse, composition. In *Summer in the City*, the bed is in the same position as *Morning in a City* (figure 42), and the corridor leading to another room is also visible, with greater detail, as Hopper has painted the scene from further back and so the second window that seems to be implied in *Morning in a City* is now just visible in the extreme left of the composition in *Summer in the City* (figure 47).

The light that falls on this female in *Morning in a City* (figure 42) is harsh and heightens the pallor of her skin. This whiteness to her skin, that seems to be reflected and intensified by the colour of the walls and the bed sheets has the effect of giving her skin

the appearance of stone, or marble. She calls to mind an artistic representation of the tale of Pygmalion's statue Galatea and the state of loving the unattainable. Pygmalion, the King of Cyprus, had always been an obdurate bachelor, and had frequently stated that he would never marry. He was also a celebrated sculptor who sought to create faithful portrayals of the gods and goddesses. On one occasion he created a sculpture of a beautiful young woman that was so perfect, that when it was completed he deemed that it was too beautiful to remain inanimate. He fell in love with the statue and began to plead with Venus to bring the statue to life, as he wished to have a wife just like her. Venus being delighted that he had finally succumbed to love, obliged, and when Pygmalion held the statue to his breast some of his warmth seeped into the statue and gave her life:

> As once with prayers in passion flowing,
> Pygmalion embraced the stone,
> Till, from the frozen marble glowing,
> The light of feeling o'er him shone. (Schiller)[43]

However, the story of Pygmalion and Galatea has a happy and passionate resolution. This cold and statue-like figure is offered no such hope by Hopper. He gives no indication of 'Hope' or resolution in this painting, and perhaps his statuesque female figure has more in common with the 'Pygmalionesque' tale of Prosper Mérimée.[44] In *La Vénus d'Ille* of 1837, the protagonist M. Alphonse, on the eve of his wedding admires the beauty of a female statue, in this instance a bronze statue, and temporarily places the wedding ring intended for his betrothed upon her finger. During the night he is crushed to death in his sleep by an unknown entity, and the ring is discovered back upon the finger of the statue. This is a supernatural murder mystery, or a clever hoax, as the author leaves the reader guessing, but it contains the more sinister elements of the potentially dangerous female, albeit in this instance a statue. Perhaps as Hopper read so widely, and particularly enjoyed French literature and poetry, this short story might have inspired the statuesque, but sinister representation of the female figure in this painting.[45] Pointon noted that Feminist Theory has also allowed the female body to be identified as a sign for the creativity of the male artist.[46] In a sense, the male artist is seen as the figure of Pygmalion, the creator of the ideal female. Therefore, Hopper, as the male creator, is representative of the Pygmalion figure and has depicted the nude in *Morning in a City* (figure 42) as his ideal female; his Galatea. He has created a figure that embodies his male desires and fantasies.

An early sketch indicates Hopper's reaction to the dominating female influence of his younger years and one senses it helped determine his reaction to women in adult life and

consequently their painterly representation. He grew up in a house dominated by his mother, sister and grandmother, as well as the maid. He witnessed his father's lack of success as a businessman, his inability to provide sufficiently for his family and subsequent reliance on the family income of Hopper's mother. It is probable that Hopper was acutely aware of this perceived inadequacy in his father as they continued to live in Hopper's grandmother's house. Like his father, Hopper took to escaping by himself, to his room, or to the attic to avoid the females of his family, as his father retreated to the store, or the church.[47]

In the sketch from around 1896, which is captioned *ACT I, ACT II NECK, THE ESCAPE* (figure 48), Hopper seems to have created a caricature of the relationship between his mother and father, as observed by a teenage boy. *ACT I* shows the couple in profile; the woman opens her arms to welcome the male into her embrace. She is domineering and demonstrative. In response the male turns his head away and raises his hands in front of him in a pathetic attempt at refusal to her advances, which is tantamount to submission. *ACT II NECK*, confirms this submission as the female has embraced the male and almost completely enveloped him in her arms. His arms are not placed around her in a responsive pose, but trapped down by his sides. The figures are seen in profile and the male figure's head is still turned away from the female; but now his expression appears to be one of desperation, as he has realised his entrapment. The final part, *THE ESCAPE*, shows the moment the woman releases her embrace. The man has turned and is running away from her, while she pursues closely behind.

This drawing reflects the way that Hopper felt about women in both a private and public sense, or at least in his experience thus far. The couple in the drawing could be any couple, or a cartoon of the relationship between his father and mother as seen by the adolescent Hopper. When this cartoon is seen in context with Hopper's mature paintings of women it seems that he never lost the sense of the domineering female. The female figure as a subject for his paintings dominates him and his work, and often when he paints couples together we witness the same awkward nature of their relationship, that he portrayed in the early drawing, *ACT I, ACT II NECK, THE ESCAPE* (1896) (figure 48), this is reflected in such paintings such as, *Excursions into Philosophy* (figure 11), *Hotel Lobby* (figure 7), *Room in New York* (figure 6), *Hotel by the Railroad* (figure 49), and *Four Lane Road* (figure 50). In these paintings there is an uneasiness, which underlies the awkward relationship between the couples. In all these paintings named here, either both the figures are introverted, or the male is introverted and consequently

the female is ignored, and therefore isolated, as a result of the psychological retreat of the man.

This preoccupation with the dominant female figure could be due to his experiences in a house where his grandmother was in command, as the family lived in her house and the mother controlled the financial concerns of the family, due to the father's lack of business success. As a young boy he would have witnessed this emasculating experience of his father. That, in this Victorian, male dominated era, not only could Garrett Hopper not financially provide for his family he had to rely on his mother-in-law for a roof over their heads. Consequently, Hopper must have been aware of the sense of failure in the home; the air of disapproval from his maternal grandmother, because not only was his father believed to be a poor marriage for his mother, but Garrett became an additional burden on the maternal family.[48]

We are aware of Hopper's sense of this matriarchal dominance as he moved to New York City to separate himself from the family constraints of Nyack. The authority from the maternal side of the family was strong and it was not until he was about twenty-eight, that he makes any determined move to support himself financially, through the illustration work that he hated, and to separate himself from the financial ties of his family, his mother in particular. It is perhaps ironic then, that he should choose to spend his married life with a woman who was as gregarious as he was quiet, and who presided over his life. Having established the cyclical occurrence of the controlling feminine influence in his life, it is then perhaps not so surprising that the female becomes such a dominant subject matter for his painting.

Hopper's Baptist background continued as a defining influence on his perception of women. Levin states that for Hopper 'danger comes in female guise' and it seems that he categorises females in his paintings, many of which represent the *femme fatâle.*[49] In his paintings his females are sensuous; he enjoys rendering the curves and subtle manifestations of their sensuality. Yet, he also speaks of them in derogatory language. The female in *A Woman in the Sun* (figure 43) is a 'Wise tramp'. What is it about her that makes Hopper see her in this way? She is not overtly salacious, nor does she appear to be explicitly offering the promise of a sexual liaison with the viewer. She is a female nude, standing in what would appear to be the private space of a bedroom. So therefore, it is the implied narrative of the painting which must reveal the answer. There is a recurring element in many of Hopper's paintings of the female, whether nude, clothed or as part of a couple and that is the unmade bed. This appears in both *Morning in the City*

(figure 42) and *A Woman in the Sun* (figure 43), as well as *Excursions into Philosophy* (figure 11) and *Summer in the City* (figure 47), among others. It must be assumed that there is a significance for this repeated inclusion, and perhaps Hopper's cartoons and caricatures reveal the answer.

Hopper frequently resorted to cartoons and caricatures to express himself and to tease his friends, and most particularly his wife, he would write poetry and limericks. Levin documents this in her detailed biography of the artist of 1998.[50] In one drawing, *The sacrament of sex (female version)* (c.1935) (figure 50) Hopper depicts Jo in bed dressed in a bridal veil and headdress, while he stands at the base of the bed dressed in his night shirt; he is bent over as if begging for her attentions. He has depicted himself in an effeminate manner as his night shirt is tied around the waist in a bow; he has also given himself a halo. Clearly marital sex was a difficult experience for both of them, as Jo recalled in her diary (in 1944) in relation to the 'matter of sex':

> About the first week or so I realized always with amazement, but I knew so little about this basic concern—except to be appalled at prize hog proportions that the whole thing was entirely for him, his benefit. Upon realizing this—& with the world so new & all & I emerged in such vast ignorance—I declared that since that was the status quo of that—let him have it all. I withdrew all my interest—There was my body, let him take it—but I'd not consent to be hurt *too* much—only a certain amount—I'd not be an object of sheer sadism. I was forbidden to consult with other women over the mysteries. If he had drawn a lemon, I needn't advertise his misfortune. Then he set forth to build up as neat a little job of inferiority complex for which in my ignorance was eligible. I, so subnormal—not enjoying attacks from the rear![51]

Clearly Jo was naïve about sex and had no pre-marital sexual experience, as was typical for most women of her generation. She confirms this as she said 'I couldn't help being a virgin when he married me & if I hadn't been he wouldn't have wished to marry me anyway.'[52] One assumes that a middle-class man of Hopper's generation may have had some pre-marital sex, this could have been with prostitutes in Paris, or with women like Mme Jeanne Chéruy, with whom he had a relationship in 1923 (this is detailed in Levin's biography of Hopper). It is possible that if his previous sexual experience had been with prostitutes then he would be lacking the refinements of sex as an action of love within marriage, and could perhaps explain Jo's reference to the 'attacks from the rear!' Hopper cruelly denigrated Jo's naivety in the bedroom, making a cartoon of her as the clothed virgin hurrying away from the attentions of the leering crowd in *There's a virgin—give her the works* (c1932) (figure 51). Yet one senses that these drawings which seem to express the more personal side of Hopper, indicate to an issue of a sexual nature that existed between husband and wife.

Clearly Hopper saw his wife in terms of her physicality, whether it be in terms of her naivety as he reveals in *There's a virgin—give her the works*, or whether it is sensuality that she exudes in drawings such as *Josie lisant un journal* (c.1935) (figure 52), which is denied or declined in *The sacrament of sex (female version)* (figure 50). In *Josie lisant un journal*, Hopper has portrayed her, buried, head down, up to her waist in a pile of newspapers that she is reading. Only her lower half is visible out of this pile, and her position has raised her skirts to reveal her naked buttocks. Significantly, she is wearing stockings and shoes, which appear odd with her naked buttocks. This drawing is intended to be overtly sexual, and it appears to suggest that Hopper views his wife as a sexual tease. She appears clothed in the drawing, but she is not wearing any underwear; her positions amongst the papers allows her to reveal her naked posterior to the viewer. When this drawing is viewed alongside one such as *The sacrament of sex (female version)*, then a troubled sex life can be assumed.

Then, to return to the recurring image of the unmade bed in Hopper's mature paintings, which appears in *Morning in the City* (figure 42), *A Woman in the Sun* (figure 43), *Excursion into Philosophy* (figure 11) and *Summer in the City* (figure 47), among others, it conveys a greater depth of meaning to Hopper's vision of the female. Although I will consider this in greater detail in chapter 3, it has serious psychological significance within the paintings of couples where the position of the figures on the bed adds to the observation of the psychological impact of the painting, and will be considered in terms of works such as *Excursion into Philosophy* (figure 11) and *Summer in the City* (figure 47) which are mentioned above. This could explain why Hopper refers to the figure in *A woman in the Sun* (figure 42) as a 'wise tramp'. Even though Hopper claimed there was no narrative element to his paintings, this seems to suggest that the figure had a greater significance to him. That perhaps he subconsciously applied a character to her, how else could her see her as a 'tramp'. This implies some form of narrative element to the image, to which only Hopper is privy.

Does this mean then, that Hopper's nude females should be considered as prostitutes, that the significance of the unmade bed is synonymous with their profession? I do not believe this to be the case, but feel that Hopper clearly wanted to emphasise the sexual nature of the female, and the bed certainly is a reference to sex. It is also possible that it could be a reference to the work of Dégas. Levin maintains, in both her *Catalogue Raisonné* (1995) and *Edward Hopper; The Art and the Artist* (1980), that there is a great debt to Dégas in Hopper's mature paintings. Certainly, Hopper greatly admired his

work, and had done since his days as a student, as did his wife. At Jo's suggestion they both tried to model Hopper's life as an artist on that of Dégas, by emulating his strategy for maintaining a distance between his public and private life.[53] However, if there is a reference to Dégas here, it would most certainly be with his paintings of nude females in various stages of bathing, such as *The Tub* (1886) (figure 53) and *After the Bath* (1888–92) (figure 54), where Dégas famously depicted prostitutes in their rooms. Dégas also produced many images of laundresses, dancers, cabaret singers (all considered to be women of 'loose' morals in nineteenth century France) and brothel life, with his own printing technique called the 'monotype', producing highly controversial scenes that are surprisingly intimate and witty.[54]

Does Hopper view his wife in the role of the 'tramp' or does he just identify all women with this image of woman as the sexual vamp, the temptress, or the *femme fatâle*? Perhaps the question might be answered by looking again at Hopper's drawings and cartoons. He depicts Jo as the naïve virgin bride in *There's a virgin—give her the works* (figure 51), and yet he also wants her to be physical embodiment of his sexual fantasy, indicated by his portrayal of her in *Josie lisant un journal* (figure 52). Yet, with his drawing *The sacrament of sex (female version)* (figure 50) it suggests that his wife frustrated his sexual fantasies, partially displayed in the way she reveals her buttocks to him. So then these nudes, his solitary female figures and the female component of the couples that he depicts within his mature paintings, can be seen to represent the painterly embodiment of his sexual fantasies and desires. As a result the depiction of the unmade bed in several of his works may be seen as a representation of his failed sexual and personal relationships.

It is for this reason that the painting *Girlie Show* (figure 4) can be discussed as a definitive image, both as one of Hopper's nudes, but also in isolation, as this painting portrays a 'stripper' within a show. The significance of this female nude is that she is not placed within her own private space, nor is she like Hopper's clothed solitary females who ape the cinematic *femme fatâle*s of the Film Noir genre, or the stereotypes of the advertising world, she is parading her nudity and sexuality for (male) public enjoyment. She is posing as part of her act on a public stage, and thematically is much closer to the ballet dancers painted by Dégas in *Two Dancers on Stage* (1874) (figure 55) or *Ballerina with a Bouquet, Curtseying* (1877) (figure 56).

Discussion of a Single Image : *Girlie Show* (1941)

As usual Josephine Hopper was the model for this painting (figure 4). This painting has to be included in any discussion of Hopper's female figures simply because it is so out of context with any other of his paintings on this subject. It seems totally at odds with any of his other mature paintings. It does share elements in common in that it shows the interior of a theatre; we know that the theatre was something that Hopper had always had an interest in from when he was very young, a hobby that he continued to share with his ex-actress wife Jo. However, this is where the connections end. When Hopper represents the inside of a theatre, or movie palace his interest lies in the audience, or the attendant, as in *New York Movie* (figure 9), and his isolated figures are generally portrayed before, or after the performance, or during the intermission when there is no action on stage, or movie to watch. The figures are captured in a moment of continual inactivity.

However, in *Girlie Show* (figure 4) although the female appears frozen in a moment of time, it is a moment of action. She is captured as she dances across the stage in the midst of her act, which presumably is a striptease act. Jo recalls in her diary on September 4th 1941 that she posed for the figure of a burlesque queen, and in a letter to Marion, Hopper's sister, she writes that, 'Ed. Beginning a new canvas—a burlesque queen doing a strip tease—and I posing without a stitch on in front of the stove—nothing but high heels in a lottery dance pose.'[55] We do know that Hopper had begun to think about this canvas several years earlier, as Jo notes in her diary of March 30th, 1939 that, 'E. has made such sketches at a burlesque & is juggling with advisability of attempting a canvas, but wants to see things more clearly—wants to make sure he is really interested before starting off.'[56]

One cannot help wondering whether this painting is a recollection of the time Hopper spent in Paris as a student. It is generally assumed by most literature on Hopper, from the evidence of his own words and of his letters, that the lure of 'les filles de joie' held no interest for him. Neither was he interested in the bohemian café life that became the staple of the artistic life in Paris of both his contemporaries and those of his predecessors. Barr summarised Hopper's first visit to Paris in such terms that, he 'lived in a respectable French family studying French, reading extensively in French literature, and avoiding bohemia.'[57]

Hopper's letters home to his mother recount the sights and experiences of Paris that he assumed she would like to read. Her letters in return seem to seek constant reassurance

that Hopper's social, moral and religious welfare is being attended to by his host family of Mme Louise Jammes. These letters are quoted in Levin's 1998 biography.[58] Yet, Hopper's sketches and pen and ink drawings in this period indicate that he was consistently drawn to the seedier life of Paris, and that perhaps given his background, he found himself both simultaneously repelled and attracted to the prostitutes that he sketched. He must have found the lax and almost brazen attitude to prostitution that he saw in the Paris of 1906 quite at odds to the attitude to prostitution to which he had known in the United States.

Here, we can only turn to Levin's biography of Hopper for this information, but she documents Hopper's use of prostitutes, or 'les grisettes', as models for sketches and pen and ink drawings. In fact she goes as far as to maintain that Paris was a sexual awakening for Hopper[59] and that to express the emotions that he was feeling he resorted to caricature and watercolour to depict the street walkers, in works such as, *La Grisette* (figure 57), *Fille de Joie* (figure 58), and *La Pierreuse* (figure 59). Hopper also often went to the cafés to just sit and watch and to sketch the other patrons.

It is also possible that Hopper, an avid reader, was well acquainted with literature on the subject, in particular the portrayal of the prostitutes that appeared in the works of Honoré de Balzac (1799–1850), Victor Hugo (1802–85) and Émile Zola (1840–1902). He would have undoubtedly been aware of the description of the character of Cecily in the *Mysteries of Paris* (1843) by Eugène Sue (1804–57), a novel read by Hopper and his contemporaries at art school, who exercised her power to dominate and subdue her defenceless male encounters.[60] From the evidence of *ACT I, ACT II NECK, THE ESCAPE* (figure 48), the theme of the dominant sexual female was one that had awakened an interest in him in his teenage years and continued to preoccupy him, manifesting in the female figures of his mature paintings, particularly the one in *Girlie Show* (figure 4). [61]

Many of Hopper's red-heads and other females exude sexuality and the offer of sex; but this is the most brazen and openly sexual of them all. Much of Hopper's work is open to interpretation by the viewer, as any narrative is subjective and perceived by the viewer. He provides his viewer with the limited information contained in a single moment and the way in which this information is deciphered or interpreted is in a sense due to personal experience. Much of the reading of his subject matter can be seen to be based on innuendo or suggestion. However, in *Girlie Show*, for the first and only time, Hopper has provided his viewer with a scene where the figure in the painting can be recognised

as having a particular occupation, and as a result the suggested narrative is no longer based on innuendo and/or personal interpretation.

Hopper clearly indicates the setting of the painting in the title, and Jo's letter to Marion Hopper confirms the setting as taking place at a 'Burlesque'. The female is, presumably, shown in the final stages of her act, as she is wearing nothing but her shoes, and the piece of matching blue coloured cloth which she holds so that it floats out behind her. This female can be seen as the culmination of all Hopper's sensual and sexual innuendo, even though the painting was executed in 1941. For Hopper, this female is the ultimate *femme fatâle*. She openly lures the men in the audience into her female trap. By performing her striptease she has paraded her sexual attributes for the enjoyment of the male audience, tantalizing them with the suggestion of the act of sex; a promise which she will not deliver as she will leave the stage once her 'act' is over. She is a full-blooded, vampirous development of the female depicted in the 1896 drawing. She does not desire to entrap one man, but all men; she is the visual culmination of Hopper's mother, his wife, Jo, and all other women. This painting depicts the female as she performs the ritual which leads to *ACT I* (figure 48); as, with her attractive body, tease and tantalising sexual promise she lures all men into her web, before she captures them, and then becomes something quite different

The sense of the woman-fearing misogynistic male that comes through in Hopper's representation of the female is similar to that displayed in the work of the Norwegian artist Edvard Munch (1863–1944). In Munch's 'Frieze of Life' there are several paintings that display the various stages of a relationship between a man and woman. For the most part, Munch's work can be seen as directly autobiographical, as the various social, sexual and emotional aspects of human relationships can be directly linked to specific events in his romantic life.

Munch's particular vision of the female was also modelled from his personal experiences, but unlike Hopper, Munch never married as he felt that his precarious mental state would be prohibitive and that marriage or a wife would interfere with his artistic production.[62] In fact, Munch's relationships were ill-fated to say the least, as he became attracted both to married women and those of unstable mental health. One such relationship ended when one female, Tulla Larsen, became obsessed with him and when he refused to marry her, she tried to shoot herself, instead ending up shooting the top off one of Munch's fingers; the irony being that this injury made it difficult for Munch to hold his palette.

Tulla Larsen was the model for several of Munch's misogynistic paintings of women and relationships such as *Hate* (1907) (figure 60) and *The Murderess* (1907) (figure 61) as well as the major painting *The Dance of Life* (1899–1900) (figure 62). As with Hopper, the image of the *femme fatâle* appears frequently in Munch's paintings and lithographs. This was a common theme in Symbolist art, but Munch's treatment of the subject reflects a particularly personal attitude to women, and to physical intimacy, as bringers of both love and death. This can be seen in lithographs such as *Madonna* (1895–1902) (figure 63), which is probably one of the most powerful of Munch's images of women. The woman is highly sensual with her rounded breasts and curved hips, and appears to be depicted at the height of sexual ecstasy, as her eyes are closed and her lips are slightly parted.

For Munch, such sensuality had a strong religious quality, made clear in the woman's halo, and the inclusion of the foetus in the bottom left corner; both of which are traditional references to the Madonna and child. The title of the lithograph also makes clear this reference. Yet, the image of the woman in love is also strongly associated with death. Although Munch includes symbols of life in the lithograph, with the foetus and the sperm in the decorative border, these are subverted by their representation. The foetus is wizened and death-like, and it casts an air or foreboding that is almost evil, over the entire composition. The features of the woman can be seen to be emerging out of the blackness of the lithograph as well, as sinking back into the blackness of oblivion or death. In the same way the swoon of ecstasy could also be read as the last swoon of death. Munch wrote about this image, 'Your lips, as red as ripening fruits gently part as if in pain. It is the smile of a corpse.'[63] Clearly, this image reveals Munch's sense of the danger and foreboding of the *femme fatâle.*

Munch's females are similar to those of Hopper in that they both convey a sense of danger and foreboding as signified in the *femme fatâle* figure, but Hopper, because he paints in a realist style, creates this psychological reference more by implication rather than the clear definition of the pure evil of 'woman' as seen in Munch's images. Certainly, Hopper's images do not contain the elements of paranoia that are visible in Munch's work, nor are they imbued so deeply with the personal trauma that is also found there.

Girlie Show (figure 4) exudes a sense of danger, that is perceived potential danger to men in her role as the *femme fatâle.* Hopper's woman is strong and confident and

dominates the space in which she is placed. This element of danger is heightened in Hopper's use of red. She has flame-red hair, which has psychological associations with a feisty or fiery temperament, and red is commonly associated with danger. Hopper has also used the same colour to define the contours of the figure's face and lips, as well as emphasising her nipples. So where this figure is imbued with the sense of the *femme fatâle*, as in the work of Munch, she does not hold the same clear reference to death. This does not mean that there is no foreboding, or references to death in Hopper's work, but, as will be discussed later, they are implied across his body of work during his mature period and perhaps obviously, they occur more clearly in the paintings executed in the last years of Hopper's life. However misogynistic as Hopper's illustration of the female may appear to be, he does not refer to 'woman' as synonymous with death, as in the paintings of Munch.

The most interesting element about *Girlie Show* is its difference in the treatment of its voyeuristic nature. Hopper has implied an element of voyeurism in paintings like *Morning in the City* (figure 42), but intimated that the female is either unaware or unconcerned by this unseen observation, the observer or the viewer is alone in this scrutiny of the figure. However, in *Girlie Show* (figure 4), Hopper has also depicted some of the audience at the base of the composition. This audience, not unsurprisingly, is a male one. Hopper has placed four male figures in the audience; it is only the back of their heads that is visible, as their attention is directed towards the female on the stage. The other male figure, whose face is visible and back is towards the female, seems to be a part of the orchestra or band. Therefore Hopper has made the viewer complicit with the act of observation that is occurring in the theatre.

The female is also portrayed in a way that makes her appear more unattainable, rather than less in comparison to the other nudes that Hopper painted. This is because he has clearly placed her on the stage and defined a boundary between her and the audience, as well as the viewer. This female may be the most sexually demonstrative of all his female figures, but she is also the most unavailable. She is the pictorial embodiment of the sexual fantasy; of Hopper's fantasy. She offers her sensuous body, with her rounded hips, narrow waist, long limbs and perky breasts, yet the audience can only watch the display that she puts on for them. She can tantalise her audience, both pictorial, and actual, but they must leave unfulfilled by the promise she offers.

Clearly the painting represents Hopper's enjoyment of painting the scene that is enjoyed from the forbidden view. Throughout his mature work, he places his viewer in the role

of the voyeur, as did Dégas with his nude female bathers, and who famously, but controversially, stated that he wanted to paint as if the subject was viewed 'through the keyhole'.[64] In 1941 when Hopper was completing this work, the burlesque show was the topic of popular debate. His choice in picking this subject matter at this time would suggest that it is also his reaction to contemporary issues, as well as tapping into his interest and enjoyment of the hidden view. It perhaps also indicates his contrary nature which tends to only reveal itself in his more intimate sketches and drawings, like those discussed earlier relating to his sexual relationship with his wife. In April 1942 in New York, Supreme Justice Aaron J. Levy denounced burlesque shows as 'dangerous to the morals and welfare of the community' when he denied the application of a theatre owner to reopen his venue when it had previously be closed by the city, saying that the shows should be banned because they were 'inartistic filth'.[65]

Hopper completed almost thirty sketches for this painting, and some of these were done at the Republic Theatre, New York. This particular theatre was the venue for Minsky's which was considered one of the most 'scandal-ridden' revues of the time.[66] This is also indicative of Hopper's contrary nature, as he has not only depicted a scene that is a topic of current social and moral debate, but he used Minsky's, the most controversial establishment of the burlesque scene as the basis for the painting.

Many elements of this painting reflect the contentious nature of Hopper's sexual and personal life. As such, one is justified to then stress the sexual nature of the painting, especially as Jo (the model) represents Hopper's ideal female form. This female figure can be seen as representative of Hopper's perception of all female figures, or just of Jo Hopper. This female flaunts her sexuality for the male viewer, and as such she is the female 'ideal' offering sex before the entrapment as defined by Hopper's *ACT I, ACT II NECK, THE ESCAPE* (figure 48). Unlike Hopper's other female nudes, the burlesque dancer is confident and aware of her sexual allure as she displays her body to an audience, both within the painting as well as that of the unseen viewer. This female can be perceived as the representation of the 'Jo' that Hopper would prefer his wife to be; his sexual ideal. As his sexual ideal, this female figure, one who is confidently aware of her sensuality, would be compliant to his sexual desires, unlike his rather naïve, and perhaps even sexually repressed, wife. One irony in this painting is, that Jo, the actress, is momentarily figured as the sexual 'ideal' that he desired.

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[1] M. Pointon, *Naked Authority: The Body in Western Painting 1830–1908*, New York and Cambridge, 1990, p.11.

[2] Many examples of this are housed in the Hopper Collection at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, and reproductions have more recently been collected in Levin's *Catalogue Raisonné* of 1995.
[3] W. H. Gerdts, *The Great American Nude, A History in Art*, New York and Washington, 1974, p.14.
[4] Ibid., p.123.
[5] Ibid., p.63–4.
[6] J. I. Smith, 'Painted Fire Engine Panels,' *Antiques*, 32, November 1937, pp.245–47.
[7] D. McCarthy, *The Nude in American Painting, 1950–1980*, Cambridge, England, 1998, p.83.
[8] A. Barr, *Edward Hopper: Retrospective Exhibition*. New York, Museum of Modern Art, 1933, p.10.
[9] B. O'Doherty, 'Portrait: Edward Hopper,' *Art in America*, 52, December 1964, p.73.
[10] Ibid., p.73.
[11] G. Levin, *Edward Hopper, Catalogue Raisonné*, New York, 1995, volume III, p.59.
[12] Ibid., p.49.
[13] G. Levin, *Edward Hopper, The Art and the Artist*, New York, 1980, p.19.
[14] G. Levin, 1995, volume III, p.24–5.
[15] Where catalogue number are used they refer to the reference numbers given to works in Gail Levin's *Catalogue Raisonné*.
[16] G. Levin, 1995, volume III, p.22.
[17] B. B. Perlman, *Robert Henri: His Life and Art*, New York and London, 1991, p.87. Despite this encouragement to his students, Henri was never as enthusiastic about Matisse as he was about the work of Manet, Velasquez and Hals.
[18] W. I. Homer, *Robert Henri and his Circle*, New York, 1969, p.163.
[19] J. Flam, *Matisse, the Man and his Art, (1869-1918)*, London, 1986, p.191.
[20] Matisse's *The Blue Nude* (1907) was also exhibited at the Armoury Show in 1913 and at the De Zayas Gallery, New York, in December 1920. Hopper may also have been able to view the work on these occasions.
[21] J. Flam, 1986, p.191.
[22] L. Gowing, *Matisse*, Norwich, 1979, p.59.
[23] Ibid., p.57.
[24] Ibid., p.57.
[25] Ibid., p.56.
[26] Ibid., p.58.
[27] J. Flam, 1986, p.191.
[28] K. Clark, *The Nude: A Study in Ideal Art*, London, 1956, pp.294-5.
[29] D. Tashjian, *William Carlos Williams and the American Scene, 1920–1940*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 1978, pp.30–1.
[30] Matisse visited Biskra in Algeria in 1906. The trip was probably inspired by his reading Gide's book *The Immoralist*
[31] J. Flam, 1986, p.195.
[32] Ibid., p.196.
[33] It should be noted that when Jo Hopper undertook the recording of Hopper's work after their marriage in 1924 the date attributed to works pre 1924 were applied to the works by Jo Hopper. Hence the vague dating of works executed at the Whitney studio club, where they are all given the time period 1923–4.
[34] G. Levin, 1980, chronology.
[35] February 3–March 23, 1924, '119th Annual Exhibition' at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia.
[36] March 20–April 22, 1924, 'Fourth International Water Color Exnibition', at the Art Institute of Chicago. Exhibited *Deck of a Beam Trawler*, *House of Squam Light*, *Beam Trawler Seal*, and *Italian Quarter, Gloucester*.
[37] May 1–25, 1924, 'Annual Members Exhibition' at the Whitney Studio Club.
[38] His illustrations continued to be published in *Scribner's* Magazine until 1927.
[39] G. Levin, *Edward Hopper, An Intimate Biography*, Los Angeles, California and London, 1998, p.175.
[40] Record Book III p.75. Cited in G. Levin, 1995, Volume III, p.368.
[41] Ibid., p.300.
[42] Ibid., p.300.

[43] H. A. Guerber, *Greece and Rome*, London, 1994, pp.98–99.
[44] P. Mérimée, 'La Vénus d'Ille' (1837), from M. J. Tilby (ed.), *Prosper Mérimée: Carmen et autres nouvelles choisies*, London, 1981, pp.81–107.
[45] G. Levin, 1998, p.xiii, and pp.15–16.
[46] M. Pointon, 1990, p.4.
[47] G. Levin, 1998, p.23.
[48] Garrett Hopper lacked the commercial abilities of his paternal family, being a man rather more inclined to literature and art. The deaths of both his father and grandfather meant that he was unable to finish his education as he was required to work to support his widowed mother. He became a drifter until he settled in Nyack and married Hopper's mother, Elizabeth Griffiths Smith, where he went into business, purchasing his own Dry Goods Store. Garrett worked hard to make the business succeed, but he was essentially forced out of business in 1901, when he was only 41, as he was unable to compete with the large department stores of Manhattan, which had become much more accessible to the local community of Nyack, via the railroad. See G. Levin, 1998, pp.7–9.
[49] Ibid., p.21.
[50] Ibid., p.176.
[51] Jo Hopper diary entry for October 12, 1944. Ibid., pp.179–80.
[52] Ibid., pp.179–80.
[53] Ibid., p.183.
[54] R. McMullen, *Dégas, His Life, Times and Work*, London, 1985, pp.271–2.
[55] G. Levin, 1995, volume III, p.282.
[56] Jo Hopper diary entry March 30, 1939. Ibid., p.282.
[57] A. H. Barr Jr., 1933, p.10.
[58] G. Levin, 1998, see pp.52–4.
[59] Ibid., p.61.
[60] Ibid., p.46.
[61] See page 47 for discussion of this image.
[62] U. Bischoff, *Edvard Munch*, Cologne, 1993, p.45.
[63] R. Heller, *Edvard Munch: The Scream*, London, 1973, p.22.
[64] A. Callen, *The Spectacular Body, Science, Method and Meaning in the Work of Dégas*, New Haven and London, 1995, p.108.
[65] B. Sobel, *A Pictorial History of Burlesque*, New York, 1956, p.184.
[66] G. Levin, 1998, p.335.

Chapter 2.
Hopper's Solitary Figures.

Hopper's paintings from his mature period serve to create what can be seen as a defining portrait of twentieth century America. Goodrich defines this 'portrait' of America stating that, 'his art was charged with strong personal emotion, with a deep attachment to our familiar everyday world, in all its ugliness, banality, and beauty.'[1] Hopper's solitary figures are one of the definitive themes of his entire body of work, and as such reflect the artist's own introspective nature, as well as his sense of a modern America.

By the early to mid 1920s Hopper had become primarily interested in the solitary figure, as opposed to painting the hustle and bustle of everyday New York life around him, as prescribed by Henri and the other members of 'The Eight'. The solitary figure is predominantly female, probably due to the gender of his model, although there are significant exceptions like the male figures in *Sunday* (1929) (figure 5) and *Pennsylvania Coal Town* (1947) (figure 64). The solitary female figure does appear prior to the 1920s, as in *Summer Interior* (1909) (figure 65), which was painted shortly after his return from Paris, but it is not until works such as *Girl at Sewing Machine* (c.1921) (figure 66), where we can see that Hopper is establishing a theme that is to become dominant throughout his future work.

The solitary figure, male or female, represents for Hopper what Goodrich terms as the 'monotony and loneliness of the city'.[2] However, this lonely state does not just exist in his depiction of the figure within an urban environment. Hopper also has the ability to endow his canvases with a sense of loneliness and isolation where he has not included a figure, in paintings such as *Rooms by the Sea* (1951) (figure 34) and *Sun in an Empty Room* (1965) (figure 3).

These two paintings are particularly significant because they do not contain figures. They demonstrate Hopper's process of reduction in his work as it developed and they portray a human environment, the interior space, but devoid of human habitation. This pervading aura of isolation is also key to his representation of the American landscape as in *Solitude #56* (1944) (figure 67), and particularly in his series of paintings of lighthouses.

The solitary figure is a defining symbol within Hopper's painting, and as such represents the pervading sense of isolation and loneliness that he experienced within his environments. This sentiment is most poignant within his paintings of the city as his figures seem to become 'isolated within the wide impersonality of the city; they seem to epitomise the lonely lives of so many city dwellers, the solitude that can be experienced most intensely among millions.'[3] This solitude is emphasised by the still and silent quality that pervades his canvases, and yet it is also timeless. Hopper records an urban America of the 1920s and 1930s and his depictions of rural America seem to date from around the turn of the century.[4] This timeless quality is particularly pertinent to the sense of loneliness and isolation experienced by his figures.

Hopper's definitive America is however fixed in the period of the 1920s and 1930s. He incorporates the consumer culture and early advertising slogans of this period, but he does not respond to their changing flux, and so the development of the neon signs, plate glass windows, huge shiny cars, and enormous parking lots of the 1960s and 1970s do not feature in his paintings; they were left to inspire the Photo-Realists. So the icons, or symbols, that Hopper chooses to represent his version of modern America, are all influenced by the style of offices, automats and diners, theatres, movie houses, motels and gas stations that he experienced in the twenties and the thirties. Perhaps the most significant element of this is that the America that he depicts, dates from the time of the Great Depression that began with the Wall Street crash of October 1929.[5]

However, Hopper had begun this pictorial representation of a country in crisis before the Depression started. His figures, even before 1929, seem to be in a permanent state of woeful submission to their fate. In paintings, such as *Sunday* (1926) (figure 5), *Automat* (1927) (figure 8), and *Chop Suey* (1929) (figure 68), Hopper alludes to the plight of those about to lose their jobs, the despair of those who are already without one, and those who still have an occupation are defined as trapped by it, or oppressed by their life. The figures that he paints before 1929 are premonitions of the Depression to come, they are portrayed in positions of alienation and resignation to their plight.

So Hopper's introverts can be seen as representing much more than just a reference to the Great Depression of the Thirties. These solitary people imply something endemic about modern American culture that predates the Depression: they reveal the essence of his vision of modern America, in which the human figure is set within an alienating and solitary world. It might be said that Hopper's great subject was the loneliness of the human condition within the modern age. Clearly, this sense of deep-seated alienation

was present in Hopper's representation of modern America before 1929, and within himself, but it condemns his vision to be permanently and inescapably trapped within this aura of loneliness and isolation as if the Great Depression never lifted, and continued until his death in 1967.

This symbolic use of the isolated figure is an indication of Hopper paring his work down to the barest essentials in order to create the effect he desired. In each painting we find the absolute minimum of detail or expression to give the viewer the visual information required. *Night Windows* (1928) (figure 69), is one such example. Levin maintains that the influence for this painting is indisputably John Sloan's 1910 etching of the same title (figure 70), which is housed in the Whitney Museum of American Art.[6] Sloan has focussed on the female life of the 'rear windows'. One female dresses her hair as she looks out of the window, and another woman is hanging out her washing on the line strung between the tenement buildings.

Essentially, the major difference between Sloan's work and that of Hopper is their different treatment of social environment. Sloan's work is predominantly based in the working-class tenements and he encapsulates the closeness and the claustrophobic nature of tenement living. Hopper's solitary female figure is given the interior space entirely to herself and she is isolated within it. Sloan's image has clear links to his works *A Woman's Work* (figure 71) and *Sunday, Women Drying their Hair* (figure 72), both of 1912, where he portrayed a woman hanging her washing from her tenement building and women drying their hair on the roof of their building. However, Hopper's painting is imbued with much more sensuality and voyeurism than Sloan's image. The focus of Hopper's image is much more intimate as a result of the voyeuristic overtones.

The voyeuristic approach to Hopper's *Night Windows* (figure 69), and all of his images where he endows the viewer with a glimpse into the private space of the human figure, is developed from the style of the French Modernist painters, Dégas's female bathers in particular. Hopper borrowed from Dégas the notion of the freedom possessed by the voyeur to watch from a hidden position, the forbidden scene as if seen 'through the keyhole'.[7] The power and the position of the unseen spectator is described by Pollock as 'an opposition between home, the inside domain of the known and the contained personality and the outside, the space of freedom, where there is liberty to look without being watched or even recognised in the act of looking.'[8] Hopper endows the viewer of his painting this special, hidden position of power over the female displayed.

The fleeting glimpse of the private world beyond the window frame described by Hopper in this painting is an echo of the sentiments in William Carlos Williams' poem *The Young Housewife* of 1917. The first verse reads thus:

> At ten A. M. the young housewife
> Moves about in negligee behind
> The wooden walls of her husband's house
> I pass solitary in my car.[9]

Williams' poem specifies that the vision he describes of this woman in her private space occurs at 10 am, in the morning, whereas Hopper's vision is at night, but his poem does indicate the power of the unseen voyeur to observe the forbidden view of the young woman in her negligee. It is also significant that the glimpse of the young woman is experienced by the subject of Williams' poem as he passes the house in his car. Hopper's painting also has the sense that a young woman has been glimpsed by someone from a passing car or train.

We assume that Hopper has painted a warm night because at least one of the windows is open, allowing the night breeze to billow the blue curtain out into the air. The billowing curtain is a device that Hopper used repeatedly, and it is possible that it was influenced by films from the 1910s.[10] Hopper gives the viewer no sense of *who* this woman is, focussing on her private moments inside her apartment or hotel room. He has placed the viewer outside the interior space, and indeed at a distance from it, to enhance the voyeuristic nature of the scene, suggesting that the viewer is passing this scene, unseen, perhaps whilst riding on the 'El'. The woman is unaware that she is being observed, as her back is turned towards the window.

In many of Hopper's paintings of interiors he places the viewer in the position of the unseen spectator, but in this early painting he is less subtle than he later becomes within this kind of observation, and clearly displays here to the viewer that he/she is being made complicit in the voyeuristic actions of the artist. In the later we are placed directly inside the room, and the sense of observation becomes much more subtle in its meanings, but no less subversive in its effects. In such images Hopper creates a much more uneasy atmosphere by placing the viewer inside the room, or much closer to the object of the observation. Although, at no time does the figure, or person being viewed acknowledge the presence of the artist, or the viewer, there is no longer the cover of anonymity to hide behind. This is how Hopper creates such an uncomfortable feeling in his paintings of interiors because we are complicit in the act of observation by the fact that we are not able to hide from discovery, or view ourselves.

In the painting *Night Windows* (figure 69), it is unclear what the woman is wearing; it could be a pink negligee, or a pink towel or a nightdress. It is evident that she has been illustrated in a manner in which she would not wish to be seen publicly, in that she is not in her outdoor clothes, or fully clothed. What is interesting here is the assumption that the figure is a female. There are certain reasons for this assumption. Firstly, the pink garment that she is wearing; unless it is a bath towel, would generally suggest that the wearer is female. Secondly, she is bending as if to pick something up and the result of the movement made, with the knees and legs together, would be considered a more feminine position in which to bend down. Thirdly, acknowledging Hopper's status as a heterosexual male artist, and with such a voyeuristic tone to the painting, the most obvious assumption would be that the object of his illicit observation would be female.

The main focus of Hopper's interest in the woman in this painting seems to be the curves of her hips and buttocks. It is perhaps the rounded, and gently curving contours of her figure that hold his interest in contrast to the angularity and regular lines of the outside of the apartment building. Her 'curves' are a visual foil to the rigid lines of the building, created by the window frames and the interior of the room that can be seen through the windows. However, this image does not appear to be overly salacious; we feel instead that we are witnessing the private lives of the individuals of the city, in the same way that we can observe figures passing in the street below. Perhaps Hopper chose this moment, not because of its voyeuristic, sexual overtones, but because of his repeated interest in the significance of private moments of solitude; a consistent concern through which he illustrates his sense of the human condition. Thus his paintings confirm an interest in people and human behaviour, and are in turn a reflection of his introspective nature, as well as his desire for solitude.

In this context it is interesting to note that the only source of light in the painting is from inside the room, and this highlights the ways in which Hopper uses colour within the image. For example, a blue curtain in the window on the left, the green carpet and the pink clad figure through the central window, and through the window on the right of the painting the curtains and the furnishings have a reddish appearance. Hopper has placed his the window blinds (one of his trademark images) in the windows to the left and right, but not in the central window, which allows a clear view of the figure behind the window.

There are two defining moments which represent a watershed in Hopper's representation of the female figure. The first is his work as a commercial illustrator, and the second, as has already been mentioned, his marriage. Hopper's work as a commercial illustrator is paramount to his rendition of the figure as his premise for working forced him to consider and portray figures in terms of 'type'. This stereotyping, or typecasting his representations was necessary within the format of commercial work as his illustrations were executed to set commissions, and were required to be instantly recognisable by their audience as representative of a particular type of person or profession.

When Hopper's body of work is considered, generally the emphasis is placed on his mature oil paintings, and his early student works, his illustrations and his etchings are ignored. Levin was the first to examine his illustrative work in detail in her book *Edward Hopper as Illustrator* (1979) which developed from her preliminary work for the *Catalogue Raisonné* (1995). There are several reasons why this particular area of his work has been so consistently ignored, not at least of which was the reluctance of the artist, and his wife, to speak about his career as a commercial illustrator before he became established as a 'full-time' painter.[11] Certainly the antagonism that was felt by Jo Hopper particularly, as was experienced by Alfred Barr in 1933, would not have encouraged any observer or commentator on Hopper's work to discuss his illustration work.

Barr felt the force of Jo Hopper's indignation when he wrote about Hopper's illustrations in an essay for the catalogue of a retrospective exhibition of Hopper's work at Museum of Modern Art, New York in 1933. Jo particularly objected to Barr's comments that:

> He is now famous but for twenty years his career as an artist was obscure to the point of mystery.... He is now famous as a painter of landscape and architecture but his student years were devoted exclusively to figure painting and illustration,[12]

and Barr's further observation that, 'He was too uncompromising to make a successful illustrator.... After a mediocre summer's work in 1915 he began to devote most of his time to pot boiling illustration. In his spare time he learned to etch.'[13] Hopper allowed the publication of the essay to go ahead as he was seemingly embarrassed by his wife's letter to Alice Roullier on 25th November 1933, who was the Chairperson of the exhibition committee of the Chicago Arts Club, where the exhibition was to tour after its showing at Museum of Modern Art.

Although Jo actually sent a more restrained letter to Alice Roullier, the original still exists amongst her papers. Her words were as follows:

> He certainly did do plenty of pot boiling—but was never a wage slave. He had no one to support and could live such manner of frugal life as he pleased. He was so accomplished a draftsman that he could easily turn his hand to illustration—such illustration as he could get without compromise—he never did that and could not do pretty girls—he'd get locomotives etc. Did covers of ship yards [*The Dry Dock Dial*]—express companies etc. [*Wells Fargo Messenger* and *Express Messenger*]—all very much in character. *Scribner's* were wonderful to him—let him go his own gait—careful not to give him things not his kind to do. He did work hard—when he was working—but no one could make him work more than three days a week—he rest he painted in his studio to suit himself. His illustration or any of his commercial work was a thing a part—not only pot boiling—and strictly his own affair. Same as our washing the dishes or washing out silk underwear—nobody's business not our career. He didn't even runabout with the illustration profession. His friends were the painters....[14]

The language indicates her strength of feeling on the subject of his illustration work, and her desire to protect his image as an artist; the desire to keep some elements of his life enigmatic in a similar manner to the way that Dégas had maintained privacy as regards his personal life.[15]

There is also another element to this defensive response, as it was said at a time when Abstraction had begun to challenge Realist painting for supremacy in America, and as Levin notes, Realist painting was easily labelled, and sometimes dismissed, with derogative references to its 'illustrative' nature.[16] For example, in 1948, a critic had remarked of *Summer Evening* (1947) (figure 73) that it was a romantic painting and as such would be appropriate as an illustration in 'any woman's magazine'.[17] However, Emily Genauer's comments were not entirely disparaging, even though, in response to Abstract Expressionism, she did criticise his work for being too illustrative, she also commented on his dogmatic independence and singularity of purpose, as she wrote, 'It actually takes courage these days for an artist not to conform to the successful formulas of the abstractionists and surrealists.'[18] Not unsurprisingly, perhaps, Hopper reacted to this denigration of his style and reference to the illustrative, and potential narrative, quality of his work. He rebutted the comments made by Genauer and was quoted in *Time* as saying that:

> I never thought of putting the figures in until I actually started it last summer. Why any art director would tear the picture apart. The figures were not what interested me; it was the light streaming down, and the night all around.[19]

He also claimed that he had had the idea for the painting in the back of his mind for about twenty years before he got to the point of transposing it to canvas.

Hopper resented his period as an illustrator partly because he did not enjoy the work, and found it too restricting. As he claimed, 'Illustration did not really interest me. I was forced into it in an effort to make some money. That's all. I tried to force myself to have some interest in it. But it wasn't very real.'[20] Hopper also referred to the demeaning nature of the work, explaining how he would had initially to take his work around to the commercial illustration offices, and effectively 'peddle' his work. In an article by Alexander Eliot in *Time*, he was quoted speaking frankly of the sense of embarrassment and humiliation experience peddling his work in this way, when he said that, 'Sometimes I'd walk around the block a couple of times before I'd go in, wanting the job for money and at the same time hoping to hell I wouldn't get the lousy thing.'[21]

This is also confirmed by a statement he made in 1956, when he claimed that 'I've never been able to paint what I set out to paint.'[22] This was one of the reasons that Hopper almost never executed commissions, because he wished his compositions to be more fluid and less constrained. One notable exception to this is his painting of the house belonging to the playwright, Charles MacArthur and his actress wife, Helen Hayes, which he entitled *Pretty Penny* (1939) (figure 74), which was the name which the MacArthurs gave to their home.

Hopper grudgingly agreed to this commission, but only after much persuasion and pressure from Jo and his agent Frank Rehn. Helen Hayes confessed later in an interview that she 'had never met a more misanthropic, grumpy, grouchy individual in all my life....I was utterly unnerved by this man'.[23] She also claimed that he was 'like a big hell-cat of anger and resentment at the whole thing.'[24] Despite Hopper's petulant complaints that he could not 'do this house', saying 'I don't want to paint this house. It does nothing for me....There's no light and there's no air that I can find for that house.'[25] He executed a work that was 'enhanced by a vision of great clarity'[26], praised by Rehn and which delighted the MacArthurs. This would explain why he would have felt uncomfortable working within the constraints of an illustration commission, as the parameters for the work would have been very specific. If he resented the constraints of painting a particular house, which really was the only restriction he had, the confines of commercial illustration and advertising work must have been unbearable.

Hopper also saw the period of his commercial illustration work as confirmation of his lack of success as an artist, and could possibly explain why once he had established his professional artistic career, that he was reluctant to look back on years when he had struggled to support himself financially. His commercial illustration work served as a reminder of the harder, less positive period of his artistic life. Yet, he was somewhat contradictory about his perception of his abilities as a commercial artist.

He told Goodrich in 1946 that he believed he was a skilled commercial artist because unlike most he could draw human figures.[27] However, in contrast to this he is quoted in an article in the *New York Post* in 1935 displaying a different opinion of his work. In this instance he is quoted as claiming that he believed that he was a poor illustrator because he was not interested in the right subjects. He claimed that, 'I was always interested in architecture, but the editors wanted people waving their arms.'[28] His mature work as a full-time artist enabled him to pursue this interest in architecture.

Hopper's air of cool detachment and reluctance to portray figures 'waving their arms' is borne out by his illustrations. He tended to avoid romantic fiction, or fantasy commissions. Instead he preferred to illustrate what could be seen as more mundane subject matter, the everyday, the industrial; the form and function of the world around him, and as a result there was greater scope for his work with trade magazines, such as *Hotel Management* (1924–) and *The Morse Dry Dock Dial* (1918–23). However, by limiting the market for his commercial work to this non-fiction area and by rejecting fantasy or fiction work, he encountered problems. He found that his artistic niche was being encroached first by photography, and secondly, the advances in the technology of the printing process. The combination of these two elements had the resulting effect that it became increasingly expensive to pay an illustrator to execute the same type of work as a photographer.[29]

As a result, the work for illustrators was increasingly limited to children's literature and fantasy, neither of which were considered to be particularly worthy styles of working, and neither of which suited Hopper's working style.[30] Secondly, the art world as a whole by the 1920s had begun to make a distinction between illustration and fine art, even though writers such as James B. Carrington defended the art and the artistic skill of the commercial illustrator in an article he wrote in *Scribner's*. As he said:

> No one who follows the development of modern art can afford to over look the work of men and women who draw for illustration, for the time has long since past when illustration may be considered beneath the dignity of the most ambitious art student.

> Some of the most admired painters of our time were known in their early days as successful illustrators, and they found the work of illustration a thorough test of their technical equipment, and discovered that the line between the illustration and painting was often hard to define.[31]

It seems that despite Carrington's attempt to raise the status of illustration work, even those employed in its execution were not convinced by his arguments. Both Hopper and Jo disliked the mention of Hopper's illustration work, and in fact Jo was quite outspoken in her contempt for those who made the mistake of discussing it or even vocalising its presence in his mature paintings. She said that, '[he] doesn't like at all all this playing up of his being an illustrator and having people see only illustration in his pictures where it isn't.'[32] Yet, despite these vehement denials made by both the Hoppers, and the lack of discussion on, or interest in, his commercial work before Levin's work of 1979, it is difficult *not* to accept that the specific nature of illustration work had an influence on his mature paintings. The unfortunate result of this ignorance of his early illustration work is that its influence on his later work is either little appreciated or denied, as it was by his wife.

However, in 1935, Hopper notably wrote that:

> In every artist's development the germ of the later work is always found in the earlier. The nucleus around which the artist's intellect builds his work is himself; the central ego, personality, or whatever it may be called, and this changes little from birth to death. What he was once, he always is, with slight modification. Changing fashions or methods or subject matter alter him little or not at all.[33]

This statement by Hopper is important for several reasons. Firstly, it confirms the personal nature, or 'self' that he put into his work, and it is the essence of this that has led to the assumption that his work differed little, or that there was almost no development in his work through his lifetime, particularly in relation to his work from around 1924 until his last work executed in 1965. At least this is the assumption made by critics on his work, such as Lloyd Goodrich. Secondly, there is truth in his words that the ethos of the central ego, or personality, changes little through his body of work. However it can be seen to deepen or increase, particularly in the case of the sense of loneliness and isolation with which he imbues his works. Thirdly, it does confirm that, at least at one point in his career, Hopper acknowledged the debt his mature oil paintings owed to the early illustration work that he produced between 1906 and 1924.

Hopper's words here constitute a rare reference to his early illustration work, and are particularly significant as they are unlike his more usual dismissive comments where he would, or his wife would on his behalf, maintain that it had no relevance to his mature work. In fact, other than in Levin's study of 1979, there are relatively few references to his being an illustrator at all. His work is not mentioned in any books on illustration, nor in any illustration catalogues.[34] However, despite his vehement denigration, later in life, of his commercial artistic career, he kept many of his illustrations. In fact, not only did he keep the illustrations, but also the proofs and the periodicals in which they were published.[35] These are now contained in the archives of the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, and catalogued in Levin's *Catalogue Raisonné.*

The significance of this collection of his commercial work is that as it represented work that he despised that he should keep it all, and also it indicates the stature of his career as an illustrator, by those who used his work. Levin maintains that it was only important illustrators who had their work returned to them by the editors.[36] It does appear though, that Hopper only kept the work from his last few years as an illustrator, from 1920–24. Perhaps this could be attributed to the fact that during this time he began to have greater success as a painter, and that as he started to exhibit watercolours and etchings during this period with the Whitney Studio Club, for example, he, in effect, felt more comfortable with this work as his artistic reputation grew.

Hopper's commercial illustrations are significant as they provided him with subject matter and a stylistic influence for his mature paintings. After his return from Paris in 1907, Hopper was employed by the Sherman and Byron Advertising Agency, and by 1912, he was supplying material to periodicals such as *Everybody's*, *The Metropolitan Magazine*, *Sunday Magazine* and *System*, and he later went on to provide illustrations, and in some cases, cover designs for *Hotel Management*, *The Morse Dry Dock Dial*, *Scribner's* and the *Wells Fargo Messenger.*[37] Until 1924, commercial art provided Hopper with an income. The number of publications to which he supplied material indicates his success at commercial illustration.

One of the most significant elements of Hopper's total dislike of his commercial illustration work, was that due to financial circumstance, he was compelled to do it. To Hopper, it must have seemed like interminable drudgery, and it explains the depth of feeling revealed in paintings like *Office in a Small City* (1953) (figure 17), where the solitary male figure is depicted in a state of silent, introspection, reflecting the artist's personal experience of the alienating nature of the grind of office employment, where

the employee is condemned to a lifetime of servitude within the workplace, with no hope of relief or escape. Hopper must have sensed this feeling of entrapment within the profession of commercial illustration as before 1924 it must have seemed that his desire to be a professional artist would be unattainable.

The sense of alienation, then, that is revealed in these images, particularly in Hopper's representations of the office and of office workers, can be clearly understood as a reference to his personal experiences. It also reflects the monotony and alienation of the office worker, which is also depicted in contemporary plays such as, Elmer Rice's *The Adding Machine* (1923), or Murray Schisgal's *The Typists* (1960). This particular thematic area of Hopper's work, the office and the figure within that particular space, is considered in much greater detail in chapter 5. Yet, it cannot be ignored that his early illustration work clearly had a stylistic impact upon his representation of figures in all areas of his work.

Hopper's illustrative work required him to closely observe the daily lives of those around him; in short, a close observation of people, their lives, habits, and environments. The magazines for which Hopper worked required their illustrators to portray people and scenes that their reader could empathise with.[38] To fulfil this obligation the artist was required to scrutinise the world around him and identify the attributes of typical occupations, lifestyles, desires and facial as well as physical 'types' for the figures.

As such, Hopper was required to show stereotypes that his audience would easily recognise and be able to relate to. In the cases of literary illustrations he was required to give a greater sense and weight to the narrative, as he does with his illustration from 1921 for Stephen French Williams' story *Sacrifice*, which was published in parts in *Everybody's* in 1922 (figure 75). His illustrations accompany the text which reads:

> Then without warning, came the charge—Lilla became aware of an apparition—a sort of naked harlequin, magnified by a towering head-dress. Another followed, crouching paralysed before that inexorable advance.

In these two illustrations, Hopper has had to convey the sense of action, excitement and fear of the language and transfer this to his work. He has shown the startled Lilla backed against a tree looking towards her attackers. In the second canvas, and the lower area of the first shows the carnage and confusion caused by the sudden attack from these spear wielding warriors. There is a stark contrast between all the dark skinned warriors and Lilla's armed entourage, and the white clad female herself. The heroine represents an air of purity and civilization amongst the turmoil of the heathen dark skinned fighters.

It is significant that even in the early 1920s the African warriors are still depicted as heathen barbarians, clad in nothing but their headdress and armed only with spears, they are indicative of a primitive and uncivilised race.

Just as Lilla is representative of the pure and defenceless female in a hostile and uncultured environment, Hopper also represents stereotypical images of the 'housewife'. 'My New Farm Kitchen' being one such example from *Country Gentleman* in 1916 (figure 76).[39] The 'housewife' is a role which has been defined as 'a family role: it is a feminine role. Yet it is a work role,' by Ann Oakley in *Housewife* (1974),[40] or as 'a woman who manages or directs the affairs of her household, the mistress of a family, the wife of a householder'.[41] Here, he has shown this young woman dressed for household chores, engaged in wiping a plate, in the surroundings of her new 'farm kitchen'. This woman is represented as if 'frozen' in a moment of activity; her head is tilted down and slightly to one side as if she has been caught in the midst of a silent reverie. Her facial features seem to indicate a slight smile on her lips, at least a look of serenity. This housewife is at peace, and at home in the surroundings of her new 'farm kitchen'. If the slight hint of a 'Madonna-esque' smile was removed, she could be a direct precursor to the females Hopper paints in his mature oils. She has the same state of frozen reverie, or silent contemplation, that Hopper employs with figures such as the solitary blond woman in *New York Office* (1962) (figure 77), where the she faces towards the picture plane, but is engaged in the same type of silent reverie, as she looks down at the piece of paper in her hands.

Not unsurprisingly, due to the business and industrial nature, thinking here in particular of publications such as the *Morse Dry Dock Dial* and *Hotel Management*, there are predominantly more male figures in his commercial illustrations than there are in his mature paintings. Therefore clear parallels can be made between the male 'types' that can be found in his illustrations and in his mature work. In some cases it appears that the illustrations indicate to some elements of inspiration which filtered through to Hopper's mature oil paintings. Here, I am referring specifically to elements of his spatial representation and the psychology of the office, and therefore it is discussed in detail in chapter 5, where it has greater relevance.

Hopper's male figures in his illustrations celebrate the environments and life of the white American middle-class worker. This is particularly significant during the years of the First World War, where the images of the strength and toiling nature of the American male was intended to bolster spirits home and abroad, and help instil a

national pride.[42] This sense is blatantly expressed in the image from the *Wells Fargo Messenger* in 1917, entitled 'The Wells Fargo Man Does His Bit For Home and Country' (figure 78).[43] The *Wells Fargo Messenger* was a monthly magazine for employees and the intention behind this illustration was to bolster the sense of national pride in the essential workers who remained at home. Here, Hopper has portrayed a male tending to what appears to be a vegetable garden converted from the backyard. The hat placed in the foreground marks this male out as a Wells Fargo Express employee.

This man is imaged as strong, muscular and healthy, and demonstrates his importance to the national war effort, as a woman and child look on. The significance of the female and the child is that they are reminder of the defenceless innocents whom the man is providing for with his war work at home, and who he is helping to protect. The child is dressed in white and exudes the innocence and purity of unspoilt future generations that the American male needs to protect. Hopper has imbued this male with an air of the heroic.

Perhaps this man could have provided the model for the solitary male in *Pennsylvania Coal Town* (1947) (figure 64). In this mature work the male has aged, he has lost the youthful vigour and enthusiasm symbolised in the *Wells Fargo Messenger* image (figure 78). Instead, the man in *Pennsylvania Coal Town* (figure 64) is weighed down with all the responsibilities and demands of his life. In fact his back is rounded and his shoulders are hunched with the weight of his solitary despondency, giving him the look of a man totally dejected by his life, consumed by *ennui* and without the ability to change it. The sense of *ennui* experienced here, and his acceptance of the inevitability of the human condition is reflected in the experience of Hopper's other figures placed within the city environments, and demonstrates his negative vision of modern America. It is defined by the placement and implied attitude of the isolated male in *Sunday* (figure 5), which is discussed below.

One of Hopper's most famous illustrations was originally executed for a poster competition by the National Services Section of the United States Shipping Board Emergency Fleet Corporation, through the *New York Sun* newspaper, in 1918 (figure 79). Hopper's four-colour poster won the competition: he then refined the poster image and used it again as a cover illustration for *The Morse Dry Dock Dial* (figure 80).[44] After the competition, Hopper wrote these words about his entry:

> In my poster I tried to show the real menace to this country as symbolized by the bloody German bayonets. The resistance of the worker to that menace is evident, I think, in his pose and the design. The way the worker's feet are spread out has a meaning to me of a certain solidity and force. They are set there for all time against this threatened invasion. The work to which the special appeal is directed is typified by a silhouette of a shipyard, smokestack and smoke.[45]

The importance of Hopper's words here is that as early as 1918 he was aware of the significance of 'types' in art to convey a particular meaning, and that he was also able to employ particular aspects of posture, attire and surrounding elements to create a particular meaning. This has great significance for his mature oil paintings as he takes the essential elements just to give enough information within the painting to reveal a few vital details about his 'characters', and their location, and it is the experience of being an illustrator that honed these skills, and which he was then able to refine. As he clarifies his representations through his mature works he gradually removes all non-essential elements until he leaves the viewer finally with the ultimate environment of solitude and alienation; the empty room.

The other definitive element that results in a clear change in his portrayal of his females can be traced back to the time of his marriage. This is confirmed by Levin's investigation of Jo Hopper's diaries for her biography of Hopper, as these diaries catalogue their lives together. From around 1920, until 1924, Hopper regularly attended the Whitney Studio Club, where he drew, amongst a group of other male artists, from the nude. However, after his marriage he stopped his sketching sessions at the Studio Club. Whether this was as a result of Jo's jealous outbursts, which are documented in her own diaries, it is not conclusively known; but certainly from this point Jo posed for him exclusively, ensuring that he needed no other model for his work.[46]

Bearing this in mind, we have to appreciate the effect this had on Hopper's females after 1924. Each figure that he paints is based upon his wife. This could explain why these females do not have any clearly defined facial features, so that they do not become a continuous stream of portraits of Jo. It is more probable though, that the lack of definition in their features is in tune with the more generalised style of the representation of their physique, or physiognomy. It is clear from Hopper's preparatory drawings that the women began their lives as portraits of Jo, and through the process of composition they became the finished paintings with which we are familiar. We can see this process in the preparatory sketches for *Morning Sun* (1952) (figures 81, 82 and 83).

These preparatory sketches are an invaluable source detailing the visual reconstruction of the artistic process that culminates in Hopper's work *Morning Sun* (1952) (figure 10). Working through the sketches reproduced here (figures 81, 82 and 83), Hopper works in various ways to create the relevant reference points for his oil painting. One drawing (figure 81) reveals Hopper's overall view of the composition and his sketch works out the geometry of the scene for his canvas, and the areas of light and shade. It is indicative of the importance of the light within the finished composition that Hopper gives it a prominent working through in this preparatory drawing.

In the two other preparatory drawings reproduced here (figures 82 and 83), the primary concern for the artist is the female figure. In one sketch (figure 82) Hopper has written notes to himself around the drawing. These notes serve to remind the artist of the colours and the tones of the light and the shading that he wished to apply to the final painting. Hopper commented to Goodrich, the former director of the Whitney Museum of American Art, that he used this system of annotating his sketches, because if he 'finished' the sketch too much he would end up simply copying the sketch onto the canvas rather than calling upon 'the concept in his mind'[47]. This fear of 'finishing' the sketches too much is in tune with Matisse's notion of the 'true' representation developing from the creative memory of the artist. However Hopper's constant use of his wife's body as a source involved obvious limitations on his work.

This is perhaps one of the reasons why the faces of the figures in his work become increasingly indistinct throughout his career. Their facial features display the minimum requirements to provide a visual typography. This is not to say that the figures have no features, but in many cases only the bare minimum of detail has been applied by Hopper to allow the face to appear as 'a face' to the viewer. In fact this minimum of detail, on closer observation, can give the figure a rather ghoulish appearance.

In the oil painting *Morning Sun* (1952) (figure 10), the facial features of the seated female are not unlike a mask. It has given the final version of the this woman a very angular and harsh profile which is accentuated by the shading under the jaw line, which in turn emphasises the pallor of the skin. Her face is more akin to a death mask; her eyes are black holes within the white mask. Hopper has further accentuated the effect of this white mask with the slash of red placed heavily across her cheekbone and picked up in the colour of her lips. They have no rounded or sensuous pout, but instead are taut and expressionless. It is not a face designed to be attractive or sensuous, instead, it is harsh, expressionless and as emotionally cold as a death mask. The finished effect has

developed out of Hopper's preparatory sketches which clearly show a much softer, more sympathetic and detailed rendition of female facial features. Interestingly, Hopper has kept the same profile from the original sketch, but has excluded all detail but the most vital basic detail creating this rather ghoulish effect.

Hopper found himself continually searching for different 'types' to use as inspiration for his paintings, conscious of the limitations of a single model, and perhaps it was for this reason that he and Jo quite often ascribed names and characters to the women in his paintings, as they did for example with the female in *Office at Night* (1940) (figure 18), where they named her 'Shirley'. Thereby differentiating the figure portrayed from the living model. The process of naming his women is documented in the record book; the entry reads, 'Man in grey coat, blond hair. "Shirley" in blue dress, white collar, flesh stockings, black pumps & black hair & plenty of lipstick.'[48] By ascribing a name and notional character to the females in his paintings, he psychologically differentiates the painted female in the final composition from the living model (see figures 84 and 85). However, Jo Hopper had auburn hair, and this perhaps explains why several of his women are also represented with various shades of reddish coloured hair. This part of Jo Hopper, at least, he was unable to avoid transcribing to the canvas.

Hopper executed about seven preparatory sketches for this *Morning Sun*, only three of which are reproduced here (figures 81, 82 and 83).[49] The preparatory sketches for this work are displayed simply because they reveal the development of the idea for the finished painting by the artist, and particularly, because they demonstrate the artistic process through which he passed, from the conception of the painting to the finished work. The drawings reveal the process of development, and as a result, show how Hopper was able to create a final painting that was imbued with so much more and not simply a painting of his wife seated on a bed.

The number of these drawings is also significant, as they demonstrate Hopper's ability and desire to 'work out' his final painting through a gradual process on paper, rather than painting from life directly onto the canvas. In effect, this process of development probably attributed to the style of the final painting in the sense that it enabled the artist to push the boundaries of his depiction further. The drawings gradually allow Hopper to move from the sketch that is a direct representation of his model (figure 81), through a process of reduction and stylisation until the figure in his resulting oil painting becomes the ghoulish representation of a psychological condition rather than simply a portrait of Jo Hopper sitting on the bed. The process of working and re-working the image through

the drawings allows Hopper to pare down the image to the barest essentials that he requires, whilst relying on his memory for the specific details of the environment. The preparatory drawings reveal that he took great pains to note the details of the colours, light an shade and how they fell upon the figure (figure 82), indicating the importance of these elements within the composition for the artist and secondly, that he did not want to rely on his memory for such important elements of the final oil painting.

Perhaps Hopper's early career as a commercial artist in illustration, or advertising could also explain the quantity of his preparatory sketches. The nature of his employment, where he was given a text to illustrate, or an advertising campaign, would have required him to work an image over and over to achieve just the desired effect required for the particular commission. This is particularly relevant in the case of his figures as he would have worked figures in his drawings to achieve the 'types' needed for his purposes, as already discussed, and it would have involved stylising his figures as well as putting them through a process of reduction until only the most essential elements remained. We can also see Hopper's preparatory sketches for his mature oil paintings in these terms. They display a methodical process of reduction until he arrived at the minimum required to achieve the maximum effect.

The process of reduction in his work is not only applied to the details of the figure in *Morning Sun* (figure 10), or any of his other mature oils, but also the environment in which, in this particular case, the female is placed. The room in which this she is located, is represented in the most basic terms; white walls, with a single window, out of which the figure gazes, and through which the viewer can see the suggestion of other apartment buildings. The only furniture in the interior, is a bed, dressed solely in white. The composition that Hopper has created here contains only the most minimal of elements which allows him to attend to the play of light and shade with great effect, and to create an image with great psychological impact.

The interior of the room is devoid of all personal details. The walls are plain white, as is the bed. Hopper has included no furnishings other than the bed, nothing to soften the harsh sterility of the white tones. The view that the artist has offered, both the figure and the viewer, through the window suggests other apartment buildings, reminiscent of Hopper's familiar area of domicile around Washington Square. However, the interior that he has portrayed in the painting has none of the familiar comforts one would expect to find in an apartment bedroom, or even in a hotel bedroom. The space within which the figure is placed is like a sterile prison cell. The interior of the 'cell' offers no

comfort and security, and the 'washed out' colour and streaming sunlight add to the harshness of the space. Hopper entices his figure, and his viewer, with the view from the window, but at the same time clearly separates the interior and the exterior space within the canvas, emphasising the captivity experienced by the figure within the white, sterile space of the room.

The reduction of the space in this way, through the composition and tones of light colours in the space of the interior, allows Hopper to concentrate on the psychological effect of the painting and the treatment of the light. The light enters the room through the window on the right of the composition. The female, seated on the bed, faces directly into the light that streams into the room; we see her in profile. As with the woman in *Chop Suey* (1929) (figure 68), which is discussed below, her skin is bleached by the light, in this case natural sunlight, upon it. The pallor or drained appearance of her skin is emphasised by the light walls of the room and whiteness of the bed sheets. The harsh and uncomfortable atmosphere of *Morning Sun* (figure 10), is due in part to her psychological confinement within the enclosed space of the room and the voyeuristic nature of the painting which is intensified by the strength and the bleaching effect of the sunlight. Inside the space of the room where the sunlight has contact with the white bedding it serves to intensify the nature of the colour. The sheets become intensely white and consequently enhance the sterile feeling within the painting. This also serves to lighten the colours of the walls in the room. Hopper has used varying shades and colours across both the interior walls and the bed linen, and yet we perceive them as a cold and sterile environment made up of whites and other light shades. The places in the room where the sunlight 'hits', for it 'attacks' rather then being a restful light, are further bleached of colour and are treated more harshly. The resulting effect of which is, that these areas drenched in light feel colder and are more sterile than the shaded areas of the painting. There is no warmth in the sun that floods into the room onto the figure. She faces this light head-on, but she has pulled her legs up in front of her body and has placed her arms around them in a defensive position.

The only softer colour in the interior of the room is the pink dress in which the figure is clothed. The pink is the focal draw amongst the cold, sterility of the interior space and is echoed on the cheek and on the lips of the woman. Most importantly the warmer pink colour corresponds to the colour of the row of buildings that is visible through the window of the room. The pinkish brown of the buildings connect the warmer colour elements within the interior space. The pink dress gives a notional colour connection with the buildings outside the room, and also seems to indicate that the warmer colour is

of the environment outside the room, rather than belonging to the cold and sterile interior. The flash of warm colour in this bleached interior serves also to enhance the brightness and the starkness of the bleached colours around it, this includes the tones of the figure's skin as well as the walls and the bed sheets.

The oppressive psychological effect of this painting is created by the use of the light that streams through the window into the interior space, giving the room the appearance of a prison cell. The harsh sterility attacks the female figure seated on the bed and has totally invaded the interior space in which she is placed. The harsh and unnerving environment created by the light in the painting is enhanced by Hopper's treatment of the figure. He uses the barest features of her face in order to make her representative of a female. Her hair is drawn back from her face and tied at the back of her head in a severe, but simple fashion. Which should allow her face to be revealed in greater detail. The essential facial features are present, but Hopper has given them no character, no personality, and no distinctive quality that make them individual. The resulting face is a white, rather ghoulish mask.

Hopper has also distorted the proportions of the figure in a subtle manner, which causes the painting to have a rather unsettling nature. Hopper's figure has been given rather statuesque proportions, rather like a Henry Moore sculpture (figure 86). The torso is in proportion to the head, but the limbs on closer examination seem rather not to belong to the same body. The figure's right arm is apishly long, as it hugs her legs. Her position assumes that her left arm is also curving around to hug her legs, and yet closer scrutiny reveals that her left arm is not at all visible; the viewer assumes the presence of this limb where it should be. In fact there is no evidence of this left arm, other than the left hand that we seen placed on her shins under the right one. It is not very closely observed and looks more like a lump of red meat, rather than a hand, accentuated by its red colour. It is also quite disproportionately large in relation to the figure's feet, right arm and the supposed missing left arm. This limb just does not 'feel' right; the fingers are misshapen and the thumb is missing altogether, and yet appears to have a shadow.

In relation to these long arms and large hand, the feet by comparison are small, dainty and carefully observed. Hopper has paid particular attention to the light and shadow and resulting colour tones around the ankle on the right foot. He has also given this female figure particularly large upper thighs, which appear to be out of proportion with her more slender shoulders and arms, her head and her dainty feet.

Hopper placed his female in both public and private spaces and we must consider the impact that this variation in the environment has upon the figure. In *Chop Suey* (1929) (figure 68), Hopper has portrayed two women seated either side of a table in the public space of a restaurant, and the female figure in *Morning Sun* (1952) (figure 10) is placed in the private interior space of her apartment or hotel room. Although the female in *Morning Sun* is in her private space she is subject to the same observation as the two women in *Chop Suey*. The two, in the restaurant, are dressed and 'made-up' in preparation for their excursion into the public world of the restaurant. Hopper has carefully defined the face of the one that vacantly stares out of the painting. Both of the two central figures of this painting [*Chop Suey* figure 68] are dressed in the contemporary fashion of the 1920s 'Flapper'. The dark close-fitting hats in which they are dressed serve to frame their faces. This has allowed Hopper to give greater detail to the face of the one looking out of the painting than he does generally. He has taken pains to illustrate her made-up face. The dark hat accentuates her eyes and her bright red lips which are in stark contrast to the pallor of her skin. We could assume that these fashionable dressed young women are office girls, or secretaries on their lunch break, or young wives taking a break from shopping, as Hopper has left the painting open to such speculation. Whatever the case, he has represented young women who have dressed with care and attention, aware that they will be seen by others. They are women who are aware of the possibility of their being the objects of observation and have dressed accordingly.

This is in direct contrast to the woman in *Morning Sun* (figure 10), who is placed in a private space. She is not dressed, or prepared, to be seen; she is dressed in a short pink dress or slip which has moved to reveal all of her legs, due to the position in which she is seated and her hair is carelessly tied back. Her face is not carefully made-up like the female in *Chop Suey* (figure 68) and she is absorbed in her own observation of the scene outside her own window. She is no more aware that she is the object of our observation than the females in *Chop Suey*. Of the two main figures in *Chop Suey*; one has her back to the viewer and the other does not appear to be looking at anyone. She is not looking at her companion, but over her left shoulder, and neither is she looking directly out of the painting and engaging with the viewer, but instead appears to be staring into a mid distance, absorbed in her own thoughts, as many of Hopper's introspective figures seem to do.

The main difference then, between public and private space, as it affects the female figures in Hopper's paintings, is not that it radically changes the 'character' of those

depicted, as they remain self-absorbed and contained in their own still and silent worlds, but that he changes the atmosphere of the paintings. The greater part of Hopper's work, particularly that where he has included figures, makes the viewer complicit with the action of observation; the viewer becomes the voyeur. Where females are depicted in a public space, particularly in the case of the one in *Chop Suey* (figure 68), with her carefully made-up face, she is wearing her 'public face'; she is dressed and mentally prepared to be the object of observation indirectly, or directly. When we observe these figures it is with the sense that we are intruding on the privacy of their solitude (even when they are not alone), and invading their still and silent space.

However, the atmosphere of intrusion is increased in the case of the private space of *Morning Sun* (figure 10). We no longer simply invade or intrude upon her solitude, but violate her private space. The females in public spaces accept the possibility of observation and are even prepared for it (although they are not aware of it), as indicated by their attire, whereas the one in *Morning Sun* is vulnerable to our penetrating gaze because she is not prepared for it and again she is unaware. The voyeuristic atmosphere of *Morning Sun* and of other Hopper paintings where he has included a female in a private space, like *Eleven A.M.* (1926) (figure 41), *Hotel Room* (1931) (figure 87) and *City Sunlight* (1954) (figure 88), is emphasised by the private nature of the setting and the oblivion of the figure to the observation.

The atmosphere of scrutiny is heightened by Hopper's use of light. The voyeurism of the paintings is harsh and oppressive, whether in a permissive environment or not and Hopper's choice of illumination echoes this sentiment because it is also harsh and oppressive. The light in *Chop Suey* (figure 68) streams through the windows on the right of the painting. It illuminates the presence of three women and a male in the restaurant; of the females, one is facing out of the painting, one facing inward towards her and one that is only just visible on the edge of the canvas, seated with a man in the background of the painting. The light is bright and stark and serves to whiten the pale skin of the young woman facing outwards. It cuts across the canvas and the rays bear down on the figures. Of the two main female figures in this painting, it rests heavily on the back of one, and directly across the face of the other. The light on the main visible female face bleaches her skin to accentuate her pallor and it also emphasises the blank expression on her face.

In *Morning Sun* (figure 10) the light, once again, streams through the window on the right of the painting and the figure faces directly into it. We see her in profile. As with

the figure in *Chop Suey* (figure 68), her skin is bleached or whitened by the sunlight upon it, which again is emphasised by the white cover on the bed, upon which she is sitting. The harsh and uncomfortable atmosphere of *Morning Sun* created by its voyeuristic nature, is heightened by the strength and bleaching effect of the sunlight. Inside the room where it has contact with the white sheet it has intensified the nature of the white, which in turn lightens the colours of the room. It appears cold and sterile; a hostile environment. The only softer colour in the room is the pink dress in which the woman is clothed. This warmer pink colour corresponds to the colour of the row of buildings that is visible through the window of the room. The colour appears to be connected with an environment outside the room, rather than that of the cold and sterile interior.

Hopper's figures refer back to his early career as a commercial artist or illustrator, as he often paints figures that can be attributed to a 'type', which is exemplified by his depictions of the office girl like the ones in *Office at Night* (1940) (figure 18) or *Chop Suey* (figure 68), his married couples in *Room in New York* (figure 6) and *Excursion into Philosophy* (figure 11), and his male middle-class, white-collar workers as in *Office in a Small City* (figure 17). The origins for these 'types' can be found in magazines such as *System* (figures 15 and 16).

Generally Hopper's work can be seen within the terms of the artist's particular view of contemporary America and the psychological conditions and results of living in such an environment as perceived by him. Within this limited view of his surroundings, and as will be further discussed when looking at his particular view of New York City in chapter 4, his work can be defined by what he excludes from his view of twentieth century America. When considering his representation of the human figure in isolation, it is significant that Hopper exists in a completely white middle-class America. Therefore, at this point, I wish to consider his painting *South Carolina Morning* (1955) (figure 89), where for the first and only time in his mature painting does Hopper refer to the multicultural society of his native America.

In *South Carolina Morning*, Hopper has painted a woman of African-American origin, which is significant simply because it is the only occasion in his entire body of work, with the exception of a few childhood drawings, that he represents a subject outside the white middle-class life that he led. Even so, it seems that Hopper has 'toned down' the depiction, perhaps to make it more saleable, as Jo's words in the record book demonstrate. She describes the painting thus, ' "Dinah", girl is a mulatto. Dress and hat

red—not vivid, black pumps, thin nylons. House grey, shutters faded blue. Wall of front hall white.'[50] As *mulatto*, this means that the female was either of mixed white and black parentage, or it could refer to her skin colour as being 'tawny', or just deeper in colour than that of Caucasian skin. Interestingly, the word is also the Spanish for a young mule and one cannot help but wonder if there is a significance to the defiant stance of the young woman in the doorway in light of this. However, if one starts to see the young woman in terms of a mule then it starts to bring in associations with the mule being the sturdy work animal of the poorer and lower classes. There is no indication that this choice of word is anything other than being descriptive of her racial background. The definition of the female as being *mulatto* also explains her skin tones; they are darker than that of Caucasian skin, but by no means is she very dark skinned.

Hopper worked on this painting over a two month period between August and September, 1955, in his studio in Truro. He cites his inspiration for this painting as dating back to a trip in 1929 to Charleston. After he completed the painting he described the experience that resulted in the works:

> We used to go along Folly beach. I remember you had to pay to get in. Sometimes I'd find a house I liked. There was this cabin back in the woods, and I stopped to sketch it. This mulatto girl came out of the cabin and she seemed interested in what I was doing. Then her husband came home. He was drunk or something and he was going to do something, I don't know what. I beat it.[51]

In this recollection Hopper clearly cites himself as the intruder, who is seen by the subject of his painting, and therefore, as the object of his desire. Perhaps he understood the interest of the woman in him, as being in him personally, and therefore seeing the art as an extension of the man. The interruption of the husband gave him a reason to retreat. The fantasy is broken by the intrusion, but also it allowed Hooper to retreat with honour as he does not have to act upon his fantasy, nor does he need to pursue the relationship. The woman and her interest in him can remain a fantasy.

Notably, the female is the dominant element within the composition, particularly as Hopper has enjoyed all the contrasts between her vibrant red dress and hat and her skin tones, and the white interior wall against which he has placed her. This woman is challenging for several reasons. She challenges the viewer with her assertive stance. It seems as though she looks out of the painting in the direction of the viewer, but her eyes are just black gashes in her face. They are also shaded by her red hat, and so she could be looking directly out of the canvas at the viewer, or she could have her eyes closed, Hopper has made this ambiguous. Her stance is defensive; she stands on the doorstep

seemingly looking out of the composition and she has her arms folded on front of her, she is almost challenging the viewer to observe her, or for anyone to approach. Her folded arms are indicative of a stereotypical defensive gesture, and as a result it seems as is she is protecting herself from the artist, or the viewer's gaze.

The position in which Hopper has painted her could be attributed to his words about the source for this painting. If she is based upon the woman that he came upon in South Carolina, it could account for her self-protecting position, as she came out of her house to find a stranger outside sketching. Hopper's inspiration was not an artist's model, and as such did not pose for him, she merely came out of her house and stood watching him. The folded arms indicating the human defence at personal intrusion would be a natural response for someone unused to being used as an artistic model.

There is also something more challenging about her folded arms, which suggest an air of insolence, especially if combined with her challenging gaze towards the viewer. This suggests overtones of the direct and challenging gaze of Édouard Manet's *Olympia* (1863) (figure 90).[52] This painting was controversial to its contemporary audience because the artist had depicted a courtesan in the guise of Venus, but allowed her to confront her audience directly with her gaze. This indicates another reason why this painting and its female figure are challenging. Hopper has given his mulatto a similar air of defiance to that given *Olympia* by Manet, and the African-American figure found in Hopper's painting challenges the notions of contemporary ideals just as Manet did in 1863. The significance of *South Carolina Morning* is that in 1955, in America, the middle-class, white, Hopper has chosen to depict an African-American woman and is clearly demonstrating her sensual nature.

As with many of his figures, Hopper and his wife gave the woman a name; they named her 'Dinah', as noted above. The choice of this particular name is significant in that it was probably suggested by stereotypical representations of African-America women found in folk songs. For example, in the song 'I've been working on the railroad', which dates from around 1900, there is a line that reads: 'Someone's in the kitchen with Dinah....strumming on the ol' banjo'. All this indicates is that both of the Hoppers would have been familiar with this type of stereotypical image and it perhaps influenced their choice of name for this figure, particularly as Hopper tends to portray his figures in terms of American 'type'. There are also drawings surviving from Hopper's childhood revealing popular images of African-Americans, like the banjo player.[53]

Hopper's female in *South Carolina Morning* is highly sensual. Her red dress clings to her body to reveal the curve of her hips and the outlines of her thighs. The artist has clearly enjoyed her voluptuousness. The top of her dress is just cut low enough to reveal a deep cleavage. Again, her folded arms are significant, because although they are symbolic of a defensive gesture, they also accentuate her breasts, almost as if she is presenting them to the viewer. The break in the colour of the dress provided by her skin on her arms, separates her breasts from the rest of her body, and allows the artist to focus on them.

The woman in *South Carolina Morning* also reveals why Hopper has been considered unable to paint the figure accurately; her breasts are obviously uneven in size and shape, her legs are positioned so as to appear to be differing lengths, and her feet and shoes appear amateurish in their rendering. Even his wife, was noted to comment that 'he never could do pretty girls'.[54] Yet, within the composition as a whole this is irrelevant and perhaps these inconsistencies heighten the curvaceous sensuality of this female within the cool coloured, and straight, simple geometry of the remainder of the painting.

The composition of this work, as with most of Hopper's mature paintings, has a dominant vertical focus. The left half of the painting focuses on the vertical emphasis of the grey house, with its even darker grey shutters, the upright figure, whose vivid red dress is juxtaposed with the white interior wall behind her. This vertical dominance in the left of the painting is contrasted with the cool blues and greens of the right half of the painting. The right side of the composition has a different emphasis, as there is a clear horizontal divide between the top and the bottom of the painting, along the line of the horizon. It also follows the perspective lines into the centre of the canvas. The focus of the painting is along the perspective lines, following the base of the building, and the right edge of the pathway, which lead to a point on the horizon line, which is slightly off centre on the canvas, over to the right of the painting. Yet, although, the geometrical flux of the composition is toward this empty point on the horizon, the woman, with her curvaceous figure, amongst this otherwise linear composition, and vibrant colouring, draws the eye away from the natural focal point of the painting.

The balance between the two halves of the painting, the left and the right is a contrast of vertical and horizontal, man-made environment and nature, and inhabitation and the expansive wilderness. Hopper's use of colour is highly personal and serves to enhance and define the boundaries or the juxtapositions in his work. It is also fundamental to his compositions and as Goodrich says, his works can be 'seen in chromatic terms.'[55] The

colour tones in Hopper's work have a specific purpose within the composition, although he does not use them as a medium of decoration, or even to convey a particular emotional language. In fact he commented to Goodrich that he was 'no colorist', a comment that was typical of his self-critical approach to his work.

This painting is no exception as this use of colour is especially noticeable in his outdoor scenes. Here, Hopper has typically employed a wide range of bright blues and greens and combinations there of. He creates a richness that is totally alive with his colourful, but cool choice of palette. Although, chromatically the left of the painting is dark in contrast to the tones of the right side. He has carefully enhanced the tones of the natural tones of the blues and the greens on the right to create the darker, or more subtle tones on the left. The grey building with its shutter, is described as such in Jo Hopper's notes on the painting in the record book, but actually appears to be a development of the greens found in the grasses and along the horizontal line. The blue of the sky is toned down and introduced into the shadows of the white interior wall. In the same vein, the colour of the path areas which link one half of the painting to the other, is found on the floor of the entrance to the house, as well as, in the expanse of grassland that stretches to the horizon. The pinkish-red of the hat and dress of the female is a vibrant and sensual emphasis within the composition, and is a trademark Hopper element.

Discussion of a Single Image: *Sunday* (1926)

In this painting (figure 5) Hopper has painted a single isolated male. This is a significant image within his body of work as it demonstrates many of the elements that are fundamental to Hopper's work. Although, Hopper's solitary male figures are considerably fewer in number than those of his females, they are no less significant. His use of the male is significant as these figures also define Hopper's vision of the nature of human existence within the modern American world. Perhaps the male figures such as those represented in *Sunday*, or *Pennsylvania Coal Town* (1947) (figure 64) or *Office in a Small City* (1953) (figure 17), typify his vision of the white middle-class working male and his psychological placement within modern America and as a result reflect the place that Hopper perceived himself, and perhaps even his father, to occupy within this environment.

The balding male represents a 'type' that Hopper repeated in *Pennsylvania Coal Town*, *Office in a Small City* (figure 17) and *Hotel by the Railroad* (1925) (figure 49). If all Hopper's figures are seen as 'types' then his men are much more limited than the range of women that he depicts, even though they can be seen to be repeated in several

paintings. His males can perhaps be seen as a reflection of the way in which Hopper saw himself, particularly as he often portrays them as balding or bald. He was conscious of his own balding head, which is demonstrated by his self-portraits where he chooses to portray himself wearing a hat, as can be seen in the self-portrait in oil dating from 1925–30 (figure 91).[56]

These male figures, particularly the one in *Sunday*, represent the archetypal middle-class working male. The one in *Sunday* is defined by his attire. He wears the 'uniform' of his station in life, the white shirt with the collar removed, the working man's suit, and the arm bands to hold back his sleeves. In the same way that Hopper defines women as *femme fatâle*s or sirens, with their sensual figures and close-fitting clothes, he defines men by their place in society, their occupation or social class.

The male in *Sunday* is not an exceptional man, he is not wealthy or outstanding, nor does he belong to the lower classes. Hopper defines this figure by his social place within modern America. He is crucial to the daily workings of America, as a small cog in a larger wheel, and as part of the anonymous mediocrity of the working middle-class he maintains the status quo of society. Yet it is just this type of figure that Hopper places within his canvases, which has led his work to be seen as definitively American.

Sunday provoked a strong reaction from the critics, and who praised the 'American-ness' of Hopper's vision within the painting, while noting the psychological effects that were created by his use of this particular figure. One who was described by Cary as a 'helpless' and 'pathetic figure', and who was 'planted in bored dejection on his doorstep'.[57] The response is to the psychological effect of this man and his position as defining the hopeless and inescapable position within the human condition. The psychological aspects and American nature of this image were also defined by one such critic for the *Brooklyn Eagle* who wrote:

> No question of the Americanness of this picture both as to treatment and to subject—a street, empty and silent, a worker, clean-shirted and helplessly idle....Out of such commonplaces has Hopper created beauty as well as injected humor and an astute characterization of place and type.[58]

This 'American-ness' or American nature is apparent in all of Hopper's mature paintings. He relies on the particular aspects of the familiar environment to set his American scene. He uses the particular definitive style of indigenous architecture, plus other emblems from urban life, such as the fire hydrant and barbershop sign in *Early Sunday Morning* (1930) (figure 12) and the use of specific signs such as those used in

Drug Store (1927) (figure 13) and *Gas* (1940) (figure 20). The use of such pertinent symbols to indicate the particular American nature of his paintings has led to his being described by Ian Jeffrey as a 'picture-maker intent on emblematic clarity'.[59] Hopper's use of familiar 'markers' or emblems, particularly of the city allow him to use a more limited palette to achieve greater psychological effect within the painting. It is this combination, and in some aspects the disparity, between the familiar aspects of the painting and the psychological meanings suggested by Hopper's use of space, light and colour that allowed him to create images that delve deep into the American psyche.

Hopper revealed in 1960 that there was more to the creation of paintings than might be first apparent when he commented that, 'You know, there are many thoughts, many impulses that go into a picture'.[60] Certainly Hopper's images operate on more than one level and become psychologically more complex with greater observation. This is perhaps why Hopper has been described by Ian Jeffrey as a 'philosopher-painter',[61] and by Alfred Kazin as a 'Poet-painter.'[62] In a sense Hopper's paintings of solitary figures confirm this, as we see in *Sunday*, as this man seated in the forefront of the composition is more than just a male figure placed within an American environment.

This male depicted by Hopper represents a particular 'type' of American man and as such he stands in for the psychological state or condition of males within human existence. Hopper maintained that he used a street in Hoboken, New Jersey as the source for this painting, taking the ferry there to execute his preparatory sketches.[63] He had originally intended to title the work 'Hoboken Façade', but decided against this in favour of a title that was less specific and that would evoke a mood or sensation, instead of a reference to the more specific location. By entitling the work *Sunday* Hopper is able to bestow upon the painting the particular sensations of mood and psychology that can only be achieved by this more universal title. To locate the painting specifically would anchor the subject in a particular location. Whereas although he made no secret of the specific location that was the source for the painting, he gave the painting such an enigmatic title that the street within the painting still becomes representative of a particular type. In fact, the Washington collector Duncan Phillips who purchased the painting for six hundred dollars in 1926, felt that the scene represented a 'middle Western Town'.[64]

Phillips was perhaps the first to make a connection between Hopper's paintings and the works of the modern Realist writers, such as Sinclair Lewis (1885–1951), Theodore Dreiser (1871–1945) and Sherwood Anderson (1876–1941). Anderson was the only one

of these writers for whom Hopper had any respect, as he proclaimed that in general the work of such writers were 'a little too mid-western for me'.[65] The figures that Hopper represents, in this instance in *Sunday*, find an echo within the text of Anderson's novels and short stories *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919) in particular. Hopper's figures seem to find themselves trapped in a pictorial representation of Anderson's naturalistic images of emotionally sterile small-town life and the impersonal big city. In effect, they represent the same sense of alienation within contemporary existence that is described in Anderson's novels, particularly *Winesburg, Ohio*. The man in *Sunday* typifies this sense of alienation and isolation within modern American society.

The position in which Hopper has placed him indicates his resigned and alienated solitude, as he is seated on the edge of a wooden walkway in front of some shops. The shops are suggested by the large plate glass windows, yet nothing can be seen on display in the windows. One shop, on the extreme right of the painting has its blinds down. This leads the viewer into various areas of supposition regarding this scene. Are these shop windows empty just because it is Sunday, or has Hopper left them to be ambiguous in keeping with the ambiguous occupation and presence of the man. Hopper has implied the possibility of a narrative content to this painting, similarly with other works, with the suggested row of shops, the distinctly middle-class working man and the title *Sunday*.

The title in itself is significant because it evokes a particular mood; one of silence, calm and reflection. However, Hopper's 'Sundays' are not peaceful or tranquil in a spiritual sense, their still and silent mood is more suggestive of the void inside a vacuum; indicative of nothingness. Hopper places his figures in introspective isolation to contemplate the futility of their daily existence in the locations of the office, the restaurant, or at home. However, the male in *Sunday* has been deliberately portrayed in the same stance of introspective alienation, but with the added significance that Sunday should be his day of contemplative rest. Sunday represents the day where 'man' should be able to escape the monotony of work and the daily existence of the modern world.

Yet, he is given no escape from the monotony of his daily existence. Hopper has not allowed his male to find peace, but has exacerbated the sense of his entrapment within his existence, as he has been frozen in a moment of silent and still contemplation on his place within the human condition and the realisation of the futility of life and the inevitability of death. This man perpetually exists in the silence, and stagnant inactivity of Sunday, further enhancing the sense that he, like Hopper's other solitary figures, is unable to escape the inevitability of his life.

The ambiguous nature of the implied narrative of the painting and the evocation of the psychology of 'Sunday' in an American town, further enhances the alienation and isolation of the solitary male in this work. The man appears small and insignificant against the dominant vertical flux of the buildings behind him. Hopper has accentuated this as he has emphasised the dominant verticals of the buildings. Consequently, he appears smaller in relation to them, as well as more vulnerable, which is suggested by his hunched seating position on the step.

This man has been placed in the centre of the lower half of the painting and is clearly, due to this placement, a significant element of this painting. Yet, Hopper has also ensured that he is made to seem psychologically insignificant in the greater scheme of things by his physical position and his relationship to his surroundings. The greater the observation by the viewer, and the analysis given, the more he becomes an anomaly within his space. The same can be said of several other of Hopper's solitary figures. This man is made to 'fit', and to be an integral part of, the space in which he is placed, and yet it is not a cohesive part of the space at all.

He is placed on a step in front of a row of shops; he sits with his elbows resting on his thighs and with his hands clasped.[66] The more closely that we observe him, the more incongruous he becomes with his surroundings. As is typical of Hopper, the shops fronts and the details of the visible architecture are closely observed and he has used them to achieve a strong vertical element to the composition. However, the scale of the buildings and that of the man are quite different. For example, the step upon which he sits, if it is observed in the same scale or proportions, is extremely high.

This anomaly in the space of the painting is indicated by his legs. In the position that he is seated, his feet comfortably reach the ground. We perceive the distance from the back of his knee to his feet as being the same as the height of the step. Yet, if we then see the proportions of the step in relation to the doorways and the shop fronts that are placed behind him, there seems to be an anomaly in the construction of the space of the painting. In this instance if he were to be imagined to stand upright he would be dwarfed by the proportions of the architecture behind him. Our knowledge and experience leads us to perceive this male as being a certain size in relation to his surroundings as it is an innate human tendency to experience the world around us in relation to ourselves.[67] It should also be noted here that we have an 'innate tendency' to apprehend space in three dimensions.[68] Hopper's psychological approach to space is

discussed in the next chapter especially in relation to his inclusion of more than one figure in the painting.

Hopper varies the angles at which the elements of the composition in the painting are viewed to enhance the sense that the man is out of kilter with his surroundings and ill-at-ease within them. This is achieved by painting the buildings that make up the background from a lower level than that of the figure. The buildings are given a particular vertical dominance which is accentuated by the appearance that they are painted from below. The sloping area of the foreground and that of the step, or walkway, rises up to the buildings, seeming to indicate that they are at a slightly higher level. The eye rises up to them. Then the man, conversely, appears to have been depicted from a slightly elevated viewpoint.

Hopper has placed the man on the step in such a way that the viewer seems to look down on to him. He leans forward, leaning on to his legs, so that almost all of the top of his head is visible and so it enhances the sense that he is seen slightly from above. This creates a dominant, almost oppressive, viewpoint. By creating a slightly downward view it enhances the already diminutive presence that he has as a result of his hunched position, but this is exacerbated when considered in relation to the dominance of the rising building behind him created by the upward view towards them. This contradiction in the angles of representation between the man and his surroundings allows the artist to enhance his isolation within his surroundings, but also as representative of the state of alienation experienced by the human figure within modern American society.

Hopper focuses on the isolation of this particular individual within this painting by enhancing his insignificance by a subtle adjustment of the spatial elements of the composition. This creates an unsettling effect to a painting, that conversely is given a title that should evoke a serene and peaceful atmosphere. This again is distorted. It is this combination of distorted or unsettling elements that enhances the sense of alienation experienced by the man in this painting. Yet, although Hopper has depicted a male figure here, the psychology of the painting is equally applicable to all of his human figures. The 'types', particularly the *femme fatâle*, that Hopper predominantly portrays could also be representative of the forces that act upon this man to result in his confinement within his monotonous life. As such, he represents for Hopper, not just the alienation and inescapable futility of the daily existence of this particular male, nor perhaps all males, but in a sense all humanity. This is the pictorial representation of the

incarceration of mankind within the boundaries of human existence, the perpetuation of the inevitable and the resignation to the realisation that there is no escape; only death. Therefore this he could be seen as representational of the effect of the female upon mankind, and this painting as a description of the 'manifest destiny' echoed in the work of William Carlos Williams and Sherwood Anderson.

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[1] L. Goodrich, *Edward Hopper*, New York, 1983, p.1.
[2] Ibid., p.104.
[3] Ibid., p.104.
[4] W. Schmied, *Edward Hopper: Portraits of America*, Munich and New York, 1995, pp.11–12.
[5] Ibid., pp.11–12.
[6] G. Levin, *Edward Hopper, Catalogue Raisonné*, New York, 1995, volume III, p.188.
[7] A. Callen, *The Spectacular Body, Science, Method and Meaning in the Work of Dégas*, New Haven and London, 1995, p.108.
[8] G. Pollock, *Vision and Difference, Femininity, Feminism and History of Art*, London, 1988, p.71.
[9] Taken from *The Young Housewife* (1917) in Norton Anthology of American Literature, Volume 2, 5th Edition, 1998, p.1216.
[10] G. Levin, 1995, volume I, p.64.
[11] For a detailed discussion on this issue, see both G. Levin, *Edward Hopper as Illustrator*, New York, 1979 and G. Levin, *Edward Hopper, An Intimate Biography*, Los Angeles, California and London, 1998.
[12] A. H. Barr, Jr., *Edward Hopper: Retrospective Exhibition.* New York, Museum of Modern Art, 1933, p.9.
[13] Ibid., p.11.
[14] Jo N. Hopper to Alice Roullier, 25 November 1933. This manuscript, found in Jo Hopper's papers, was not actually sent; rather she mailed an abbreviated, toned-down version dated 25 and 26 November 1933, now in the Modern Manuscript Collection, The Newberry Library, Chicago. Also in this collection is a letter from Edward Hopper to Alice Roullier, dated 9 December 1933, which expresses his embarrassment over learning of Jo's letter and gives them permission to use Barr's essay if they wanted it for their catalogue. (Taken from G. Levin, 1979, p.4.)
[15] G. Levin, 1998, p.184.
[16] G. Levin, 1979, p.8.
[17] Emily Genauer, 'Courageously Realistic Oils Exhibited by Edward Hopper', *New York World-Telegram*, January 6, 1948, p.12.
[18] Ibid., p.12.
[19] 'Travelling Man', *Time*, 51, January 19, 1948, pp.59–60.
[20] B. O'Doherty, *American Masters: The Voice and The Myth*, New York, 1988, p.16.
[21] Quoted in Alexander Eliot, 'The Silent Witness', *Time*, December 24, 1956, p.37.
[22] A. Eliot, *Three Hundred Years of American Painting*, New York, 1957. p.298.
[23] Helen Hayes interviewed by Gail Levin, October 27, 1980. Published in G. Levin, *Edward Hopper Symposium at the Whitney Museum of American Art*, 'Six Who Knew Hopper,' *Art Journal*, 41, Summer 1981, p.129.
[24] Ibid., p.129.
[25] Ibid., p.129.
[26] Jo Hopper diary entry for December 16, 1939. Quoted in G. Levin, 1998, p.318.
[27] Quoted in Goodrich's notes from a conversation on April 20, 1946, the transcripts of which are now housed in the archives of the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. Cited in G. Levin, 1979, p.4.
[28] Archer Winsten, 'Wake of the News, Washington Square Boasts Strangers Worth Talking To', *New York Post*, November 26, 1935. Quoted in G. Levin, 1998, p.106.
[29] G. Levin, 1979, p.5.
[30] Ibid., p.4.
[31] James B. Carrington, 'American Illustration and the Reproductive Arts', *Scribner's* Magazine, 72, July 1922, P.123.

[32] G. Levin, 1979, p.4.
[33] Letter from Hopper to the editor Nathaniel J. Pousette-Dart, and quoted in 'Edward Hopper Objects', *The Art of Today*, February 6, 1935, p.11.
[34] G, Levin, 1979, p.2.
[35] Ibid., p.2.
[36] Ibid., 1979, p.4.
[37] W. Schmied, 1995, p.39.
[38] Ibid., p.39.
[39] Mrs George L. Russell, 'My New Farm Kitchen', *Country Gentleman*, 81, June 3, 1916. Uncaptioned illustration.
[40] A. Oakley, *Housewife*, London, 1974, p.13.
[41] Definition of 'housewife' from the Oxford English Dictionary, p.659.
[42] The United States entered the First World War in 1917 and the propaganda illustration in the *Wells Fargo Messenger* mentioned here was intended to bolster spirits at this time.
[43] Wells Fargo Messenger and Company Express, 'The Wells Fargo Man Does His Bit For Home and Country', for the Wells Fargo Messenger, 5, June 1917.
[44] *Morse Dry Dock Dial*, 3, September 1920. Cover Illustration.
[45] Quoted in 'Pete Shea, Poster Model, Joins Navy', *New York Sun*, August 15, 1918, p.12. Cited in G. Levin, 1995, volume I, p.61.
[46] D. Lyons (ed.), *Hopper Drawings*, New York, 1989, Introduction.
[47] Ibid.
[48] G. Levin, 1995, volume III, p.270.
[49] Ibid., p.340.
[50] Record book III, p.53. Ibid., p.350.
[51] Quote from Johnson interview, cited in G. Levin, 1998, p.488.
[52] See M. Fried, *Manet's Modernism or, The Face of Painting in the 1860s*, Chicago and London, 1996, and T. J. Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and his Followers*, New York, 1985.
[53] G. Levin, 1998, p.488.
[54] B. O'Doherty, 1988, p.16.
[55] L. Goodrich, 1983, p.122.
[56] G. Levin, 1995, volume III, p.162.
[57] E. L. Cary, 'Many Types of Art Now on Exhibition', *New York Times*, February 28, 1926, Section 8, p. 12. Cited in G. Levin, 1998, p.197.
[58] 'America Today', *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, March 7, 1926, PE7.
[59] I. Jeffrey (ed.), *Edward Hopper, 1882–1967: Hayward Gallery, London 11th February to 29th March 1981: A Selection from the exhibition Edward Hopper, the Art and the Artist, held at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York from 16th September to 25th January 1981*, London, 1981, Introduction, p.3.
[60] Ibid., p.5.
[61] Ibid., p.15.
[62] Alfred Kazin, 'Hopper's Vision of New York', *The New York Times Magazine*, September 7, 1980. Reprinted in I. Jeffrey, 1981, p.32.
[63] G. Levin, 1998, p.197.
[64] Ibid., p.200.
[65] Hopper in an interview with Brian O'Doherty. Cited in ibid., p.200.
[66] This is a posture that is used repeatedly by Hopper, irrespective of the sex of his subject, and can be found in *Sunday* (1926), *Hotel Room* (1931), *Summer in the City* (1949) and *Excursions into Philosophy* (1959). This pose is also reflected in the photographic portrait of Hopper by Lynes of 1950.
[67] E. Boring, H. S. Langfeld, H. P. Weld (eds), *Introduction to Psychology*, New York, 1939, p.440.
[68] M. D. Vernon, *A Further Study of Visual Perception*, Cambridge, 1954, p.110.

Chapter 3.

Couples and Groups.

In this chapter I want to emphasise how Hopper intensified the psychological and atmospheric impact of his paintings by focusing on contemplative and introspective figures. He saturates the entire canvas with a pervading sense of a dislocated relationship; achieved by a felt psychological state as defined by the figures themselves and their relationship to the space of the painting. In this sense one of the most significant elements is his complex use of both a physical and 'psychological' environment. Hopper uses this in his works as a pictorial allusion to the varied literary connotations of the word 'space'. On one level, it can be seen as a literal representation of the three dimensional, on a two dimensional surface. On another, it can represent the interval (both distance and psychological) between his figures that is often signified by the objects placed between them, and as such, it reflects their separation and can act as a physical barrier dividing, or separating them. Hopper can thus be seen as representing an emotional void: part of what I want to call 'the uneasy psychology' of the paintings.

One of the most potent examples of Hopper's multiplicity of space is revealed when he depicts tension between a couple, as if they have reached a crisis point in their relationship, as he does in *Room in New York* (1932) (figure 6). In this painting we see a young couple within an interior; they sit either side of a round table. The man is engrossed in reading his paper and the woman is idly tinkering with the keys of the piano. Hopper appears to have placed the viewer outside the space of the room. He has located the viewer in such a way that it seems the scene with which he has presented us is reminiscent of the type of view that could be glimpsed whilst passing, as if on the New York 'El'. The interior that is glimpsed in this way appears to be a domestic one; 'glimpsed' because Hopper has presented the viewer with an illicit scene from a private interior space. This room is devoid of personal ornament, and appears to have the sterile and featureless formality of a hotel room rather than the comforts of an apartment.

The space within the painting is used by the artist to reflect the ways in which the figures are both divided and separated, physically and psychologically; a central aspect which is once again felt by the viewer. The table that is placed between the couple and the brown hue of the door behind them operates as a tonal demarcation of the physical and psychological space between this couple. The table acts as a physical barrier between them, and the door symbolically divides the room between implied separate male and female areas. Hopper here has emphasised the psychological divide between them as he

has placed them so that their body positions turn away from each other. She has turned marginally away from him as she sits at the piano, and he is hunched over the paper, looking down at it, and therefore away from her. The psychological significance of this painting is enhanced by the stiff and tense positions of the figures. However, Hopper has imbued the canvas with so much tension that the table has become symbolic of the emotional and psychological divide between them; thus creating an air of tension that can be seen to represent the state of the relationship between the two figures. Hopper has divided the composition through his use of the dominant vertical lines of the window frame, the door at the rear of the room, the frames of the paintings on the walls and the vertical representation of the couple.

Hopper has also created a physical and psychological barrier between the scene within the room and the viewer, with the use of the window frame and sill, which place the viewer outside the room. This, in effect, separates the viewer from the implied tension of the scene, allowing the viewer to experience it without feeling involved. He achieves this effect in that because the viewer is placed outside (in the dark), and who consequently takes on the role of an unseen voyeur.

This use of spatial arrangement within a composition in this context is interestingly used by Pierre Bonnard (1867–1947) in his paintings of couples within interior spaces. Bonnard uses a similar spatial arrangement to that employed by Hopper in *Room in New York* (figure 6), in his own *Man and Woman* (1900) (figure 92). Bonnard represents his couple both as nudes, whereas Hopper's male and female are clothed here. However, Bonnard's two nudes are separated by a screen in the same manner that Hopper employs the table and the door. Marthe sits on the bed, while Bonnard, who is standing, faces the mirror, for it is he and his wife that he has portrayed here. Bonnard's couple are carefully established in their own space inside the room. Once again the effect is to suggest the ways in which they are both physically and psychologically isolated from one another.

Just as the figures in both paintings are separated from each other, the artists have both placed their viewer beyond the confines of the interior space. In Hopper's *Room in New York* we observe the scene through the window to the room. In Bonnard's painting, *Man and Woman* he achieves a more complex relationship between the figures which is reflected in the subtle spatial composition of the painting by creating what could be called a 'conundrum' of space. The Bonnard couple look into a mirror, which is represented by the picture plane. Therefore, as he looks out of the painting at us, he

also, in effect, is looking back at himself in the painting. So unlike Hopper, who chooses to place his viewer where he can be an unseen observer witnessing the emotional and psychological tension of the relationship of the couple, Bonnard chooses to involve us. In this sense we not only become complicit in the emotional drama of the painting, as the use of the mirror places us directly into the tension of the relationship in front of us, but see ourselves projected into the roles of Marthe and Pierre. Bonnard uses the duality of the mirror in several others of his works as in *Mantelpiece* (1916) (figure 93) for example. The spatial arrangement of *Man and Woman* is also similar to that of *Man and Woman in an Interior* (1898) (figure 94), in which Bonnard again achieves a use of space which simultaneously reflects the physical and psychological distance between his figures.

Significantly, Homer in his book on Robert Henri comments on what he calls a 'little known kinship' between Henri and the international Symbolist-Nabi idiom of the 1890s.[1] This was at a time when Pierre Bonnard and Édouard Vuillard (1868–1940) were at the peak of their prominence of the Nabis group. Homer asserts that Henri's painting *Fourteenth of July—'La Place'* (c.1897) (figure 95) borrows the conventions indicative of Bonnard's and Vuillard's style, particularly that of Bonnard's *Le Moulin Rouge (or Place Blanche)* (1896) and Vuillard's *At The Pastry Cook's* (c.1898).[2] As his pupil, Hopper would have been aware of this painting and its influence, as he would have had the opportunity to see Bonnard's paintings during his visits to Paris between 1906 and 1909.

Both Bonnard and Hopper used their wives as models for their paintings and both artists repeatedly return to their wives as subjects, both clothed and nude. Bonnard is perhaps most famous for his paintings of Marthe in the bath. Curiously, both artists chose to depict their spouses in a youthful eternity. This is apparent in Hopper's *A Woman in the Sun* (figure 43) of 1961, as his wife would have been in her seventies, but in the painting he has depicted a woman who has a slender and youthful figure

One of the greatest differences between the figures in Hopper's and Bonnard's paintings is the sense of movement. The vivacious colour and fluid brushwork in Bonnard's works create a sense of motion, both, across the canvas and in the figures themselves. In contrast to this, Hopper's figures are static; they are frozen in a single moment of time, as if they are from a movie 'still', or reminiscent of the hesitation in the drama of a play, and his colours are usually cold and bleached by the sunlight. The static nature of Hopper's figures can be attributed to Henri for two reasons. Firstly, as mentioned

above, some of Henri's work is influenced by the work of Bonnard and Vuillard, as he uses the surface of the canvas as a flat, decorative entity with the elements of the painting stressing the horizontal and vertical geometry of the compositions; the figures and other elements are stacked on top of each other in the manner of Japanese art, where 'above means behind'.

Secondly, Henri's figures do not reflect the fluid decorous nature of the Nabis, but are instead, stiff and rather motionless. Homer feels that it reveals one of Henri's shortcomings as an artist, in that he was unable to endow the human figure with a sense of movement.[3] This is an element that is reflected in Hopper's painting as his figures are also statically transfixed and it is this quality that gives weight to the implied psychology in his mature paintings, particularly where it helps to convey a particular sense of the awkward and tense nature of the relationship between the couples on the canvas.

Hopper's has a particular psychological interest in portraying male and female figures together, to imply to the viewer that there is a troubled relationship between them. That is to say that he places them in a particular setting and spatial arrangement to suggest a relationship that has broken down or become dysfunctional. For example, the couple in *Room in New York* (figure 6) are placed in such a way as to suggest that they are in a private interior and we assume that they are a 'couple'. Hopper's particular use of the compositional space of the painting displays the dysfunctional nature of their relationship.

Henri, as teacher and mentor, encouraged his students to express themselves in their work and pressed them to explore the deeper implications of the psyche. As he said in one of his lectures, 'What you must express in your drawing is not "what model you had", but "what were your sensations", and you select from what is visual of the model the traits that best express you.'[4] He continued that, 'This, is selection...the great artist has not reproduced nature, but has expressed by his extract the most choice sensation it has produced upon him.'[5] It is this search for the personal experience that we see expressed in Hopper's depictions of his couples. He uses the elements of the model that best reveal the psychological impression that he wished to convey.

It has already been noted that there is a gradual development in Hopper's body of work, as he simplifies the elements within his compositions, removing any unnecessary elements, culminating in the ultimate depictions of his oeuvre: the empty room. Having accepted this, instead of discussing his paintings of couples in a chronological order,

which would logically follow this developmental pattern, I have chosen to discuss them in terms of the stage of development of the relationship portrayed within the painting. The reason for this being that Hopper's couples reflect his personal experiences and his tempestuous marriage. This biographical element in his work deepens the sense of the psychological dysfunction within the heterosexual relationship he represents on canvas, and indicates his flawed sense of human attachments.

Hopper's wariness of the female has already been discussed in relation to the sexuality of the female nude, and how his childhood experiences of his parents is reflected in his *ACT I, ACT II NECK, THE ESCAPE* (figure 48) of 1896. If his drawings and caricatures, such as *There's a virgin—give her the works* (c1932) (figure 51), *Josie lisant un journal* (c.1935) (figure 52), and *The sacrament of sex (female version)* (c.1935) (figure 50), can be seen as expressions of emotional need and vacuity between himself and his wife, consequently his paintings of couples can also be observed to represent his personal expression of troubled and dysfunctional relationships.

By looking at Hopper's paintings of young couples it is possible to see his pessimistic attitude to love and sex had not always prevailed. In 1923, when Hopper was still courting Josephine Nivison his actions reveal his romantic nature. Her wrote her notes in French, drew her sketches and quoted French poetry.[6] In fact, French remained the language of their attachment for all of their lives together. In 1923, Hopper designed and painted a Christmas card for Jo which depicted a young couple, Hopper and Jo, who by this time are now both in their early forties, reclining together in a French attic garret (figure 96). The figures are silhouetted against the window, through which they regard the view of the skyline of Paris. This is a truly romantic vision of the affianced couple against the backdrop of the spires of Nôtre Dame, which are picked out in the moonlight. The magical nature of this vision is completed with the inclusion of what appears to be a lute in the bottom left of the foreground.

Symbolically Hopper quotes the opening six lines of Paul Verlaine's poem, *La Lune Blanche*, which Verlaine wrote for his own fiancée. The poem reads thus:

Un vaste et tender	A huge and gentle
Apaisement	Peacefulness
Semble descendre	Seems to come
Du firmament	From the heavens
Que l'astre irise	That the moon illumines
C'est l'heure exquis.[7]	It is the exquisite hour.

The words Hopper quotes reflect a idyllic vision of his life together with his future wife, and imply that she will be his artistic and literary soul mate who brings peace and contentment to his life.

However, if we then consider his painting *Summer Evening* (figure 73) of 1947, bearing in mind that he had now been married for over twenty years, he has portrayed a young couple who appear to have reached a crisis point with each other. We would assume that they are a young courting couple as he has placed them outside the house on the porch. He has not allowed any of the wistful vision of his 1923 Christmas card to invade this image. This unmarried couple are already experiencing the personal crisis of a souring romance. Perhaps Hopper's choice of the time of day is also significant to the implied narrative here. The painting is entitled *Summer Evening* (figure 73), although it is already dark. This suggests that the relationship between the young couple is drawing to its conclusion and that this is reflected in the evening setting for the painting, as the day draws to its natural close.

The couple appear to be in the midst of an argument, as the male is portrayed as if speaking and she seems to be irritated or angered by his words. She is leaning back on her hands against the wall of the porch. Her facial features appear contorted, her mouth is twisted which gives her face a look of anger or annoyance. The tension she is experiencing as a result of this conversation is reflected in her stiff body position, as even her shoulders are arched defensively. The young man has perched himself on the wall; half sitting, half standing. His body is turned towards the female and she is the sole focus of his attention. Hopper has depicted the man with one hand across his chest, which would seem to suggest that he is either trying to explain himself or that he is acting defensively. Whatever is read into the alleged conversation of this man, his gesture suggests that he is protesting or being earnest.

This demonstrates the use of gesture to convey a particular sense of visual narrative, and is something that Hopper used as a commercial illustrator, particularly when he was creating images to sit alongside a fiction story, as can be witnessed by his work for periodicals such as *Everybody's* (see figure 75). It is no accident that a critic commented that *Summer Evening* (figure 73) would be suitable to be fitted to the 'text of any story in any woman's magazine'.[8] Hopper was aware of the use of the posture of the body to signify a particular mood or meaning for his figures as his words about his competition winning poster *Smash The Hun* (figure 79) indicate in 1919. This has already been quoted and discussed in detail in the previous chapter.

Hopper claimed that the idea for this painting, *Summer Evening* (figure 73), has already occurred to him twenty yeas before he executed it.[9] Levin has suggested that the original inspiration for the work may date back even further as it was inspired by the artist's memories of his sister courting, which might explain why the architecture of the house evokes a sense of Hopper's boyhood Victorian Nyack.[10] Whoever was the inspiration for this woman, she is attired in a skimpy pink bathing suit and as has already been discussed in relation to Hopper's women she seems to be related to the scantily clad female depicted in *Second Story Sunlight* (figure 97) of 1960. This is to say that Hopper has used the same 'type' for both females.

The psychological motivation behind each of the two women in these paintings would also seem to be consistent with his representation of the female as a 'type'. The one in *Summer Evening* (figure 73) is described in the record book as 'standing out for matrimony',[11] and the young woman in *Second Story Sunlight* (figure 97) was described by Hopper as 'a lamb in wolf's clothing'.[12] Both, are perhaps seen as acting as the temptress, as they are depicted in only minimal dress, and display themselves to the viewer. The one in *Summer Evening*, who stands out 'for matrimony', despite such as display will not succumb to a sexual relationship before marriage; thus the source of the tension, and the reason for the discussion between them.

However, the young woman in *Second Story Sunlight* (figure 97) is not depicted alongside a male, as the only other person in the painting is an older woman, perhaps a chaperone, and therefore, perhaps the male recipient of her attentions is the artist or the viewer. Yet, Hopper describes her as a 'lamb in wolf's clothing'. He has represented her as looking the part of the temptress, but she is in fact as pure and innocent as a lamb, and like the young woman in *Summer Evening* (figure 73) she is holding out for matrimony. Hopper also describes the young woman in *Second Story Sunlight* as 'obstreperous' and this would confirm that she was an unruly and rather demanding young woman who perhaps behaves like the temptress, but it is all a pretence and underneath she is naive and innocent.

Perhaps an interesting point that Hopper raises with the woman in *Summer Evening* (figure 73) and her counterpart *Second Story Sunlight* (figure 97) is the female ability to construct a public 'face' for herself whilst maintaining the private. In the words of Berger:

> A woman must continually watch herself...from earliest childhood she must have been taught to survey herself continually. And so she comes to consider the surveyed and the surveyor within her as the two constituent yet always distinct elements of her identity as a woman.[13]

The relevance of Berger's observation, in this context, is the contradiction that it poses between the subject and the object elements which face women, and are also inherently present when considering the depiction of the female body. Berger's statement confirms the words and the actions of Hopper, as the artist, in the sense that they reveal that the female in general cannot escape from the paradox of being surveyed, labelled and catalogued as a 'type' and yet simultaneously being in the act of surveying herself.

The most obvious element of this categorisation, which is not only relevant here, but to all Hopper's females, is their placement in what can be defined as the Madonna/whore complex. On one hand she is representative of the pure, virginal 'good' woman, who is resistant to and unspoilt by sex or sin, and her alter-ego, the whore, who is consumed by the 'desires of the flesh' and as a result is dangerous to 'man'.[14] In a sense a woman cannot be both of these elements and has to be categorised as either one or the other, hence the character traits that have been ascribed to these two women by the artist.

Perhaps Hopper's response to these two females in such terms can again be attributed to his relationship with his wife. Sex was always a contentious issue between them, made worse by the failure of their expectations of what married life promised.[15] Jo Hopper had been the virgin who had held out for matrimony, and so he saw his wife as the basis for the figure who turned out to be a 'lamb in wolf's clothing', and as such the 'public' face of his wife, who it must be remembered had been an actress before their marriage.

In the painting, *Summer Evening* (figure 97), the two figures are placed at the front of the house. The only source of light comes from the ceiling of the porch which accentuates the darkness of the evening around them. Outside there is little detail visible and it is lost in the murkiness of the growing darkness of the evening. The culminating effect of these elements is that Hopper appears to have placed his two figures on an illuminated stage set, like actors on a theatre stage. The darkness outside the porch area is akin to the darkness of the theatre auditorium.

This allusion to the world of theatre in his work is not surprising as Hopper's teacher, Henri viewed the theatre as an essential part of the life of the city, which in turn was so central to the artists of the Ash-Can School.[16] However, it influenced Hopper in a

different way. Apart from providing him with a rich source of subject matter, it inspired him to paint subjects which suggested withdrawal and the transparency of life, instead of the 'human closeness' that Henri had intended.[17]

The theatre seems to have inspired Hopper to paint his subjects as a series of individual tableau and in as such he allows his viewer to anticipate the implied action to come. Hopper has reversed the scenario from his days as an illustrator. Instead of being in a position where he is forced to create an illustration to fit someone else's narrative, the work of his mature period challenges the viewer to find one to suit the situation and the figures he has painted.[18] However, Hopper has not made this as clear as this might at first appear, presenting his viewer with a dilemma. However, the visual clues to an implied narrative are ambiguous, but complex, and despite the increasing simplification of his compositions achieve, paradoxically, a dense and ambiguous effect as to the meaning of the image (e.g. *Sun in an Empty Room* (1965) (figure 3)).

In a sense the process of compositional reduction that Hopper applied to his works has an affinity with the literary style of Ernest Hemingway (1898–1961) who was inspired to write in such a way by Ezra Pound (1885–1972) and Sherwood Anderson (1876–1941). Hemingway's early work especially is characterised by his concern to use words as sparingly as possible as part of his search for the *mot juste*. The result is often short, laconic sentences, which are almost devoid of adjectives.[19] It is perhaps no surprise then, that Hopper enjoyed Hemingway's short story *The Killers* when it was published in 1927, as the author's writing style reflected his own laconic personality.[20] Perhaps the process of 'paring down' in Hopper's images is his painterly equivalent to Hemingway's mistrust of adjectives. Thus Hopper's parallel version of the painterly *mot juste*.

The significance of Hopper's couple in *Summer Evening* (figure 97) is that it displays his view of his fellow human beings. He has represented this couple at a crisis point in their relationship and he remains free of any element of sympathy or pity. His portrayals are stoical, and he reveals that he is aware of the disappointment that life has in store for this young couple and as Schmied notes, 'He knows that the vitality of youth passes, to end in the resignation of old age. That is the way of the world. It appears immutable, to be neither welcomed nor regretted.'[21] Hopper imbues his canvas with the sense of the inevitable; the relationship of the young couple is doomed to failure, as is any of their attempts in the future. The prevailing sense of the inevitable in Hopper's work, and the accompanying psychology is that the journey of life will end with *Sun in an Empty Room* and ultimately death.

The uncomfortable and depressing nature of Hopper's vision of the human condition—of the existence of the human figure within modern America—is compounded within his his couples. His isolated figures speak of the alienation of the 'self' within this environment, but a couple would be expected to represent something more hopeful. Whereas within Hopper's America the plight of the couple is exacerbated as the relationship isolates and alienates the human figure further. Not only are these figures trapped within the monotony of their daily existence, they are also trapped within unsatisfactory relationships.

A young couple or a husband and wife would generally be considered to represent a positive hope for the future. However, this sense of the future is all but completely missing in his mature work. The only reference to a child is in *New York Pavements* (1924 or 25) (figure 98), where he depicted a nurse walking along the street pushing a 'baby carriage'.[22] This painting, according to Jo Hopper was painted in either 1924 or 1925 and perhaps the significance of this one off reference to a child was that it was in a painting executed shortly after his marriage.[23] The child is not visible in the carriage and as such is only present by implication. In the same vein his caricature entitled *Joseddy at age of 6 ½* (figure 99) from around 1932 would also imply that he had considered the possibility of children and had rejected the idea.[24] His fantasy of his potential offspring reflects his pessimistic attitude, as 'Joseddy' is a rather awkward and gangly child, who would appear to be an intellectual, due to the books under her arm. This caricature has similarities to the way in which Hopper perceived himself as a child in his *Caricature of the artist as a boy holding books by Freud and Jung* (c.1934) (figure 100), where he portrays himself as awkward, with a large head and glasses. He also has books tucked under his long, thin arms.

In *Summer in the City* (figure 47), he rejects what is accepted as the natural and academic perceptions of the proportions of the human. The famous Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519) drawing of the proportions of man (figure 101), based on Vitruvius, within the circle and the square from his unpublished notebooks *Treatise on Anatomy*, defines the perfect figure in terms of these geometric shapes.[25] Hopper's figures, in the works of his mature period are in opposition to this classical ideal. He places his males and females within a setting, in this instance an interior devoid of all furnishings bar a bed, as part of this setting and inherent to the atmosphere he wishes to create. The greater the observation of the figures by the viewer and the greater detail in which they are observed; the more they become an anomaly within their space. They are created to

'fit', and to be a part of, the space in which they are depicted, and yet, somehow are not consistent with the space in which they are placed.

In *Summer in the City* Hopper depicts two figures within the interior space of the painting. The room is empty apart from the bed. The man is lying on his stomach on the bed, with his head buried in the pillow. The woman sits on the edge of the bed, with her arms folded, leaning forward onto her knees. This female can be noted to develop through his use of the preparatory drawings. Jo Hopper wrote of this painting:

> I amazed when found a mute figure stretched out full length on bed in back of the female figure. I won't have to go buy a new nightgown for that creature. The stringy will do. Where E. going to get the boy friend? Maybe I could be used—since E. knows all there is to know he can elongate.[26]

Jo's words here are significant because they reveal two things. Firstly, Hopper elongates, or 'stretches' her body to fit the space on the canvas, as he did with her body in *High Noon* (1949) (figure 44), and secondly, she reveals that she has set garments to wear when she is posing, her 'straggly pink nightgown', or her 'stringy' blue kimono.

However, Hopper decided that he wanted a much more buxom woman for this painting and so his wife's slight frame was not suitable, she did however, pose for the legs of the man as she had predicted in the diary entry of November 1949, as quoted above. The resulting effect on the figures is that the man is lean and of a much more gentle frame than his rather buxom companion. The woman is disproportionately large in relation to the male lying behind her. The closer we observe them the more incongruous the female become within her surroundings.

The female, seated on the edge of the bed, appears to 'fit' her space. Her legs are bent over the side of the bed and the distance between her knee and the floor all fit together spatially. Yet, as the viewer, we sense something uneasy about the depiction of these two people. The disparity between them is accentuated by the lean limbs of the male in contrast to the large and heavy limbed female, particularly across her shoulders and her thighs. Upon closer observation the uneasy quality of the figures is not so much suggested by the heavy, buxom female as by her, in comparison, diminutive male companion.

The proportions of the man are disguised behind the body of the woman. On her left, his head and shoulders are visible as he is lying face down into the pillow. On the other side

of her, Hopper has revealed his long, thin legs. Yet, on closer scrutiny it is at the point where his body disappears behind that of the woman that it becomes distorted. Both the arms and shoulders and his legs are depicted as being long and thin and yet his torso must be very short as it is completely hidden by the body of the seated female, along with his buttocks. His legs and upper body logically relate to each other, but the area of his body that is hidden from the viewer is distorted. This missing section of body does not spatially connect with the visible parts.

The distorted figure achieves a psychological effect which is compounded by the ways in which the figures are related to the surrounding physical space.[27] It is important to note at this point that not only do we perceive and measure space in proportion to ourselves, we also have an 'innate tendency' to apprehend space in a three dimensional manner.[28] Therefore, the imagination and the learned response of the viewer accepts the information that the artist has given in this painting and readjusts it to 'read' in a manner that conforms to the preconceived knowledge of space and size. The viewer's imagination adds or adjusts the information received by the eye, so that the whole image conforms to what can be seen as accepted 'norms' of space, proportion and size. If we then break down this pictorially created space, we can see that this man does not conform to the space in which he is depicted. At the point where his body disappears behind that of the female, the viewer automatically accepts the space and the way in which this male fits into it within the terms of a normal physical environment. But, because he is distorted and does not actually 'fit' within this normal environment it creates a rather disturbing distortion of the space, which results in a feeling of psychological dislocation within the composition.

The tense atmosphere in this painting is not just caused by this subtle distortion of the figures. As with *Summer Evening* (figure 73), Hopper has depicted a couple at a point where their relationship has reached a moment of crisis. The cause of this trouble is hinted at in Jo's diary and in the placement of the bed in the painting. Here, once again Hopper reflects the circumstances of his own personal sex life. Since he has chosen to place the bed as the only piece of furniture in the room, clearly, then we can understand that its inclusion has a significance. Hopper has removed all other non-essential elements from the painting leaving only the minimum of detail to convey the psychological effect that he was seeking.

Jo quotes Hopper in her diary, revealing that he said of his 'buxom prima donna' for whom she couldn't be used to pose, 'C'est le proper des animeaux d'être triste après

l'amour (it is the nature of animals to be gloomy after love)–a fine name for his picture.'[29] This title was not given to the painting, neither was it entitled *Triste Après l'Amour*, as both Jo and Hopper called it.[30] Instead, it was given the much more enigmatic title *Summer in the City* (figure 47) as it represented a 'hot A. M. after a hot night in the city' and both felt that their title would hamper the chances of the painting being sold as it would frighten any customers away.[31] Besides the less specific title suits Hopper's painting style as it allows the viewer to find a narrative in the painting, should he choose, rather than the title suggesting one.

Hopper implies the potential narrative content of the painting with his focus on the tense and dislocated couple who are both placed on the bed; the bed being the sole piece of furniture in the room. There really can be no doubt as to the theme of this work. It is what Levin calls 'post-coital melancholy'.[32] The man lays disconsolately on the bed, and has buried his face into the pillow. The woman sits hunched over herself. Her body displays the tension of the scene in her folded arms, as she leans forward resting her elbows on her knees. Her face is looking downwards as if she is studying the floor, but like many of Hopper's introspective figures she is silently trapped within her alienated position in the room. She is estranged from the male due to the tension that is apparent between them. She is even isolated on the bed as he has cut himself off from her by burying his head in the pillow. She is placed in a position of tension and isolation on the edge of the bed.

Hopper also indicates that there is no resolution or hope in this painting for the couple, and as with many of his paintings there is no aim towards *dénouement*. This is another affinity that he shares with Hemingway.[33] Hopper has trapped his two figures, not only within the space of the interior but within their relationship, and he offers no hope of a resolution to their problems. He has created this sense of entrapment with his represention of the room itself and in the light that falls across it.

The room resembles a prison 'cell' as it has no decoration or furniture, save the bed. The walls are stark and white, reflecting the light where it falls on them, and the floor is bare. Hopper has intensified this feeling of imprisonment with the fall of the light through the window. The light picks up the frame of the window and as it falls onto the floor it casts shadows reflecting the bars of the window frame. The shadows on the inside of the window frame and on the floor give the impression that the windows are barred and in effect the couple are trapped within the 'cell' of this interior space.

On the extreme right side of the painting Hopper has implied that there is a corridor leading through to another room. He does not offer any sense of escape or relief with this other suggested space as it appears as barren and emotionally featureless as the one in which the figures are placed. Hopper has condemned this couple to exist within the psychological prison of their relationship, as well as that of their apartment and ultimately their whole lives. This couple are representative of a particular state within the human condition, and Hopper has achieved this through the implied psychological state within the painting which is created through the use of symbolic elements, such as the bed and the light, but it is enhanced by the distorted proportions of his figures to dislodge the psychological balance of the image.

This distortion of the human body to create an uneasy and tense atmosphere within a painting is used as a device by Hopper in many of his paintings. In *Room in New York* (1932) (figure 6) the man appears to be too large for the easy chair in which he sits, as does the female nude in *Eleven A.M.* (1926) (figure 41). In several paintings the artist depicts seated females who would be giants if depicted standing within the same space. In *Western Motel* (1957) (figure 102) the size of the female is displaced because she is seated on a long sofa which faces towards the window through which a wide expanse of landscape is visible, the figure however, has twisted around so that she faces towards the viewer. However, if we mentally reconstruct the hidden part of her body taking into account the measurement of the length of the lower leg and her upper body, if standing, this female would tower above the furniture in the room.

The female in *Hotel Room* (1931) (figure 87) also has a similar effect if her entire body is reconstructed and considered standing within the painting. In this work Hopper has placed her within a hotel room, and the 'space' of which is defined by the bed and the easy chair. Our mental preconceptions of space mean that we automatically assume that the space conforms to the size of the figure.[34] However, upon closer observation and calculation it is revealed that the bed and the chair were built for a figure of a much smaller stature than the one painted by Hopper.

There are two possible reasons for this type of representation in addition to the subtle psychological disturbance that the image suggests. Firstly, Jo Hopper (as she noted in her diary, especially in relation to *Summer in the City* (figure 47)), began to pose as the female subject. Despite her slight frame that is seen in the preparatory drawing (figure 103), Hopper had to stretch and enlarge her figure in order to achieve the 'husky blond wench' of the final composition.[35] She also reveals that Hopper used her to pose for the

legs of the man, stretching and elongating her proportions.[36] It is possible that in this process of elongation and physical rearrangement of Jo's body that he distorts the proportions in the final paintings.

It is also possible that this distortion could be a visual representation of the personal experience of the artist. Hopper was an extremely tall man, reaching nearly 6ft 5 inches. It is possible that in his representations of these ill-proportioned figures in their ill-fitting furnished interiors, he is possibly expressing his own discomfort with his personal surroundings. Hopper, perhaps, felt that he physically dominated his space and surroundings, beds and chairs would have looked and felt small. In a photograph taken of the artist in February 1950 by George Platt Lynes (figure 104), the photographer has managed to capture this sense. Lynes, a portrait photographer, was intensely concerned with the formal composition of his photographs and his work is characterised by the striking light effects that he employed.

The significance of this photograph is that Lynes has captured Hopper as if he is a figure from one of his own paintings. He is seated leaning forward, with one hand draped across his leg, his hand is drooping down and the pose is reminiscent of the male figure in *Sunday* (1926) (figure 5) or *Excursion into Philosophy* (1959) (figure 11). Significantly Lynes has dramatically highlighted Hopper's hands, symbolic of the artist. He also balanced the shape of Hopper's shoulders with the rounded shape of the hearth and the wood stove. However, the relevance of this photograph here is that it shows the length of Hopper's arms and the great expanse of his hands, which is emphasised by the way that Lynes has highlighted them. He is sitting on a chair that appears small and fragile in comparison to his large frame. The position of his knee being at a higher level than his waist indicates that this chair is lower to the ground, and shorter than the distance between Hopper's feet and his knees. He dominates the space of the photograph and there is a disparity between the size of the chair and his physical proportions.

The importance of Hopper's depiction of space in his paintings is that he appears to employ an almost subliminal perversion of it, and the relationship of the figure within it, quite deliberately. He creates a space that appears to be familiar and secure. It is a recognisable one: a street, an apartment, a room, a railway car, an hotel room, for example. These are all familiar to our eyes, appealing to our imaginary perception that familiarity represents security. The figures, however, do not fit the composition and at times they are spatially at 'odds' with themselves.

This proportional and spatial displacement subtly pervades upon the sense of security evoked by the familiar and is not immediately obvious to the viewer because of the way in which the human eye and brain function. This is because the scene viewed by the eye initially appears to be familiar, the parts, evidence or codes that are missing, or displaced, are automatically 'filled in' by the brain. This 'filling in the missing element' exercise is not totally successful because it creates an uncomfortable effect on the viewer. We do not feel at ease with the space or figures portrayed, as it seems that at one level we are aware of the disparity in the information that we see and what we *think* we see. These phenomena are defined by Gestalt psychology, which was pioneered in the 1930s by eminent psychologists such as M. Wertheimer, K. Koffka, and W. Köhler, among others, and has continued as a method to explain sensory perception

Firstly, Gestalt psychology establishes that the way that we see things has a great deal to do with perception.[37] This can be simplified, in that when we look at a person, or any other object, we perceive that the object has a certain shape or contour, and so it stands out from a background; this is known as a Figure-Ground relationship. It determines that a television set is seen *inside* a room, and that a figure is seen *on* the television set, because experience leads us to make assumptions about the objects that we see.

As conventionally we visualise the space around us in three-dimensions, this Figure-Ground relationship is relatively stable. For example, as you read this text you do not reverse the figure and the ground, and focus on the white paper instead of the black print. However, the second and more significant area of the Gestalt theory occurs when this stable relationship is upset. The process of perception can be confused and the viewer can unintentionally shift between the figure and the ground, reversing their roles. Examine figure 105; in this illustration, they alternate. Sometimes we can see a white vase against a black background, and at other times two dark faces, looking into the centre of the illustration, against a white ground.

The distortion of this stable relationship is what is more interesting in relation to Hopper's figures. It develops and becomes more complicated, as instead of just reversing the figure and the ground, it creates visual illusions. If we examine figure 106, we see a two dimensional image on paper. However, we could also perceive the image as a piece of paper folded down the centre, lengthways, and then stood up on one end so that the crease is farthest away from us, and the longest edges are towards us. We could also perceive the same image as a piece of paper folded, as described before, and placed

so that it is resting on the longest edges, with the crease down the centre nearest to us. This is a simple visual illusion, but it is the basis for the illusions in the works of M.C. Escher (1898-1972), and Bridget Riley (b.1931).

Objects that are close to us appear larger than when they are placed further away; this is simple linear perspective. However, if we assume that humans normally live and move about in a three-dimensional world, then we could conclude that our visual system has developed to piece together a three-dimensional representation of the images that it sees.[38] It is this phenomenon that is distorted by the artists of the Surrealist movement, who created works that were conundrums of space and association. Figure 107, for example, illustrates such an illusion. If we observe each of the corners of the triangular shape in isolation to the others, then they appear to be perfectly acceptable to our understanding of the three-dimensional world; but when the figure is seen as a whole the rules of the three-dimensional world are perverted. This image functions in a similar way to *Sunday* (1926) (figure 5), which was discussed in detail in Chapter two. As was observed at this point, both the figure and the architecture conform to our understanding of the representation of the three-dimensional world, but only when seen in isolation to each other.

The Surrealists delighted in this visual violation of the rules of logical visual perception. One of the best examples of this perversion is René Magritte's (1898–1967) *The Listening Room* (1953) (figure 108), where he has naturalistically painted a room that is filled by an equally naturalistic apple. We can perceive the reality of both the apple and the room, but not in conjunction with each other, so to the figure and the architecture in *Sunday* (1926) (figure 5). Either the room is tiny or the apple is enormous; they cannot both exist as they are depicted in the same place.

This distortion or revision of the proportions of the figures within the composition, and the violation of the accepted visual relationship between the figure and the space that it inhabits within Hopper's paintings could be argued to be in the same vein. Just as the surrealists, like Magritte, violated logical visual perception. Hopper creates a surrealist view of the figure in his three-dimensional world, on a two-dimensional surface. In fact during the 1940s critics had associated Hopper's work with surrealism. In 1943, the critic C.J. Bulliet commented in an article that 'Hopper has imagination, invention and a subtle feeling for what is alive, without exhibitionism. He has the psychological insight of the best of the "Surrealists" without their circus methods.'[39] Bulliet's words reflect the importance of the psychological impact in Hopper's works and increasingly critics

became aware of the implied psychological disposition of his view of the human condition within modern America.

By 1948, American critics increasingly linked Hopper with Surrealism perceiving within his work the inflection of the concealed moods and what Levin terms 'evocations'.[40] For example, one such critic wrote of his work, that he had 'selected and arranged, and ordered, but he lets what he feels emerge from what he sees.'[41] Her words reveal the sense of the personal psychology with which Hopper was able to imbue his canvases and in a sense gave his work an affinity with that of the surrealists.[42]

Hopper also inspired younger artistic generations through the surrealist content of his work. Amongst a number of Pop artists, Jim Dine (b.1935) for example, cited Hopper as an influence on his work, because his realist style inspired their work at a point when they were making a break from a form of abstractionism that had at the time dominated American art. In 1963 Dine declared that,

> I love the eccentricity of Edward Hopper, the way he puts skies in. For me he's more exciting than Magritte as a surrealist. He is also like a Pop artist—gas stations and Sunday mornings and rundown streets, without making it social realism...It seems to me that those who like Hopper would be involved with Pop somehow.[43]

In works like *Sunday* (1926) (figure 5), *Room in New York* (1932) (figure 6), *Summer in the City* (1949) (figure 47) and *Western Motel* (1957) (figure 10) for example, the perversion of the accepted norms of three-dimensional space has two effects. Firstly, it adds a surrealist aspect to Hopper's work, and secondly, it creates a sense of unease with the disparity of the relationships between the figures and towards the surroundings in which they are placed.

These disproportionate figures are interesting because we can assume either one of two things; either that Hopper has no talent for painting figures and included them only to represent human existence, as Thomas Cole (1801–48) did with his landscapes which were executed in the style of his inspiration Claude Lorrain (1600-82), who was also unable to paint naturalistic figures. The alternative is that this particular style of depiction was quite deliberate, as the evidence of Hopper's early drawings and etchings confirm his ability to render human form. I submit to the second theory because not only did Hopper include them, but they are central to his aesthetic, even when they are not visible.

If we refer back to Hopper's early training, his early studies of the human body display a competence that is belied by his later paintings. Therefore there must be other reasons why his figures appear to be so distorted as Hopper's gift for draughtsmanship was acknowledged, as he was nicknamed the 'John Singer Sargent of the class' because he could regularly produce brilliant drawings.[44] This was a great compliment to Hopper's ability, as Singer Sargent was renowned for his portraiture. Hopper's interest in the human figure and his ability to depict it is displayed in the many illustrations now housed in the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. These many and varied illustrations display its importance for Hopper. In particular *Male Nude* (c.1917-20) (figure 109) displays Hopper's competence with the nude. In the rendition of the legs and arms in particular, he reveals the influence of the teaching of Henri that stressed the importance of anatomical drawing.

Perhaps the relevance of this is that Hopper's figures are included as part of his personal psychological study of the human condition and its place within modern America. He explores this with his use of space. In *Excursion into Philosophy* (1959) (figure 11) Hopper presents us with one male and one female. They are placed in an almost empty interior, similar to the composition of *Summer in the City* (1949) (figure 47). In both paintings the artist has placed his two figures on the bed, the sole piece of furniture in the interior; both dominated by his study of light that enters the room through the window. He has reversed certain elements between these two works, in that it is the male and not the female that sits on the edge of the bed, and the female who is lying on the bed in *Excursion into Philosophy*, as opposed to their placement in *Summer in the City*. The position of the bed and the window have also been moved from the left of the composition in *Summer in the City* to the right of the painting in *Excursion into Philosophy*.

The male in *Excursion into Philosophy* (figure 11) is fully clothed and is depicted sitting on the bed in a similar aspect to the man in *Sunday* (1926) (figure 5), the only difference being the placement of his hands. Instead of his hands being clasped, as they are in *Sunday*, they droop down between his legs, in a similar position to the one in which the Lynes posed Hopper in his photographic portrait of 1950 (figure 104), mentioned above. The woman is lying on the bed. She has her back towards the viewer, and the male sits with his back towards her. In effect, the two have been placed in such a way so as to indicate the breakdown of the relationship between them, and to highlight their personal alienation both, from each other and from their environment.

This woman has turned her back towards the viewer *and* the man. We do not see her face and her hair flows over the pillow. Her back is completely obscured from view by the body of the man. This allows Hopper, and thus the viewer, to focus on her legs, which are bare, and her naked buttocks, where her dress has risen to reveal them. This focus suggests an underlying sexual tension in the painting. Just as Jo Hopper commented on *Summer in the City* (figure 47) as representing 'post-coital melancholy', the same could be said of this painting.[45] The attention to detail on the female's exposed legs and her placement on the bed would suggest that this painting had sexual implications. The focus upon this area of her body has similarities to Hopper's drawing *Josie lisant un journal* (c.1935) (figure 52), and once again may be seen as a reflection of the sexual problems of the Hoppers. The couple portrayed in this work are of an older age than those previously discussed here, and this perhaps indicates the continuation of this perennial problem between Jo and Hopper, alluded to in her personal diaries.[46]

Jo, in writing to Lloyd Goodrich concerning this work, classed it as 'rather scandalous' and recites its origins as follows:

> I said 'a nice girl wouldn't have the soles of her feet so grimy.'
> E. said 'I'm not sure she is a nice girl.'
> But, said I 'soles of feet do get that way in Duncan Sandals.'
> To which E.: 'That girl does not wear Duncan Sandals. She wears 4" spikes.'[47]

This would suggest that this couple, as they first appear, are not indeed a 'couple' in the regular sense at all, and that the implied narrative of the painting does not reveal the 'post-coital melancholy' of a married couple, but the almost catholic guilt of the man after his liaison with the woman, who Hopper has characterised as the stereotype of the *femme fatâle*, or the sexually unbridled female.

The book on the bed beside the male is described in the record book as 'Plato, reread too late'.[48] Hopper's words then, and the implied narrative meaning of the painting, suggest that the man has turned to the book for solace after his sexual encounter and has again discarded it, as it is too late to bring him the resolution he seeks. Hopper imbues this image with elements of his sexual relationship with his wife and as such the disconsolate male could be seen as representative of the sexually dissatisfied artist. Yet he also manages to encapsulate the contemporary struggle of his generation between the Victorian morals of his upbringing and the greater sexual freedom of the modern American world.

The woman is lying in a relaxed foetal position which presents an elegant outline as it is revealed from behind the more angular form of the male. The outline curves gently over her hip and sweeps down to her feet. The bed on which she is lying appears to be too short for her body, and if she were to stretch out, instead of lying in the foetal position, her feet would hang over the end of the bed. The long limbs of the male, too, seem out of proportion with the space of the bed. In contrast to the smooth curves of the female, the male is much more angular. This is emphasised by the creases in the front of his trousers and the line of his shirt.

This difference between the gentle curves of the woman and the angular position of the man is also emphasised by the palette employed. The female is sensuously warmed by the pink of her dress, highlights of which are picked up in the tones of her skin. The pallor of her skin is also tonally linked to the light on the walls, and she seems to start to merge with the wall in the background. The man however, is depicted in dark, harsh, even sombre greys. The coldness of the colour of his attire is a stark contrast to the fleshy warm pinks of the female behind. The use of colour clearly divides them and through its use Hopper defines their separation.

The male has been proportionally distorted to enhance the sense of alienation and sexual tension in the painting. As with the solitary male in *Sunday* (figure 5), the distance from the back of the knee to his feet measures the distance from the top of the bed to the floor. If we refer back to Leonardo's drawing (figure 101), the distance between the hip and the knee should be similar, if not the same, as the distance between the knee and the feet. In *Excursion into Philosophy* (figure 11), Hopper has made this distance shorter, as he has also done with the proportions of the upper body. In accordance with classical proportion, and most human bodies in reality, the elbow is at about waist level if the arms hang down the sides of the body. In this instance the man's elbow is below his waist, and if we were to imagine him standing upright, he would be exceptionally tall, with most of his height created in his legs below his knees. His arms are longer than the proportions of the human body normally dictate, and his head is much smaller in relation to the shoulders on which it is placed.

There are also other inconsistencies with the representation of the body of this man. The visible hand that droops down between his legs is elongated from the wrist to the knuckles, but the fingers are remarkably short in relation to this distorted hand. The man also has large feet; his left foot is in proportion to the lower leg to which it is attached,

but seems especially out of proportion to the thigh, torso and head of the male figure. This left foot is further away from the picture plane than the other, and yet it is visibly larger than the male's right foot. These physical discrepancies could be explained away as Hopper's representation of how he perceived his own large frame, as previously stated.

These examples of male and female couples have been discussed in this series of chosen images to follow the development of Hopper's perception of relationships as invariably pessimistic. Clearly then it can be seen that Hopper's romantic vision of his ideal partner and of marriage which he outlined in his Christmas card to Jo in 1923 (figure 96) changes dramatically. Yet, even in his paintings of young couples, as with *Summer Evening* (1947) (figure 73), and *Sunlight on Brownstones* (1956) (figure 110), he suggests the dislocation of personal relationships that he clearly represents with more established couples. This is demonstrated in *Room in New York* (1932) (figure 6), *Summer in the City* (figure 47), and at first glance *Excursion into Philosophy* (figure 11). This chapter will thus conclude with a discussion of a painting of a much older couple and the way in which he has portrayed their relationship.

Discussion of a single image: *Hotel Lobby* (1943)

I have chosen this image (figure 7) because, firstly, it portrays an older couple and secondly, because he has included two other figures in the painting. With the exception of *Room in New York* (figure 6), which was executed in 1932, this painting is dated the earliest of all the works discussed in detail within this section. The reason for the discussion of these works in such a manner, ignoring chronological order and stylistic development, is to consider the particular nature of his treatment of the figures themselves and the suggested relationships between couples, beginning with the young couples and working through to his older couples, as in *Hotel Lobby* (figure 7). Accepting this, it can be noted that this painting, like *Room in New York* contains a much greater attention to detail in the composition, whereas later paintings such as *Summer in the City* (figure 47) and *Excursion into Philosophy* (figure 11) are reduced to their essential elements. In these later works no effort is wasted on extraneous detail, allowing Hopper to focus the attention purely on the implied psychology of the relationships displayed.

In contrast to these later paintings, Hopper's earlier works, such as *Hotel Lobby* (figure 7), give the viewer much more narrative detail, although the implied plot is still difficult to decipher. In this work the artist has placed three central figures in the lobby of a

hotel. These consist of two females, who are both seated and a male who stands at the side of the older of the two seated females. The placement of the two older people together, both of whom appear 'dressed' to go somewhere, suggests that they are together. She is attired in a black coat and hat adorned with a large feather and he is wearing a suit, with his overcoat draped over his arm. We assume that this is a couple as they are placed in close proximity to each other, and also because the female figure appears to be looking up towards the man as if she is speaking to him. The younger woman is stretched out in a relaxed pose in an easy chair absorbed in the book that she is holding.

Levin maintains that Hopper executed ten preparatory sketches for this painting before he was satisfied with the composition (see figures 111 and 112).[49] These sketches, some of which are reproduced in the *Catalogue Raisonné*, indicate that Hopper had originally intended to include several more people in the painting and in the process of working out the composition he gradually erased them. He had considered placing them in both of the chairs on the left of the lobby, and an additional male in the chair on the right of the lobby, next to the young woman. The process of reduction of the number of people in the work demonstrates how Hopper gradually reduces the parameters of the image until he achieves the bare minimum to create the desired effect, a process that he continues to use throughout his career until he arrives at the ultimate space of the empty room. However, due to the time of the execution of *Hotel Lobby* (figure 7), it still maintains a relatively large amount of extraneous detail, including a fourth person who remains a ghostly presence in the background of the painting. He is a male member of the staff whom Hopper has placed behind the counter of the reception desk, and he acts as, what Schmied terms as Hopper's 'silent witness'.[50] He is just visible in the illumination that comes from his desk lamp.

The setting for this painting is unusual for Hopper as he generally depicts the areas of the city of modern America that he and his wife inhabited. In this painting he has taken great pains to illustrate the classically ornate and decorative interior of this lobby. The decoration, furniture and plush carpets indicate that this is a hotel where Hopper's collectors and his dealer Rehn would feel more at home. This would not be the type place that the frugal Hoppers would generally patronise, as such it must have been inspired by a hotel in which they stayed on an occasion ,where Hopper had been invited to sit on an exhibition jury and consequently the bill was collected by their hosts.[51]

As was usual, Hopper used Jo as the model. For the older woman, Jo dressed in her fur coat, which she reserved for grand occasions.[52] It is interesting that Hopper was able to adapt the figure and features of his wife, who was now in her early sixties to create two very different females. The older woman—although closer in age in reality—bears no resemblance to Jo's features, as she, like most of Hopper's females is representative of a type of woman. The younger blond woman represents a similar 'type' that Hopper used in *New York Office* (1962) (figure 77) and *New York Movie* (1939) (figure 9), for example.

The two women are placed on opposite sides of the composition which is divided diagonally by the green stripe in the carpet. The two females are placed either side of this dividing diagonal. They pose a series of oppositions; one is young, the other is old. The older woman is dressed to go out, and sits in a rather prim and neat way, with her knees and legs together, whereas the younger is wearing a short-sleeved dress and is wearing 'spike' heeled shoes, but is lounging comfortably in the easy chair engrossed in her book. The older woman is wearing dark-blue shoes that have a rather 'sensible' or matronly appearance. These are a complete contrast to the very 'strappy', flimsy, high-heeled shoes worn by the younger woman. The older woman is also wearing a dress that is carefully pulled down over her knees; the dress of the younger is much shorter and reveals her knees, as she relaxes in the chair. The two women are attired in blue and a reddish-pink, as is usual with Hopper's female figures. The other major difference between the two females is that Hopper has depicted the older woman looking up towards the male figure which seems to indicate that she has spoken to him and is awaiting a reply, is speaking to him, or is about to speak to him, and yet, the younger female is placed quietly reading her book. As such, this younger female is as quietly introspective as the standing male in the centre of the composition.

The man is pivotal to the composition and has been placed in the centre. He is placed mostly on the left side of the green stripe in the carpet that creates the diagonal divide across the painting. Hopper has depicted him so that he has one foot on the green stripe. Perhaps this indicates that the male figure has a more ambiguous position in the work. Although he is located close to the older woman, and the position of their two bodies seems to indicate that they are together, perhaps the fact that Hopper has placed him with one foot on the green stripe, which seems to notionally divide the work into two halves diagonally, could demonstrate that he is spatially dislocated from his 'partner'. In a sense, by placing his foot on this compositional element, Hopper is indicating that this man is not entirely happy with his placement next to the older woman.

This could suggest a breakdown in their relationship, but it could also indicate this man's preference to be on the side of the room where the younger woman is seated. As this male has only placed one foot onto this dividing part of the composition, we could assume that Hopper is suggesting that this figure has neither the desire nor the ambition to change his surroundings and move from the side of the older woman to that of the younger, and as such, is a reflection of the inability of all Hopper's figures to effect change on their lives. Therefore, this man will be eternally trapped in the position of wanting to leave the dislocated relationship with the older woman, yet unable to move and make the change.

The man dominates the space in which he is placed. This is achieved by his central placement in the composition, so that he become the focal draw of the work. Hopper enhances this as the elements of the composition draw towards him; the diagonals of the green stripe on the carpet, the easy chairs on the left of the painting, and the direction of the hotel reception desk coming into the canvas from the right. These directional lines meet at the male, enhancing his prominent position, and are then enhanced by the vertical elements, which are achieved by the door frames and the fluted columns, with their ionic capitals, which adorn the reception desk. The vertical elements of the painting mirror the stiff, upright position of this man.

He appears stiff and ill-at-ease with his surroundings unlike the young woman who seems completely relaxed and at home, which is suggested by her body position as she lounges, stretched out in the chair. She is depicted in a relaxed and informal position which is contradictory to the austerity of the hotel lobby. She appears as relaxed as she would be if placed in a private interior space, rather than a public lobby. The sense of ease that the young woman has is compounded by her blue dress which tonally complements the blue chair in which she is seated; her body has begun to merge, and become one, with the chair.

The older woman is the antithesis of this, as she also exudes the same sense of discomfort as seen in her companion. This is indicated by her stiff and formal body position, and the way she has seated herself. Instead of relaxing into the chair as the younger woman has been able to do, she has been placed in the chair in a manner that meets all the requirements of decorum and propriety, indicated by her skirt that is pulled over her knees, her seated position with her knees and legs together, and her rather 'matronly'-styled shoes which are placed neatly together in front of her body. Her

suggested discomfort is exacerbated by her twisted position in the chair. Her upper body is taut and twisted as she looks up to the man.

This discomfort displayed is possibly based upon the personal experience of the artist. As already mentioned, the interior represented here reveals a type of hotel that would not normally be frequented by the frugal Hoppers. He has carefully attended to the details of the decoration in the design of the reception desk, and the ornately framed landscape on the wall. Levin maintains that the specific attention to the decorative detail of this interior, in particular the gilt framed landscape and the fluted columns on the desk are included to represent a cliché, which typifies America, in the sense that the landscape represents the nineteenth century drive to conquer and populate the West and is indicative of the restless desire for change. The interior of the hotel lobby, and in a sense the notion of the American hotel itself, typifies this restless nature or desire. Hopper's lobby is then intended to be a stereotypical representation of the American hotel as defining such a sentiment, and is designed to be indicative of such a building. As such, Hopper's image finds parallels with Henry James' description of the significance of the American hotel in *The American Scene* (1907), when he described it as, 'a synonym for civilization,....the American spirit most seeking and most finding itself.'[53]

Just as James found himself dislocated from the America of his birth when he returned in 1904 after twenty years in England, Hopper, also a Victorian by birth, finds himself at odds with the development and modernisation of America. (The consequences of this in relation to his responses to the American city, in particular New York, are discussed in detail in Chapter four.)

The young woman can be seen as representative of the youthful America, which is confident and comfortable with its position, as she is at ease in the surroundings of the tradition hotel, in the sense that the modern and vibrant twentieth century America works alongside the more traditional elements of nineteenth century America. The older couple then are contemporaries of Hopper and his wife, born in the nineteenth century but overtaken by the twentieth. They are effectively dislocated by both, portrayed by Hopper as neither belonging to the past, nor the future.

The painting, through its use of the American hotel, reflects a central area of Hopper's work in relation to its depiction of American culture, i.e. the transient nature of its modern condition. The seemingly restless desire of Americans to travel, or to move on,

and a past pioneering spirit are evoked by the landscape painting on the lobby wall. The irony of Hopper's painting is that his figures are motionless, and in effect, are captured in a moment of endless anticipation. The fact that the older couple are depicted as holding or wearing their coats would suggest that they are going somewhere. Perhaps they are waiting for a taxi, or for friends? Hopper only implies that they are waiting for something, but gives no indication as to what that might be. Then, perhaps for Hopper, this is the point: the waiting, as they are condemned to wait forever. Whatever restless desires they might harbour, they will remain unfulfilled, as they have been condemned them to an eternity of inactivity and the dissatisfaction of unfulfilled dreams.

The gaze of he male is introspective and alienated, one that is employed on Hopper's solitary figures. This man demonstrates the possibility of the human figure to feel emotionally isolated and alienated within an environment even when others are present. It also reveals the importance of this figure within this work and the significance of his dominant position, that although the setting has changed and the artist has included other figures in the composition the motive remains the same. The motive being the depiction of the alienation of the individual within their environment and relationships, and through this one figure Hopper represents his sense of the isolated and hopeless existence of the human condition within his contemporary America.

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[1] W. I. Homer, *Robert Henri and his Circle*, New York, 1969, p.40.
[2] Ibid., p.220.
[3] Ibid., p.220.
[4] Ibid., p.107.
[5] Ibid., p.220.
[6] G. Levin, *Edward Hopper, An Intimate Biography*, Los Angeles, California and London, 1998, pp.172–74.
[7] Paul Verlaine, *La Bonne Chanson*, Paris, 1870. Translated by John Van Sickle.
[8] Emily Genauer, 'Courageously Realistic Oils Exhibited by Edward Hopper', *New York World-Telegram*, January 6, 1948, p.12.
[9] 'Travelling Man', *Time*, 51, January 19, pp.59–60.
[10] G. Levin, 1998, p.398.
[11] Record Book III, p.25. Cited in G. Levin, *Edward Hopper, Catalogue Raisonné*, New York, 1995, volume III, p.320.
[12] W. Schmied, *Edward Hopper: Portraits of America*, Munich and New York, 1995, p.98 and G. Levin, 1995, volume III, p.366.
[13] J. Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, London, 1972, pp.46–7.
[14] J. M. Ussher, *The Psychology of the Female Body*, London, 1989, p.13.
[15] G. Levin, 1998, pp.178–181. See also Chapter 1 for greater detail here.
[16] Ibid., p.95.
[17] R. Hughes, *American Visions*, London, 1997, p.423.
[18] W. Schmied, 1995, p.40.
[19] Ibid., p.52.
[20] 'The Killers' was published in *Scribner's* magazine in March 1927. It was this version that Hopper read and praised.
[21] Ibid., p.98.
[22] Record Book I, p.52. Cited in G. Levin, 1995, p.159.

[23] From a conversation with Lloyd Goodrich. Goodrich Notebook I, p.75. Housed in the archives of the Whitney Museum of American Art. Cited in Ibid., p.159.
[24] G. Levin, 1998, pp.184–5.
[25] N. Mirzoeff, *Bodyscape; Art, Modernity and the Ideal Figure*, London, 1995, p.19.
[26] Jo Hopper diary entry November 30, 1949. Cited in G. Levin, 1998, p.418.
[27] E. Boring, H. S. Langfeld, H. P. Weld (eds), *Introduction to Psychology*, New York, 1939, p.440.
[28] M. D. Vernon, *A Further Study of Visual Perception*, Cambridge, 1954, p.110.
[29] Jo Hopper diary entry for December 6, 1949. Cited in G. Levin, 1998, pp.419–20.
[30] Ibid., p.420.
[31] Jo Hopper diary entry for December 6, 1949. Cited in Ibid., p.420.
[32] Ibid., p.420
[33] W. Schmied, 1995, p.56.
[34] E. Boring, H. S. Langfeld, H. P. Weld (eds), 1939, p.440.
[35] Record Book III p.35. Cited in G. Levin, 1995, volume III, p.330.
[36] Jo Hopper diary entry November 30, 1949. Cited in G. Levin, 1998, p.418.
[37] L. D. Fernald and P. S. Fernald, *Basic Psychology*, Boston, 1979, p.83.
[38] P. H. Lindsay and D.A. Norman, *Human Information Processing-An Introduction to Psychology*, New York, 1977, p.40.
[39] C.J. Bulliet, 'Artless Comment on the Seven Arts', *Chicago Daily News*, October 30, 1943, p.7.
[40] G. Levin, 1998, p.401.
[41] Aline B. Louchheim, 'Realism and Hopper', *New York Times*, January 11, 1948, section 2, p.9.
[42] Unfortunately the limited space here does not allow for further expansion on the Surrealist aspects of Hopper's work.
[43] E.H. Johnson, *American Artists on Art from 1940 to 1980*, New York, 1980, p.81.
[44] G. Levin, *Edward Hopper, The Art and the Artist*, New York, 1980, p.19.
[45] G. Levin, 1998, p.420.
[46] Jo Hopper's diaries are quoted in detail upon the nature of the sexual differences between them in G. Levin's 1998 biography of the artist.
[47] Jo Hopper to Lloyd Goodrich, Letter of September 23, 1959. Cited G. Levin, 1998, p.524.
[48] Record Book III, p. 69. Cited G. Levin, 1995, volume III, p.362.
[49] Ibid., p.296.
[50] W. Schmied, 1995, p.70.
[51] G. Levin, 1998, p.359.
[52] Ibid., p.359.
[53] H. James, *The American Scene*, London, 1907, p.102.

Chapter 4.

Manhattan, New York: The American City.

In this chapter I want to shift the emphasis by moving away from a discussion of the representation of the figure alone, to consider Hopper's depiction of it in relation to a series of urban environments central to his sense of American city. This chapter discusses the American city as a subject and how this affects his treatment of the human figure within that urban space. In the following chapters I then move on to consider his portrayal of the human figure within a series of specific interior environments of the city: the office, the American restaurant, the movies and 'theater', and the apartment building.

The city as a subject became a central part of Hopper's work during his life. It was a source of inspiration with which he was consistently preoccupied. Primarily, the city that Hopper paints is New York City. He claimed that he preferred to live on Washington Square, in Greenwich Village, away from the provincialism of small town American life (in Nyack);[1] as suggested by Sinclair Lewis's (1885–1951) *Main Street* (1921) and Sherwood Anderson's (1876–1941) *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919). His New York paintings reveal his specific areas of interest within the American city, such as specific architectural forms as portrayed in *Manhattan Bridge Loop* (1928) (figure 113).

Hopper's response to New York is very much an individual one, and his works are distinct from other contemporary responses. His paintings of New York seem to reveal his criticism of the American city, in particular the effect of the developments of the twentieth century upon the human figure, as revealed in his paintings of the office and the automat, for example. He revealed his criticism of the city with his darker, more negative depictions which focus around the representation of the human condition within the city, even when he has not placed anybody within the painting, as in *Drug Store* (1927) (figure 13). These more negative depictions of the urban scene have led to the assertion that his paintings define the 'monotony and loneliness of the city'.[2]

Hopper reminds us, as late as 1935 that, 'you must not forget that I was for a time a student of Henri's who encouraged all his students to try to depict the familiar life about them.'[3] It is this sense of the familiar and his immediate surroundings that are reproduced in his paintings. Hopper's paintings of 'the city' explore the many facets of urban living. He

responds to the architectural forms around him in a very personal way and he paints the particular areas of the city which most interest him.

If however, this is answer to Henri's dictum, Hopper is interested by dramatically differing elements of this 'familiar life'. Hopper's New York paintings are startlingly different to the responses of other Henri students, like Sloan and Luks, or even other contemporary artists. His paintings are sparsely inhabited, or empty, and do not give any indication of the thriving metropolis captured by Everett Shinn (1876–1953) in *Sixth Avenue Shoppers* (undated) (figure 114) where he portrays the crowds of shoppers that thronged the Avenue in Greenwich village just north of Washington Square, or the noise of contemporary music and the dazzling electric lights of Broadway conjured up by Piet Mondrian's (1872–1944) image *Broadway Boogie-Woogie* (1942–3) (figure 115). Hopper's vision of New York is based at street level, and focuses on the nineteenth century brownstone buildings making no allusion to the increasing skyscrapers of the early twentieth century that so attracted artists like Georgia O'Keeffe (1887–1986) in *Radiator Building—Night, New York* (1927) (figure 116) or the icons of the city like Brooklyn Bridge, which were repeatedly depicted by Joseph Stella (1877–1946) as in *Brooklyn Bridge* (c.1919) (figure 117).

I want to move on to a consideration of the range of Hopper's representation of the city and in this context it is necessary to consider his earliest city paintings of Paris; some of which he painted there between 1906 and 1910. After his return to America he continued to paint Parisian subjects, indicative of the way that he was stimulated artistically by that city as an urban environment. These early images reveal the influence that *that* city, and its art, had upon him, as they are in an Impressionist style. The painting *Louvre in a Thunderstorm* (1909) (figure 118) is one such work, in which we can see his specific interest in the atmospheric conditions. Hopper has carefully applied the paint to show the brewing and threatening storm clouds over the Louvre and the wind blowing through the trees along the edge of the Seine.

He also employed the Impressionist use of black and white paint in the work. The black is toned with grey to gradually lighten the colour across the painting, starting with the darkest area, the boat, in the bottom right-hand corner and moving diagonally left and upwards, recessing into the space of the painting. The dark and threatening colour moves back into the painting from the foreground boat, through the bridge and the roof of the Louvre, up to

the thunderclouds in the sky above. Hopper uses white in the same manner, moving the viewer's eye from the white around the porthole on the boat, to the wash created by the boats moving on the river behind, to the less threatening clouds on the periphery of the storm.

What becomes most apparent in Hopper's early paintings of Paris is his interest in the light and the colour variations it created across the buildings, the bridges and rivers. Hopper was particularly inspired by the light he experienced there, as he said, 'the light was different from anything I had ever known. The shadows were luminous—more reflected light. Even under the bridges there was a certain luminosity.'[4] His interest in this different light can be seen in paintings such as *Le Pont des Arts* (1907) (figure 119), *Le Pont Royal* (1909) (figure 120) and *Le Quai des Grands Augustins* (1909) (figure 121). After his return he continued to paint in a 'European' style, either reminiscing over French subject matter from memory, or using his European experience to influence his visual and aesthetic approach to American subject matter. A clear example would be *Queensborough Bridge* (figure 122) in 1913.

By looking at the range of city images that Hopper executed during his career, we can also recognise the way in which he focuses on smaller areas of subject matter. In early paintings, such as *Blackwell's Island* (1911) (figure 123), which housed New York's notorious penitentiary from 1832 until 1935, when all the prisoners were moved to a new prison on Rikers Island, *Queensborough Bridge* (1913) (figure 122), *American Village* (1912) (figure 124) and *New York Corner* (1913) (figure 125), we can see that his view of the city began with wide cityscapes. By 1913 he has already reduced his field of vision to a street corner. In *Blackwell's Island* we view the island and the city from the bridge, with only a few lights and the moonlight to reveal the outlines of the buildings of the penitentiary below. In *Queensborough Bridge*, the bridge dominates the painting and the city is only suggested in the haze of the background of the painting. This is the vision of the city, as seen from Queensborough Bridge, that is experienced by Nick Carraway in *The Great Gatsby* (1925), when he said 'the city seen from the Queensboro Bridge is always the city seen for the first time, in its first wild promise of all the mystery and the beauty in the world.'[5]

By 1912, in the painting *American Village*, Hopper has moved the focus in closer. We view the street scene below from a window; the window ledge is still visible in the bottom of the painting. The high viewpoint that is created by Hopper here anticipates his later paintings,

where he creates dramatic, or unnerving, effects by employing high, oblique vantage points. This painting also indicates Hopper's changing style, as he started to move away from the Impressionist style of his early years, and in this particular painting he comes closest to painting in the style of Henri and the Eight, where his indistinct figures convey the sense of the movement and bustle of the scene echoed in Shinn's *Sixth Avenue Shoppers* (figure 114).

Hopper consistently reduces the field of vision that he employs in his mature paintings where he concentrates on a shop front, for example as in *Drug Store* (1927) (figure 13) where he concentrates on a single shop front, and then to a single room, viewed from the outside in *Room in New York* (1932) (figure 6) and ultimately with the empty interior of a single room. Interestingly this gradual reduction of the visual field is reflected in the method used by contemporary filmmakers to move from the wide view of an area, to focus in on a small area of the scene/seen. It is also a method used by writers to focus their readers on the characters, having placed them in a wider context.

The interior of a single room, in particular the interior of an empty room, as in *Sun in an Empty Room* (figure 3), is the fusion of the elements of Hopper's paintings of the human figure within the city as it allows him to focus on the inevitable negative nature of the human condition, and the play of light. By 1924 Hopper had refined his field of vision moving away from the wide angled cityscapes in *Blackwell's Island* and *Queensborough Bridge* to focus intently on specific 'close-ups'; the interior space of the office, the apartment, and the movie theatre, for example. This allows Hopper to create specific observations of the city and its inhabitants.

This process of focussing on a single aspect also reflects the increasingly minimal number of figures in his paintings. In *American Village* (figure 124) his painting is densely populated with small, nondescript characters in the style of the Eight, but as his focus is intensified they lessen in number and become much more in keeping with his developing realist style. In his later cityscapes like *Manhattan Bridge Loop* (1928) (figure 113) or *Approaching a City* (1946) (figure 126), he paints a city that is either generally undisturbed by a human presence or they are diminished in size and seem insignificant in relation to the massive structure of the architectural environment. Where Hopper paints the city in close up the

figures are few in number, generally only one or two, and are as important as the setting in which they are placed.

The emphasis on the representation of light is crucial as he commented at one time that what he 'wanted to do was paint sunlight on the side of a house'.[6] By looking at his many paintings of Gloucester, Massachusetts, where he spent the Summer of 1912, his lighthouses, and his careful rendition of the architecture of New York, we see that like the Precisionists, Hopper is interested in the strong geometric forms of architecture; but in contrast to them, he is also interested in the heaviness, and the solidity of the buildings, the play of light upon them and the effect of the time of day.

Early Sunday Morning (1930) (figure 12) is a major example of Hopper's concerns in his paintings of the city. The painting reveals a row of shop fronts with apartments above. The building continues beyond the confines of the canvas at either side. This is typical of Hopper's style of editing his images. He portrays a small area of interest on canvas, revealing to us the extent to which the buildings or the figures, for example, continue on beyond the confines of his paintings. This painting has a flat and horizontally dominated composition. It can be broken down into four 'bands' across the canvas. The top 'band' of the painting is the clear morning sky; the next is the apartments, then the shop fronts and finally, the pavement in front of the building.

The rigid geometry is puritanical in its conception. The composition is so flat that it is difficult to believe that the buildings illustrated are anything other than cardboard cut-outs, or the fake frontages used on early film sets. Even the shadows on the pavement conform to the horizontal nature of the painting. The doors and windows of the shops and the apartments above, although more usually considered to be vertical elements, further enhance this nature of the painting through their placement as a regimented band of elements across the composition of the painting. This horizontal focus is broken by the suggestion of a building in the top right of the painting, and the fire hydrant and the barber shop post that are on the pavement.

The long shadows across the building, and in particular those on the pavement in front of the shops, indicate the early hour of the day, which is confirmed by the title of the painting. Hopper has painted the street before the shops are open and before anyone is about. The

apartments suggest the presence of people as the blinds are at different levels. Although one can enjoy the light, bright sunlight that Hopper haspainted, the curtained windows and dark shadowed doorways virtually close the building off from the viewer. We are unable to see into the apartment rooms or the shop fronts. With the exception of the indication of the barbershop with its brightly coloured sign outside we are unable to make out the nature of the shops, as their lettering is illegible. The darkened windows and doorways do not invite the viewer towards them, and indeed appear as threatening because they play on the perception of darkness as danger. To enter the spaces behind them the figure must enter these areas of darkness on the canvas.

The drawn and half-drawn curtains and blinds are a recurring element in Hopper's paintings. They shut the viewer out of the painting. These blinds deny the viewer the ability to see into the spaces of the rooms beyond. Windows are the 'eyes' of a building and these shutters could be thought of as blinded eyes; the viewer cannot see in and the occupants behind the blinds cannot see out. The occupants (or implied occupants in the case of *Early Sunday Morning*) of the building become isolated inside, and the viewer on the outside of the building is an outsider to city life and the city. If windows are the eyes of a building, they are the outlets of its consciousness in the same way that human eyes are believed to be the window to the soul. They allow us to see into the inner life of the building. Hopper uses them to indicate that there is human existence beyond the building façade, or in many paintings allows us a voyeuristic view into the rooms beyond them. Hence, through Hopper's painting, we are allowed a view into the secret life of the city beyond these 'eyes'.

Wallace Stevens (1879-1955) believed that, 'a room without a window is a life denied consciousness of itself and contact with others. Or a life which has declared itself to be inscrutable.'[7] The effect of this is as if the rooms psychologically appear to have no windows and therefore the interior has lost contact with the external world, as by implication have its occupants. Stevens further maintained (in 1900) that when office buildings closed after the day's business and the curtains were drawn it created the effect that 'the faces of the buildings looked hard and cruel and lifeless'.[8] This is an effect that Hopper achieved repeatedly, and not only with office buildings. In his paintings the closed and half-closed blinds are hard and cruel because they exclude the outsider and maintain captive those held prisoner behind them.

This more sinister use of the drawn, or partially drawn, blinds can be witnessed in *Rooms for Tourists* (1945) (figure 128), or *House at Dusk* (1939) (figure 129), as light from the rooms behind the windows can be seen in the darkness. The use of light in the darkness should give the effect of a welcoming beacon. In fact the illumination should act as a homely beacon in the darkness because it represents a haven or refuge from the night and the implied presence of people. However, this is not the effect that Hopper achieves. They are not welcoming beacons; they do not offer refuge to the viewer, but indicate the presence of city dwellers or travellers passing through, trapped inside their rooms that are closed to our eyes.

Just as the painted exterior of the buildings offer no comfort or refuge, Hopper's interiors offer no shelter either. All the oppression, negativity, exclusion and fear that apply to the outside of his buildings still apply to their interior. Hopper clearly indicates that there is no escape from the conditions of the city, inside or out. Peter Conrad claims that 'Hopper's compositions contrive to diminish or efface human beings, as the city does'.[9] Indeed his figures have no personality or character, other than that with which the viewer wishes to endow them. They are moulded and defeated by the size and impersonality of the city.

The people that Hopper places in his city scenes are 'trapped' inside rooms that suggest goldfish bowls, vulnerable to the gaze of the viewer, and insignificant against the weight and the solidity of the buildings around them. Quite often Hopper paints his figures so that we can only see a part of them, as he does in *Night Windows* (1928) (figure 69) where only the back and legs of the woman are visible through the window of her room. Hopper also places them to appear as if they are walking out of a composition, as if they are aware of that the city has no place for them. *Manhattan Bridge Loop* (figure 113) is one such example of this, where there is a man walking out of the picture frame at the end of the platform.

Hopper also erased figures, another example of his 'absences'. What Hopper does not say is just as important as what he does, and so the people he implies behind half-drawn curtains and illuminated windows are as important as those that are represented. There was one of these erased figures in his painting *Early Sunday Morning* (figure 12), originally placed in one of the shop fronts.[10] In the Elmer Rice (1892-1967) play *Street Scene* (1929) there had been four pivotal characters in the street, and it is conceivable that as Hopper had been

inspired for the painting by the stage set of this play (figure 130). Hopper must have later decided that the barren street scene gave greater effect than one that was inhabited.

It seems that, in this painting, not only is the presence of humanity suggested by the apartments above the shops but also the shadows on the pavement in the foreground of the painting. There is one shadow that extends from the right side of the painting, across the pavement and beyond the edge of the canvas on the left. As there is no indication, because the shadow begins outside the range of the canvas, as to what the object of the shadow is, we can only assume that it is tall, by the evidence of the length of the shadow. It is possible that it is the shadow of a figure standing to the right outside the realm of the painting, and that the only visible trace of humanity in the work is the shadow cast across the pavement.

This particular vision of New York City, in which Hopper continually represents scenes where it would normally be expected to reflect the evidence of a thriving metropolis, is a personal one, and at odds with the reality of a contemporary urban scene. He primarily chooses public areas, such as the restaurant or automat, the theatre and movie theatre, the office and specific areas of New York like *Manhattan Bridge Loop* (figure 113), and *Circle Theatre* (1936) (figure 131). The American city, in particular New York City, is densely populated, but Hopper gives little or no indication of this. For example, in the census of the 1920s, it was revealed that over fifty percent of the entire population of the United States lived in cities, and at the same time the country was still subject to large-scale immigration.[11] He continually painted empty streets and isolated figures contradicting the accepted notion of the noisy, vibrant and densely populated city.

Hopper's representation of the city is on one level that of a Realist, and yet at the same time his vision of urban America is disconcerting. He depicts a personal view of New York City, and one that finds parallels in other art forms, such as Film Noir. In his essay *Something More Than Night: 'Tales of the Noir City'* (1997), Frank Krutnik acknowledges a particular notion of the city when it is depicted by Film Noir. He claims that it is 'Haunted by the appearance of the unconscious, the streets of the *noir* city are often empty–the public, social world overwhelmed by privatised traumas.'[12] Krutnik's words could be almost directly applied to works such as *Drug Store* (figure 13) and *Nighthawks* (1942) (figure 14).

Hopper's city scenes construct a 'picture' of the American city, by defamiliarising the city. He places the viewer in the eerily, and artificially, empty streets of Manhattan, therefore placing the viewer in an unfamiliar position within the familiar. He also achieves this by close observation of small areas of the city. By focusing his paintings on particular environments, such as 'the office' or 'the automat', he almost takes them out of context and renders them unfamiliar. It is the same effect as looking at a highly magnified picture of an everyday item, like a piece of wool, and by observing this item from such a close view it becomes strange and unfamiliar, and difficult to identify as a piece of wool. Hopper deconstructs the experience of Manhattan by painting each small and individual location, like the office, the automat and the movie theatre, and then he enables the viewer to observe the sense of the city in each of these particular domains, while experiencing the rather personal overview that Hopper had of the whole city. Each small room, automat, office and street scene when seen together reconstruct a complete image of the city, as seen through Hopper's eyes.

Such 'glimpses' by Hopper, of the city and city life, are akin to the cinematic method used at the beginning of Dassin's film *The Naked City* (1948). At the beginning of the film Dassin offers us a collection of small tableaux of life in New York, which seen individually appear unconnected, but which later piece together to create the narrative of the film. Hopper's city images are unconnected scenes which as a whole create an overview of city life and the condition of the city. The only difference here is that there is no intended narrative in Hopper's paintings, only that which is read by implication by the viewer. Peter Conrad denies any anecdotal intention in Hopper's work.[13] However, again due to what Hopper does not say in his paintings, rather than what he does, the stillness within his paintings lends them to be seen as movie 'stills', or as a single moment from a play. In fact, that we can refer to his figures as characters implies the sense of narrative. They are frozen, waiting for the moment of action that will never come. The viewer cannot help but speculate on impossible action, the frisson of his female 'characters', or the psychological tension that lies between them. There is also the implied sense of impending crime in works such as *Nighthawks* (figure 14), which can be seen in relation to Weegee's (1900–68) portrait of New York in *Naked City* (1945) which includes the photographs of murder victims (figure 132). This photographic portrait of New York City was the inspiration for Dassin's film of the same name.

Hopper's city figures are 'types' that he utilises to portray the humanity of the city, which although invariably represent the white middle-class population of Manhattan, the inhabitants are very much viewed in relation to himself. Hopper's choice of 'type' that he portrays reflects the creation of the notion of the 'stereotype' which was a term adopted by Walter Lippmann in the 1920s to categorise the population.[14] This generalised treatment of humans as 'types' also occurs in the poetry of Walt Whitman (1819-92), in *Mannahatta* (1860) for example, and the writing of Sherwood Anderson. Whitman's urban pantheism in *Mannahatta* witnesses the multi-racial population of New York undergo a unification; because they are no longer divided by race or social strata, they emerge as a class of citizens. Whitman, like Hopper, does not individualise his characters. We can see Whitman and Anderson utilising American 'types' in their works and can acknowledge their influence upon Hopper's urban figures. Henri used Whitman's poetry as part of his teaching[15] and Hopper was aware of Anderson's work, commenting that he was 'a good writer', but that he was 'a little too Midwestern for me'.[16] These particular 'types' are synonymous for all of New York and all American cities; after all New York is the city of all American cities, yet they are not stereotypes but quintessential white middle-class, white-collar worker 'types'.

The Ash-can School artists were interested in the urban 'types' within their paintings. They filled their canvases with young girls, laundresses, children playing, boys on the street, mothers and drunks. This heritage is apparent in Hopper's paintings of the city as he sees the population in terms of his own 'type', the white middle-class male, but, it is subdued as he moves away from the study of the social under-classes depicted by the Ash-can School. Hopper's figures are more than just 'types' of New Yorkers and have more in common with the 'grotesques' of Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919). Just as Anderson's characters wallow in their depression, inertia, solitude and requited ambitions, Hopper's figures are trapped within their settings in just the same way. The only difference between them is that Hopper's figures are unable to unburden their souls to a George Willard, as Anderson's 'grotesques' do.

Certain areas of the city hold greater interest for Hopper, as an artist, than others. His interest in the city is more intimate and mundane, and although he focuses on social spaces within the city he paints them as antisocial and enclosed, emphasising the isolation of the human figure within them. His figures are trapped alone within the space of the rooms; isolated within their own interior world, unable to be social even when others are present.

Nowhere is this more apparent than in his definitive painting *Nighthawks* (1942) (figure 14), which is discussed in greater detail below.

Although I noted above that Hopper had little interest in the New York skyline it is perhaps interesting at this point to introduce his painting *City Roofs* (1932) (figure 133), which reveals both the personal nature of Hopper's vision of the city, as it is based on Washington Square, and his artistic intentions generally. This painting gives clear evidence of Hopper's assertion that all he wanted to do was 'paint sunlight on the side of a house'.[17] The play of the sunlight on the side of the tall building and across the shapes laid out on the roofs is the dominant interest for the artist in this work. In the foreground of this painting, in the area that concentrates on the chimney pots and the skylights of the roof area, the light creates the interest. The light aids the angles and the straight edges of the roof area and deepens the tonal differences in the colours. Clearly the light, and the artist's use of it here, is the primary concern.

It is worth quoting fully the note in Hopper's record book on this painting as it raises potent elements for discussion within this work. The entry reads:

> *City Roofs*. Zinc White. R. Colors. Poppy oil. Seen from 3 Washington Sq. N. Walls of 1 Fifth Avenue at R. [right] back, full of windows, greyish tin floor of roofs & tops of glass sky lights in full sun light. Vertical planes seen against light chimneys & chimney pots & house over stairs of #4–dark red on shadow side; pink in light.[18]

Firstly, this entry places the location of the painting exactly. Hopper painted the scene from the roof of his apartment in Washington Square, the repercussions of this I will return to later, and secondly it reveals the importance of the representation of light to the artist as it figures so strongly in this record book entry.

The sunlight falls onto the scene from outside the boundaries of the canvas and to the left. This allows Hopper to play with the contrasts it creates within the composition between the areas of light and shade, as well as, the effect that it has upon the tones of the colour and the shapes of the composition. As with many of his paintings, he gives the composition a number of dominant vertical lines, not in the sense that he has given the painting an endless feeling of height, but that he evokes a rigid monotony and the architectural strength of the scene. The strength and rigidity of these vertical lines is a result of their angular shapes. This emphasis on their angularity gives the lines and edges a crisper and more precise

rendering. This allows the artist to render the scene like an architectural study, or an illustration, with clear emphasis given to the drawing of the lines. This quality is achieved with the use of the light and its effects on the shapes and colour tones.

Just as the sunlight upon the shapes in the composition gives greater definition to their delineation, the light also permits Hopper to vary the colour tones. The importance of this element within the painting is again emphasised by the wording of the record book entry. The light in the painting varies the red tones on the chimneys and the chimney pots. In the shadows the red is deep and graduates towards brown and in the areas of bright sunlight it appears pink and dilutes to a pinkish beige. These subtle changes in colour tone permit the artist to mould his shapes and gives form to what otherwise could become a study of line. This painting is clearly a series of contrasts. The basic composition is created by the dominant foreground horizontal band which displays the roof top area. This area of the foreground is foiled by the vertical lines which make up the chimneys and chimney pots. The horizontal area of the composition is more clearly opposed by the walls of the tall building on the right of the painting further into the distance.

The purpose of this building in the background, named as number 1 Fifth Avenue, reflects the increasing development of Manhattan. The painting is Hopper's response to what he sees as the opposition between the old and the new. The rooftop in the foreground is representative of the nineteenth century architecture of Washington Square and the tall building in the background is a metaphor for all the rising buildings of twentieth century Manhattan. It indicates the *modern* city and reveals New York emerging as *the* city of modernism. It is important to note at this point, the completion of several icons of the early twentieth century New York skyline, which serve to aid its emergence as the definitive modernist city; the Flat Iron Building (1901), the Woolworth Building (1911) and the Empire State Building (1931). It is this sense of the young vibrancy and rising architecture that is evoked by this tall building in the background of Hopper's painting. Yet, it is dull and faceless, even the many windows hold no great visual interest. In comparison, the shapes of the chimneys, chimney pots and the skylights capture the light. The light upon them defines their shapes and colour tones and as a result they reveal a greater interest for the artist than the symbol of the modernity of the city, embodied by the tall building, which he has pitted against them.

The view of the modern American city that emerges in Hopper's paintings is a negative one, despite his love/hate relationship with it. One senses that his figures are oppressed by and afraid of the city. To counteract this, the idea of reality or unreality can be seen as a mask. For example, just as people give themselves a 'false front' to either project a particular image of themselves to others, or to protect themselves from others, Hopper's figures, or characters, act in just the same way when they are placed alongside others in a painting; this operates both in interiors and outside. They protect themselves from others around them, enabling them to keep their privacy, and for the purposes of self-protection. It is not difficult, or illogical to see this as a reflection of Hopper's own introspective nature.

When we closely observe Hopper's paintings of the various aspects of the city we get the sense that they reveal an element of neurosis about the city. There are several paintings that substantiate this, the most potent is *Approaching a City* (1946) (figure 126) which defines the fear or anxiety that the city invokes, even though the city is not visibly present in the painting, only suggested. This painting of the tunnel entrance to Grand Central Station, is divided horizontally. The top half is dominated by a block of buildings, which are most probably apartments, that give a strong vertical force to the image. Even the painted windows of the buildings stand in vertical columns. In the bottom half of the painting we see two railroad tracks that lay across the painting from right to left and disappear into the darkness of the railroad tunnel. The lines of the tracks and the wall in the bottom half of the painting follow the lines of perspective, forging towards a focal point in the darkness of the tunnel; this forces the viewer's eye to follow the tracks into the tunnel.

There is no train evident, nor is there a hope that one will appear. However, the viewer is placed on the tracks as if they were standing at the front of the train, or just standing on the tracks. The optical focus of the painting drags the eye towards the compositional centre of the painting; that being the darkness of the tunnel. This gives the sense that the viewer is being visually, and therefore psychologically, dragged towards the darkness of the tunnel, and the unknown. We, the viewers, are being dragged into the darkness, or the 'abyss' of the city. The tunnel represents an ominous blackness that has to be encountered before we arrive at the city. It is also indicative of the city; a black hungry mouth that is waiting to devour the bodies and souls of those that come to the city to live and work. This painting is the vision of the city as a nemesis of all those who chose, like Hopper, to leave the small town, or country life, and live in the city.

The tunnel can be seen as a route to oblivion. The buildings above look on, witnesses to the extinction of all those who enter below. The windows in these buildings display typical Hopper characteristics; they are either shuttered or half-shuttered. The 'eyes' of the buildings do not wish to see what goes on below; to ignore the fate of those who enter the dark tunnel. The blinds or curtains act as a delineation between the world outside and the world inside the building. The windows with the blinds lowered cannot act as witnesses to the atrocities below because they cannot 'see'. The lowered blinds are another way for the people of the city to protect themselves and prevent their association or integration with the masses of the city.

Hopper's absences are ominous, but this is perhaps one of the most ominous as the destination of the railroad track disappears into an unknown darkness. This painting is a prime example of Hopper's strength, which is in what he does not say, rather than what he does. In *Approaching a City* the strength and potency of the painting lies in the unknown destination of the tunnel, to which we are compellingly drawn. This painting can also be discussed in conjunction with *Bridle Path* (1939) (figure 34), which is based on a bridle path in Central Park. It is also interesting to note that both of these paintings are anticipated by *Bridge in Paris* (1906) (figure 135), to which the same discussions apply.

In the painting, *Bridle Path* (figure 134), we observe three fashionable equestrians riding towards a tunnel entrance along a bridle path that has been carved out between two escarpments of rock. It goes underneath what appears to be a roadway. There is a building at the top of the painting, in the background, where again, the blinds are drawn, or half-drawn to close the 'eyes' of the building to the world outside. The building has a dark arched entrance that corresponds to the tunnel entrance. This suggests that the ominous sensation invoked by it also applies to the building entrance, and therefore applies to the building itself. The sense of anxiety at the unknown tunnel is compounded by the action of the horse nearest to the picture plane, as it rears in fear at the entrance.

Hopper claimed that he intended the railroad aperture in *Approaching a City* (figure 126) to suggest the 'interest, curiosity, fear' of arrival in an unknown city.[19] This variation of emotions in response to the painting, as well as to the situation indicated, is entirely plausible as we willingly read horror stories or watch horror movies, where we are

transfixed by what terrifies us, although our curiosity persuades us to continue. Hence, we have the desire to enter to satisfy our curiosity, although it fills us with terror.

However, it represents more than this as both the tunnel in *Approaching the City* and *Bridle Path* (figure 134) invoke what Peter Conrad terms the 'urban terror of reduction to nonentity'.[20] The city, by its sheer size and weight of humanity makes everyone feel insignificant. The human figure is crushed by its size and power and made conscious of their individual insignificance in its vastness. By entering the tunnel to nowhere the human figure subjects itself to self-examination on a journey to annihilation. The darkness of the aperture is a dominant force within the painting; it draws the viewer towards it. This signifies the inevitability of existence within the city, and acts as a premonition of death.

Hopper's dark and threatening underground passages in these two paintings also seem to comment on a tunnel-like transition through city life; the monotony of the worker. The deathly servitude with which the worker pays to the mechanisation of the city; in particular the tunnelled existence of the office worker. There is a sense of the tedium of existence that begins at nine and ends at five, that begins with the first day at work and ends with retirement. This repetitiveness manifests itself in paintings such as *Office in a Small City* (1953) (figure 17), *New York Office* (1962) (figure 77) and *Office at Night* (1940) (figure 18), where Hopper paints his office workers caged within the box of their office. With the exception of *Office at Night* (figure 18), Hopper has accentuated the sensation of being trapped as he has clearly placed us outside the office looking in.

These paintings, if viewed together, unconsciously express the monotony and entrapment felt by Hopper during the period spent working as an illustrator. He would have been aware of the futility of his existence, as he had to keep returning to a job he disliked because he needed the money. Hopper would have experienced this ominous tunnel-like trap or procession through life, all in return for the 'holy Dollar' at the end of the week.

Hopper returns to the subject of the railroad in many of his oil paintings, both within the city, in *Approaching the City* (figure 126) and *Hotel by a Railroad* (1952) (figure 49), and beyond the city as in *House by a Railroad* (1925) (figure 136). The artist's interest in this subject is an indication of his recognition of its crucial role within the development of modern America and its placement in his work, again, emphasises his awareness of the

iconography of contemporary America. His depictions of railroad lines, tunnels bridges and the interiors of railroad cars are also an important part of Hopper's interest in the mobility of the human figure and the transient nature of the modern American people.

The following four chapters of this thesis consider the treatment of the human figure within specific areas of the modern city; the office, the automat, the movie theatre and the apartment building. Hopper places his figures within these distinctive American city spaces and uses them to define their hopeless confinement within their lives and spaces within New York City. This transient nature is crucial to Hopper's treatment of the figure and in particular to this element of the American psyche. Hopper represents routes of entry and exit to the city; paintings like *Approaching a City* (figure 126), *Manhattan Bridge Loop* (figure 113) and *Queensborough Bridge* (figure 122), all offering the possibility to travel into, and more importantly out of the city. This promise of escape is empty, as the routes disappear into tunnels and the tracks are empty, consequently they emphasise the notion that his figures are trapped within their urban environments.

In his painting of 1952, *Hotel by a Railroad* (figure 49), Hopper has incorporated both the elements of the railroad and the hotel, thus increasing the emphasis on the transient elements of the painting, but has placed them in a city context. This serves to emphasise the desire of the figures to escape their *ennui*, but also underlines their inability to leave. By locating the figures in the space of the hotel Hopper has emphasised the sense of dislocation, or of not belonging. The hotel room, although given more detail by the artist than some of his more intimate interiors, is still an austere space. This painting is unusual in that Hopper has included a fair amount of detail to the interior space despite the date of the work.

In *Hotel by a Railroad* (figure 49) Hopper has chosen to include a greater amount of detail, which is more akin to his paintings of the 1940s. It is unusual perhaps, that he has taken care with the incidental details of the interior, like the dresser and the ornaments placed upon it, the easy chair, the mirror and the curtain at the window, when he is portraying a space that is defined in the title as being an 'hotel'. He has attributed more personal detail to this 'impersonal' space than he does when the space is ambiguous, such as an apartment. In *Summer in the City* (1949) (figure 47), *Morning Sun* (figure 10) and *Excursions into Philosophy* (1959) (figure 11), amongst others, Hopper has kept the space ambiguous, but has minimised the detail to focus on the intense psychological narrative that is implied. It is

also interesting to note that of the nine preparatory sketches that exist, one reveals that at one point he considered placing just one male figure in this interior, seated on either a long sofa or a bed. It has a very similar aspect to the compositions of both *Summer in the City* (figure 47) and *Excursions into Philosophy* (figure 11), and the male would have been reminiscent of the contemplative, seated male in *Sunday* (1926) (figure 5).

However, in the final composition of *Hotel by a Railroad* (figure 49) Hopper decided to include two figures in this work. He has depicted a woman seated in the easy chair on the left of the work, and a man standing facing out of the window onto the railroad tracks. The notes on this painting in the record book reveal that this couple are husband and wife.[21] As ever, Jo Hopper posed for the female and she records the progress of this painting in her diary entries. When this work is first mentioned by her she reveals that she posed even though she was 'not the type' that he wanted for the painting. Hopper wanted 'a large creature able to hold her own with the man he has standing by a window with his back turned to her.'[22]

Again, Jo's words seem to indicate the tension between the couple, both in the painting and in reality. Her words suggest that she does not feel that she is able to 'hold her own' with Hopper, which is why she feels that she is unsuitable for the figure of the female in the painting. Perhaps her words 'I'm not the type he wants either' also have greater significance than just relating to the painting, in that she could be suggesting that she was not the partner that she wanted, rather than just not being the right type of model for the figure that he was painting. The relationship had periods of clear animosity when Jo would punish Hopper by going on hunger strike in her studio,[23] when she described herself as 'bitter with frustration & waspy of tongue & desperate of mood.'[24] In more light-hearted moments Hopper would refer to her moods as he did in her Christmas present of 1951, when he inscribed a book of Arthur Rimbaud's poetry, with the words 'la petite chatte qui découvre ses griffes presque tous les jours' ('to the little cat who bares her claws almost every day').[25]

Jo continually battled to receive some recognition for her own paintings, only to be disappointed, and criticised by Hopper.[26] Her diaries reveal her constant battle for recognition as an artist in her own right, and the lack of support she received from Hopper. These diaries are carefully quoted in Levin's 1998 biography of Hopper, in a sense making

the book more of a biography of Jo Hopper than her husband, as he, and their relationship, is more often than not seen through her eyes.

The implied tension between the couple is created by the position of the two figures. The female is absorbed by the book which she is reading, and has isolated herself from the male by her concentrated position within the chair. She concentrates on the text rather than on him and he, in turn, is absorbed by the view through the hotel window. Both are still and silent in their occupations, and it is this silence that defines the tension between them, particularly as the male is seemingly absorbed by a view of empty railroad tracks which run outside their hotel window. The buildings on the other side of the tracks offer no visual interest either as they appear either to have no windows or have windows that are boarded up. The man is effectively staring at nothing, and this holds his attention rather than his female companion.

Jo intimated in her diary that she found this painting 'very depressing'[27] and that it was Hopper's intention in this painting to place the 'emphasis on mood', maintaining that the wife had 'better watch husband and tracks below window'.[28] Her words suggests that the male was experiencing a negative psychological state. Perhaps she saw the painting as 'depressing' because it implied that the man was contemplating suicide. Certainly this male appears deep in silent contemplation. Perhaps he harbours thoughts of being able to escape via the railroad, whether that is to be by throwing himself onto the tracks, or by boarding a train; it reveals his desire to escape the monotony of his existence.

This figure is typical of Hopper's representations of the American middle-class working male. He is similar in 'type' to the men in *Sunday* (figure 5), *Pennsylvania Coal Town* (1947) (figure 64) and *Excursion into Philosophy* (figure 11). He is described as 'pulling on his neck tie', perhaps in an attempt to remove it, or remove what it symbolises to him.[29] He is significant as he has been depicted standing, holding a cigarette that does not appear to have been lit, whilst staring out into nothingness. It has parallels with a photographic portrait of Hopper that was taken in 1941 by the young photographer Arnold Newman (figure 137). In this photograph Newman has chosen to pose Hopper, whom he described as 'very reserved—almost uptight', dressed in an elegant suit, holding an unlit cigarette.[30] It is significant that Newman has chosen to pose Hopper in this way, standing in front of a canvas.

In this photograph, which is part of a photographic essay on the artist, Newman has captured the inwardness and the struggle of the artist with his art. Hopper is not depicted painting, nor is he placed before a finished canvas, but significantly the canvas is completely blank, and as such is representative of the struggle that Hopper often had with starting to paint, often suffering from a lack of inspiration for a subject. Significantly, at the time of this photograph, Hopper was indeed struggling to find subjects to paint. He was also experiencing a lack of sales of his work, which was partially due to the emotional state of his dealer, Rehn, who had been affected by the recent death of his wife.[31]

The focus on the psychological state of the man in *Hotel by a Railroad* (figure 49) is achieved through Hopper's use of light. The world outside the window is bathed in bright sunlight, which harshly bleaches the stonework of the building seen through the open window. This sunlight barely reaches into the room, but where it does it is used to great effect. It illuminates the head and right arm of this male figure, focussing on the hand that holds the cigarette. It clearly defines the angular contours of his face and emphasises his receding hairline. The strength of the illumination upon this male visually connects him with the brightness beyond the confines of the hotel room.

However, this light is not welcoming or sympathetic; it beats harshly down onto the building and upon this man. The light does not offer restitution or deliverance from the captivity of the hotel room, should he climb outside the window. It acts oppressively upon the elements that it touches and in effect represents annihilation. Perhaps this is why Jo Hopper felt this man was contemplating suicide, sensing that the light was dragging him outside the relative obscurity represented by the hotel room, the anonymity of the self within the machine of American modernity, towards the potential death he would risk on the rail tracks.

The woman is also illuminated, but the light that reaches her is subdued by the colours around her. The harshness of the bright and oppressive illumination that rests on the man is softened. The blues of the interior walls and the chair cover diffuse its harshness. However, it is no more sympathetic as the same blue tones that soften its harshness also remove its heat. In this part of the painting, the diffused blue light illuminates the female, but it is cold and offers no more comfort than that received by the man. It is not as oppressive as that on the male but the blue tonality of the composition at this point emphasises its cold sterility.

Perhaps then we could see Hopper's treatment of the light as suggestive of the psychological states of the two figures in the painting, and of the relationship between them. The man is weighed down by the harsh light that falls upon him as he stands in the window deep in contemplation and the woman is isolated within the sterile environment created by the blue tones created around her. The atmosphere that Hopper has achieved within this work define the notion that the hotel offers an escape. These figures are trapped within the hotel room, and are effectively caged within the confines of their tense relationship and the monotony of their daily existence, with no hope of resolution.

The small view of the railroad track that Hopper offers in the right of the composition does not alleviate this sense of imprisonment either. It merely offers a tantalising glimpse of a possible escape route. Yet, this escape route will never materialise, as he has only intimated its presence in the corner of the painting. It is an empty piece of track with no trains. In effect it is as barren as the relationship between the couple and as sterile and monotonous as the lives that they lead. Hopper offers this couple no hope of escape from their lives, or their relationship. The railroad cannot offer a way out for the male so his only possible course of action is suicide. It is possible that this painting could be seen to represent Hopper as the contemplative figure standing at the window of the hotel pondering his own fate.

By 1952 (the date of this work) Hopper, who was now reaching seventy years of age, was suffering from several health problems. He had had surgery for prostate problems and spent most of the years from 1949–52 in various stages of recuperation. Both of the Hoppers were also affected by the deaths of various members of their group of friends, and thoughts of mortality were clearly becoming preoccupations to them both, particularly to Hopper, who sank into a deep depression over his need for further prostate surgery in 1949. It is therefore possible that this painting reflects the artist's thoughts of his own mortality.[32]

In *Hotel by a Railroad* (figure 47), Hopper has placed a couple in a hotel that looks onto railroad tracks. These tracks, as symbols of railroad travel, demonstrate the alienation of the human figures within their relationship and the city. Conversely, his *House by a Railroad* (figure 136) defines the isolation and alienation of the figure beyond the boundaries of the city, which is symbolised by the house in the empty landscape, bypassed by the seemingly unused railroad tracks.

Although this thesis is primarily concerned with the plight of humanity within the modern American city *House by a Railroad* (figure 136) must be considered as the visualisation of the futile nature of the desire of the human figure to escape the monotony of existence within the city. This painting indicates the isolation and alienation of the human figure within the greater expanse of the American landscape and serves to confirm Hopper's view that there is no escape from the monotony and alienation of human existence.

House By a Railroad was executed early in Hopper's later career, and in it, to a certain extent he can be seen to be looking backwards to the architectural style of the nineteenth century. The house dates from between 1860–90, and it represents a particular type of American second Empire style house. Its main distinguishing feature being its Mansard roof to which Hopper particularly responded. He painted a work entitled *The Mansard Roof* (figure 37) in 1923. He chose this particular subject because it allowed him to concentrate on the roofs and windows. When speaking of this painting he commented that he chose in particular the Mansard roof because it had 'always interested' him, and because it reminded him of Paris.[33]

Hopper uses the house to evoke a sense of bygone era, and with it he stimulates a desire to return to a more simple age. The painting thus involves one of the compelling tensions in Hopper's work: i.e. the oppositions between the Victorian world of Hopper's childhood and his adult life in the modern America of the twentieth century. This house is placed in isolation in the American landscape, with only the indication of the railroad track slicing across the bottom of the composition. Hopper has not paid any attention to the landscape itself, merely referring to the wide-open, expansive emptiness of it, which is symbolised by this solitary house.

The placement of the railroad line across the bottom of the composition refers to the nineteenth century push across the landmass of America that was greatly aided by the development of the railroad. This painting evokes the nostalgia of the American pioneer age. It should not be surprising then that an artist who was to become one of the quintessential American realist painters, one whose paintings epitomise the everyday of modern America should begin his mature career with a work that defines the beginnings of the modern age of America. It should also be noted that the railroad was also considered by modernist writers

to be the outmoded form of transport representative of the nineteenth century, and therefore in this painting in keeping with the nineteenth century style of the house. In *The Great Gatsby* the railroad and the area around it is described as being as grey as ash. The significance of the grey colour and the allusion to ash, is that the colour is dull and depressing and ashes are the end result of a fire after it has died. In *The Great Gatsby* it is described:

> Occasionally a line of grey cars crawls along an invisible track, gives out a ghastly creak, and comes to rest, and immediately the ash-grey men swarm up with laden spades and stir up an impenetrable cloud, which screens their obscure operations from your sight.[34]

When the painting was first exhibited in 1926 at the New Society of Artists' Seventh Exhibition at the Anderson Galleries in New York it provoked a positive reaction. It was described as 'his final apotheosis of a Grantian or a Garfieldian house deserted by everything except the railroad track that runs across the bottom of the canvas...' in an article by the *New York Sunday World*.[35] Lloyd Goodrich also praised the painting, commenting that it was probably,

> the most striking picture in the exhibition....Without attempting to be anything more than a simple and direct portrait of an ugly house in an ugly place, it succeeded in being one of the most poignant and desolating pieces of realism that we have ever seen.[36]

As one of his earliest paintings from his mature period it is a starting point for Hopper's portrayal of the loneliness and isolation of the human figure within the wide expanse of America. It hints at the dilemma of the human condition within the modern world as the old traditions are swept away, carried forward on the man-made developments of modernity, which are symbolised in this painting by the railroad cutting through across the bottom of the canvas. The painting indicates the ever increasing pace of development and change, and also points to a thematic relationship with the concept of rail travel and the railroad, even the Elevated Railway of New York.

When Hopper was asked from where in particular he found the inspiration, or the source for the house in this painting, typically, as it was to become, Jo Hopper answered for him, replying that, 'He did it out of his head. He has seen so many of them.'[37] In fact the house in this painting is a marrying of styles from Victorian England and Second Empire France, and as a result of Hopper's painting it has come to be seen as definitively American. This painting also indicates the role that Hopper has played in cataloguing, as well as defining,

modern America. His paintings record the America of the 1920s and 1930s in the offices, restaurants, movie theatres and house facades that he employs throughout his career, even in his paintings executed during the 1960s.[38]

This painting is dominated by the symmetry of the geometry that Hopper employs. The vertical strength of the house itself is opposed by the horizontal line of the railroad track that cuts across the bottom of the image. The strength created in the careful rendition of the vertical elements of the architecture; the outlines of the building, the columns on the porch, the window frames and the chimney pots, all combine to rise away from the unseen landscape.

Hopper has chosen a deliberately low viewpoint. As a result both the rail track and the house are seen as if from below. This gives the image an element of artifice. This house is clearly isolated within the landscape; the only other facet in this otherwise desolate space is the railroad track, which is also significantly empty. The overriding effect that Hopper creates is the isolation of the human figure, indicated by the house, within the American landscape, or space and to underline the idea that even if his figures are able to leave the confines of the American city, they will be defeated and alienated by the sheer enormity of the landscape.

The rigid geometry employed here, and the low viewpoint give the painting a very flat appearance. The house and tracks rise up in front of the viewer, which gives the feeling of immense height and by contrast the viewer feels small and insignificant. However, this emphasis on the vertical elements in the painting gives the effect that the house is flat; devoid of the third dimension. In this sense it is similar to Diane Arbus's *A House on a Hill, Hollywood, California* (1963) (figure 138). In this photograph, Arbus captured the façade of a house from a similar low vantage point to that chosen by Hopper for his painting *House by a Railroad.* She chose to photograph the image from an angle, slightly over to the left of the façade so that she could reveal the true artifice of the work. She displays the fact that her house on a hill is really *only* a façade, as she exposes the armature of the structure behind it. Hopper's house has the same feeling of artifice, and as such if the viewpoint were altered perhaps it would too be revealed to be merely a movie set façade like the one in the Arbus photograph.

The Arbus image is primarily concerned with absence. Her photography is most commonly associated with what could be called the 'freak' elements of society. Yet, here she has chosen to depict a different façade. One that appears to be a deserted 'faux New York tenement' and yet as such it has been removed from its environs and placed in isolation.[39] The curious punctum of the image being what appears to be a fire escape. This element is standing off by itself and is isolated. It is a random ladder to nowhere. This element is nonsensical and poignant, yet truly encapsulates the artifice of the movie set.

Hopper too, was not adverse to incorporating the elements of deception from the world of the theatre and the movies, which he enjoyed so much. *Early Sunday Morning* (figure 12) too, has the same flatness across the canvas that we see in *House by a Railroad* (figure 136), and the link between *Early Sunday Morning* and the Elmer Rice play *Street Scene* (1929) has already been discussed in detail. This is no less apparent in the relationship between his isolated and floating apartment, or interior spaces. These also call to mind the visual trickery of the movie set, like that employed by Hitchcock in films such as *Rear Window* (1954) (see figure 139). What remains key in Hopper's *House by the Railroad* is the reference to the human figure. Unlike Arbus' image, where due to the clear reference to the artifice of the Hollywood set, the human figure is completely absent from the depiction, Hopper still makes reference to one, albeit an implied one.

Hopper was clearly inspired both by the artificial and by architecture, and in a sense it is these elements in his work that allow him to be considered as the nearest in artistic terms to the work of photographer Walker Evans (see figure 140). Both Hopper and Evans were concerned with the representation of architecture and the geometric patterns of form, and both had a preoccupation for fabrication.[40] In *Graveyard, Houses and Steel Mill, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania* (1935), Evans has created an image of America that reflects the underlying pessimism of Hopper's work; this photograph is daunting and depressive. It fuses elements that are found in Hopper's paintings; the typical American-style housing, the reference to the monotony of the life of the lower middle-class working man in the industrial elements, and the inevitable resting place of the human condition, death, indicated by the graveyard.

There are clear similarities between the work of Hopper and that of Evans, as his work and in particular *Graveyard, Houses and Steel Mill, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania* and, like Hopper, echoes the archetypal portrayal of the 'American Scene' architecture and the negative

psychology of modern America. Evans worked within the confines of monochromatic photography and Hopper deliberately and he generally composed his works around a limited and subdued palette. Jeffrey emphasised the architectural and cultural similarities between them when he wrote:

> They made pictures as architects made houses, and both delighted in the gauging and crafting of artefacts. Evans, addicted to culture and all its works, boasted that he had never photographed a tree. Hopper a constant theatre and film-goer, was a devotee of artifice.[41]

It is this revelation in architecture and detail that Hopper carries through all his works.

As already noted with reference to *Approaching a City* (figure 126), the railroad is a source of entry and exit to the city; but more importantly it leads to its heartland–downtown, which is its central focus. It houses the central business district where 'the diverse ethnic, economic, and social strains of urban life were bound together, working, spending, speculating, and investing.'[42] It houses all the main department stores, the hotels, the theatres and most importantly it is the focal centre for all the transit routes in and out. When Hopper paints the railroad lines in *Approaching a City* we know that the destination of this line is the centre of the city, as the tunnel is the entrance to Grand Central Station, but all transport routes lead to the centre. Therefore, in *Manhattan Bridge Loop* (figure 113), and *Macomb's Dam Bridge* (1935) (figure 141), the railroad line and the bridge are routes that also lead to the epicentre of the city.

Paintings of the public transport system of New York is particularly relevant because even as the motorcar spread in usage across America, New Yorkers remained, in the first half of the twentieth century, as predominantly public transport commuters.[43] New York was not so well suited to the development of the motorcar as other American cities, particularly in Manhattan. As a result, during most of Hopper's life in New York the primary source of transportation would have been the transport systems; the train, the 'El' and the subway. All which lead directly to the centre, and also emphasise the horizontal axis of Hopper's representation of the city.

For Hopper, the city is predominantly a sign, or a symbol of American modernity and the human condition. The transport systems that Hopper reproduces in *Approaching a City* and *Manhattan Bridge Loop* illustrate the special relationship between the transport systems and

the city of New York. The New York 'El', although it no longer exists, can be read as a symbol for Hopper's New York City, it is also significant for Hopper as it allowed him a view into offices and apartments that were placed alongside its route and which he used as inspiration for his paintings. Hopper's city paintings can be read in themes; themes which also build up a series of 'signs'. Hopper's offices, automats, theatres, railroad lines, apartment buildings and shop fronts, when placed together go towards a construction of an iconography. Hopper's figures when read as 'types' also exist as symbols. As an advertising illustrator Hopper would have been conscious of marketing 'types.' Advertisements are, and always have been, designed to appeal to a particular 'type' of people, or market. It is not unusual perhaps, that Hopper should consciously, or unconsciously, perceive his figures in this context.

Hopper's interest in signs and typography is a more obvious example of his vision of the city as a sign. Again there is no reason not to assume that this interest in signposts, advertising boards and lettering is not a result of his time spent as an illustrator. In *Drug Store* (1927) (figure 13), Hopper has represented a pharmacy situated on the corner of two streets, at night. The shop offers the only light in the painting; the light from inside the shop floods out onto the pavements outside. What interested Hopper in this painting was the various types of lettering. Hopper has carefully reproduced the name of the shop and its street number, and the advertising slogan for 'Ex-Lax' in the shop window.

Hopper has carefully rendered the lettering of the pharmacy and the advertising logo in the display. This is the artist's visual reference to the commercialism of the modern city and of the modern life style of its inhabitants based upon a new form of consumption which is especially apparent in his paintings of the restaurant and automat. In these the act of consumption is made clearly visible through the use of the eatery and food, as in the window in *Tables for Ladies* (figure 142). It is important to recall that Hopper was particularly attuned to the nature of mass consumption through his experiences as an advertising illustrator. This is not the only painting where Hopper has paid great attention to the lettering within the work.

The use of the lettering, and particularly illuminated lettering, is a clear reference to the modern city. It refers to the modern capitalist society, and embodies the desires of the inhabitants of the city to indulge in the possibilities of new consumerism. It also invokes the

dazzling lights and letters of the 'Great White Way' on Broadway, described by poet Vladimir Mayakovsky (1893–1930) thus:

> Where it really is white and one really has the impression that it is brighter there at night than in the daytime, because there is light everywhere in the daytime, but this White Way, against the background of the black night, is bright as day. The lights of the street lamps, the jumping lights of advertisements, the glow of shop windows and windows of the never-closing shops, the lights illuminating huge posters. Lights from the opening doors of cinemas and theatres, the rushing lights of automobiles and trolley cars, the lights of the subway trains glittering under one's feet through the glass pavements, the lights of inscriptions in the sky.[44]

Hopper's *choice* of the lettering in *Drug Store* also clearly indicates this sense of modernity. Firstly, he includes just the bottom of the illuminated sign outside the pharmacy, only the 'S' at the base is visible. This sign is only just visible because he has cropped the building in his composition at the first storey. He intimates the continuation of the building above the drug store, and the continuation of the illuminated sign. The cropping of the composition of this painting has precedents in both Hopper's illustration work with *When you go over there* (1917, unsigned) (figure 143), which was a cover illustration for a fold-out brochure advertising Wells Fargo and Company office locations in Paris,[45] and in his oil painting *New York Corner* (1913) (figure 125), where lettering has been included above the saloon. The illuminated electric sign is indicative of the modern city.

The second aspect of significance to which I want to draw attention is Hopper's particular choice of the lettering that he uses in *Drug Store* (figure 13). This specific choice of logo, the decision to depict a well-known brand of laxative is a reference to the nature of modern living. The product reflects the highly intensive, demanding and monotonous lifestyle of the inhabitants of the city. The choice of the laxative is again a clear reference to the notion of consumption within modern society; the need for a laxative product being the result of the inhabitant's indulgence within the restaurant or automat, or the result of the effects of the consuming nature of the city upon its inhabitants. Hopper's choice of a well-known laxative product is a metaphor for the visual consumption that he depicts, and emblematic of the social flux of the modern city.

Hopper's record book not only gives specific details of this painting; its size, media and general depiction, but also reveals the concern over the name of the painting and the prominence of the wording EX LAX. It seems that it was intended that the logo would be

included in the title of the painting, but that the use of the name of a well-known brand of laxative may well prejudice any prospective purchaser against the painting. It was suggested by Frank K.M. Rehn (Hopper's dealer) that the lettering was changed to make the painting more saleable. Jo Hopper's record notes that:

> It was suggested that E. Hopper change the name to ES LAX. But the 2 X's in EX LAX compose so much better. E.H. just made the change in watercolor, so soon after this, the canvas was bought by J. Spalding (Boston) who had no scruples about EX LAX, so watercolor removed.[46]

It also seems that the painting was photographed before and after the removal of the watercolour 'S' and so there had been some confusion about the correct version of the painting. The record book also notes that the manufacturer's gave permission for their brand name to be used in the painting with their full approval.

It is interesting to note that Hopper chooses such a logo to include in his realist depiction of the city at night. Not only does the particular choice of product advertised refer to the problems of modern living, but it is also challenging for any potential purchaser. Peggy Rehn, the wife of Hopper's dealer, is quoted in one of Jo Hopper's letters as suggesting that the choice of the brand name, 'EX LAX might have indelicate implications for those whose realism concedes nothing to aesthetics.'[47] She reveals in this statement the notion that any potential purchaser may be disinclined toward the painting due to the inclusion of a reference to such a product.

The geometry of the composition leads to a focal point which is the indistinct white objects in the centre of the shop window. However, the three red and blue coloured pieces of the window dressing direct the eye toward the advertising slogan above them, as they fan out towards it. This focal direction is also achieved with the dominant use of the blue in the painting, which is at its deepest and most resonant hue in the background of the advertising slogan, and as the 'true' centre of the image does not hold much visual interest, being white objects which are indistinguishable in the window. The advertising slogan announces 'Ex-Lax' as a product available inside the drug store alongside the prescription drugs; it is the remedy needed for city dwellers caught up in their modern lives of fast food and mass production.

This is a painting of contrasts and oppositions. Hopper has contrasted the illuminated area of the shop with the blackness of the just visible buildings behind; the bright colours in the shop window in the centre of the painting with the areas around the edges of the painting which are in shadow, which are, by contrast absent of colour; and most potent is the contrast of the old style pharmacy store with its advertising board marketing a 'modern' product. Hopper captures 'Broadway's brightness' in his city paintings, which Waldo Frank terms as 'the sum of advertisements flashing petticoats and constipation-cures against the blackened heavens.'[48] It is just this effect that Hopper achieves in *Drug Store.*

American cities are distinctive from other major cities (such as London and Paris), and their representation in art or literature has consistently reflected the nature of this difference. The American city for example, is a modern entity which embodies a unique way of life; providing the writer or artist with a modern subject. It demands that the writer or artist expresses his response to it in the modern idiom. Artists, when they describe or depict the it automatically respond to it with a different form of representation, which suits the total 'American-ness' and urgent modernity of cities like New York and Chicago. Hopper, like his artistic and literary contemporaries, recognised the importance of the American city; love it or hate it, it required an indigenous style of representation. Hopper responded to the modernity of it as did his contemporaries, but he responded in an individual way. The multi-cultural nature of the American city permits the multi-styled response that it received, Hopper responded to it as a Modernist, and from his own personal experiences of it.

It is possible to draw comparisons between Hopper's representations of the American city and those of American modernist writers; Hopper was well read in both American and European modern literature. His paintings represent the American city as a series of 'types'; the buildings, the apartments, the automats, the movie theatres and the people, are all compartmentalised. Hopper expresses a belief that it depersonalises the figure, for example *Early Sunday Morning* (figure 12), where the building stretches beyond the confines of the canvas. His image is imbued with the uniformity and the monotony of urban life. Such uniformity, once again, is expressed by Sinclair Lewis in *Main Street* (1921). Although Lewis is describing a town rather than a city, he says, 'Nine-tenths of the American towns are so alike that it is the completest boredom to wander from one to another.'[49] This uniformity can be compared to Hopper's depiction of suburban city life and his townscapes of Gloucester, Massachusetts.

Hopper's figures are affected in the same way that O. Henry (1862–1910) described the influence of New York City upon his characters in *The Defeat of the City* (1919): in that it 'remodelled, cut, trimmed and stamped' Robert Walmsley, 'to the pattern it approves'.[50] Hopper, like O. Henry, Henry Blake Fuller (1857–1929), and John Dos Passos (1896–1970) for example, offers an interpretation of the American city which reflects as Gelfant says, 'a way of seeing and evaluating it as an ordered pattern of experiences consistent with the inner principles of its being.'[51] In Hopper's work, like a synoptic novel, the city is the protagonist and his vision reflects the result of the actions, or the manifestations, of it upon the human figure in the painting, rather than the development, or experience, of the human figure within the city. Hopper uses 'mood' to unify his 'portraits' of the city in the same way that Dos Passos does in *Manhattan Transfer* (1925). The difference between Hopper's depiction of his 'characters' and those of Dos Passos, is that Dos Passos' characters move about in an atmosphere of 'excitement and tension', whereas Hopper's figures are forever frozen in a moment of inaction.[52]

Hopper's paintings prescribe to the principles defined by Gelfant that create the urban setting, in the same way that the experience of the city preoccupied so many American writers. These are firstly, the physical facts of the scene, the actual streets, buildings and topography and secondly, the aesthetic impression that the scene makes upon a sensitive mind, and thirdly, the urban atmosphere. Hopper brought to these elements his own individual nature, just as the American modernist exponents of the city novel did.

One of the most comprehensive themes of the city novel is that of dissociation, which is consistently reflected throughout Hopper's representations. His figures are permanently imprisoned within the city, suffering from a pathological condition which reflects a larger social disorder and *ennui*. They are permanently dislocated within the urban environment and from each other. Hopper's city reveals the inner experience of alienation and aloneness in the city and casts an overwhelming sense of foreboding across his representations of the city. This, he has in common with contemporary exponents of the city novel. However, he does not join his literary contemporaries in their emphasis on the materialism and inequality of city life, and their social condemnation. Gelfant notes for example:

> the pathos and tragedy of urban fiction lie in the inner defeat that man suffers as he becomes self-divided and perhaps even self-destructive...The characters in urban fiction typically feel that they are strangers moving in an alien world.

> Their subjective experience is one of loss and confusion: they feel as though they have lost hold of their identity.[53]

This statement could equally apply to Hopper's paintings of the city. His figures appear lost in contemplation, as if defeated by it; they sit rigidly, like the woman in *Automat* (1927) (figure 8), or hunched like the men in *Excursions into Philosophy* (figure 11) or *Sunday* (figure 5). By their particular representation they have become 'types' within the urban scene and have therefore lost their individuality, and so their identity.

Hopper's figures, or characters, have been deprived of the power and the inclination to resist their environment or to impose their own will upon it, in the same way that Theodore Dreiser did with his characters in *An American Tragedy* (1925) and *Sister Carrie* (1900), although Hopper was not a naturalist like Dreiser. Hopper's figures appear defeated and alienated within their environment in paintings like *Automat* (figure 8) and *Sunday* (figure 5) and are mechanisms within the framework of the painting, just as Dreiser's characters are within his novels. The figures, like the characters in the novels are no more than passive participants within their environment. They do not *act* within their environment, but are *acted upon* by their environment.

The major difference between Hopper's representations of the city and that of his literary contemporaries is that Hopper's paintings contain no element of social commentary. At no time does Hopper paint the poor conditions of the tenement buildings, the living conditions, or the social life of the largest majority of the population; the working classes. Hopper left this subject area alone. Hopper's city was that of the white, middle-class, white-collar worker. Ironically he did not stray from the area in which he felt most at 'home'.

Hopper's paintings reveal the life of middle-class New Yorkers, the white-collar workers. Young female figures who are depicted working in offices as secretaries (*Office at Night* (figure 18) and *New York Office* (figure 77)), where they are able to meet friends for lunch (*Chop Suey* (figure 68)), until they marry, when their life becomes centred around the husband and the home (*Room in New York* 1932 (figure 6), *Summer in the City* (figure 47), and *Excursions into Philosophy* (figure 11)), with occasional trips to the theatre or the movies for entertainment (*Two on the Aisle* 1927 (figure 144), and *First Row Orchestra* 1951 (figure 145)). Hopper recreated on canvas the New York City that he knew.

The city that Hopper paints is strangely unaffected by the events of the external world. Hopper's literary contemporaries, to which he had so much in common, write in the 1920s a large contingent of war-related literature or novels that display the fast changing nature of modern life, yet there is no reference to this in his paintings. Other contemporary painters like Reginald Marsh lavishly celebrated the sense of the youthful excitement of the decadent 1920s in paintings like *Coney Island* (1936) (figure 146). The 1920s American city is most famously associated with the jazz era that focussed around the Cotton Club in Harlem, featuring musicians such as Louis Armstrong (1901–1971) and Duke Ellington (1899–1974), and the writers of the Harlem Renaissance, just as much as prohibition and the mobsters associated with Chicago.

However, the notion of the decadent 1920s was a paradox. It was a period of conservatism; the middle-classes expanded, personal spending boomed and it announced the birth of mass production. It is this middle-class conservatism that we see portrayed in Hopper's work of the city. His work reflects the isolationist politics of the era and consequently he concentrates on the representation of the indigenous culture of modern America. Yet, this is a personal vision of modern America and one that is equally isolationist, as he focuses purely on the white middle-class areas of the city that he frequented. He emptied the streets of Manhattan to enhance the sense of alienation of the human figure within the modern city, probably as a reflection of his own introspective nature.

Hopper ignored the ethnicity of the city and certain areas of American culture, the only non-white figure that he depicts is in his work *South Carolina Morning* (1955) (figure 89), which has already been discussed. The figures that we see represented in his paintings are the same figures to whom the work he did as an advertising illustrator would have been aimed. This narrow view continues consistently throughout Hopper's work from the establishment of his most recognised style in the 1920s, until his death.

The narrow view of the city that is revealed in Hopper's paintings is consciously confined to the white middle-class areas of Manhattan and one senses that Hopper held onto a nineteenth century nostalgia for the area of Greenwich Village. North Washington Square, in particular, had been the location of the fashionable residences of the upper-classes, although Henry James in his *Washington Square* (1880) suggests that the fashionable 'set' had already started to move uptown as New York City developed. McFarland, in his *Inside*

Greenwich Village (2001), also documents the bohemian and predominantly multicultural nature of Greenwich Village by 1918, however, he also documents the strength of the middle-class movement within North Washington Square, to preserve the social and cultural status of their area of 'the village'.[54] Hopper consistently returns to subjects that he found in and around Washington Square, and he predominantly focuses on the nineteenth century brownstones, which reflect the more auspicious history of the area.

In *The City* (1927) (figure 147) we look out across the city from a vantage point above most of the buildings around, although as this is a painting of a view across Washington Square it must be assumed that the artist is painting the subject from the vantage point of one of the roofs. It is the architecture of the nineteenth century brownstone buildings in the middle ground that most interest Hopper, and when he paints the city from the roof tops, it is the roof top itself that interests him, not the panorama his vantage point affords him. In *City Roofs* (1932) (figure 133), Hopper pays great attention to the detail of the chimney pots; the shapes, the colours and the effect of the light upon them. The tall building in the background of the painting is included because it was in his view, but we can see that it was not the focus of his interest because it is chopped off at the edge of the canvas. Hopper indicates that the building rises much further beyond the top of the canvas and further to the right, but that it has no special interest for him. He did not share the artistic revelation of the New York skyline that we witness in the work of Georgia O'Keeffe or Joseph Stella, for example (see figures 116 and 117).

Hopper has no interest in what Waldo Frank describes as the 'resplendent city' of New York. For Waldo Frank, New York is a towering city and he celebrated its energy and progressive nature. He describes its 'high white towers' as, 'arrows of will: its streets are the plowings of passionate desire. A lofty, arrogant, lustful city, beaten through by an iron rhythm.'[55] However, Frank does also acknowledge the New York City depicted in Hopper's paintings in *Our America* (1919). Frank describes the weary drudgery of the people who built and created New York and who now inhabit it. As he says:

> the men and women who have made this city and whose place it is, are lowly, are driven, are drab. Their feet shuffle, their voices are shrill, their eyes do not shine. They are different indeed from their superb creation. Life that should electrify their bodies, quicken them with movement and high desire is gone from them...America is the extraverted land. New York its climax. Here, the outside world has taken to itself a soul–a towering, childish soul: and the millions of human sources are sucked void.[56]

The 'climax' of New York eludes Hopper in his paintings, just as it eludes the 'souls' of the city described by Frank. However, Hopper's interest is in these 'souls' of New York, who are 'sucked void' in his paintings, just as Frank described them.

Frank writes of New Yorkers in the same vein that Hopper paints them. They both acknowledge that the city dweller is drained and consumed by the city in which they live. Frank recognised the divide between the lofty splendour of the 'high white towers' of the city and the weary drudgery of the masses living in their shadow. He says:

> The base of the New York world is a weary people. The margin of energy whence spring the higher impulses of men is sapped away. A people turned debtor to its own affairs. A bankrupt people, unable with the repose of night to meet the fearful drainage of that day. The city is too high-pitched, its throb too shattering fast. Nervous and spiritual fiber tears in such a strain. The average New Yorker is caught in a machine. He whirls along, he is dizzy, he is helpless. If he resists, the machine will mangle him. If he does not resist, it will daze him first with its glittering reiteration, so that when the mangling comes he is past knowing. He says he is too busy, and wonders why. He means, that all preference of act is gone from him. He must face to-day without that inner light which can alone illuminate it: he must face to-morrow without that seed of a dream, by which alone it might be rendered fecund.[57]

This weary New Yorker, as characterised by Frank, is painted repeatedly by Hopper. The dissociated figures of Hopper's paintings reflect the effects upon them of the mangling machine that is the city, helpless to its power and defeated by its will. Hopper's figures are pawns in the city, impotent to its power. The figures are depicted isolated in their inability to act. The city as a machine exerts this power over its inhabitants rendering them paralysed, each in their own lonely world. For Hopper, it is a personal reflection upon the power it has over its inhabitants. His city on canvas is a direct reflection of the one that he experienced; the theatres and automats he frequented, the streets he walked and the offices and apartments that he observed from the New York 'El', or on foot.

Discussion of a Single Image: *Nighthawks* (1942).

In *Nighthawks* (figure 14), Hopper represents a cheap diner on a deserted and anonymous street corner in New York, at night. This night-time scene is evidence of the city that, supposedly, 'never sleeps'. However, his painting does not revel in the exciting nightlife of New York, but displays it as an eerie and disquieting time. The poeple in the diner are not enjoying the social life of the city. They drink coffee as if to combat sleep, to delay the

action of returning home from their small and isolated offices, to their cage-like apartments, both of which appear elsewhere as subjects in Hopper's paintings.

The figures are displaced from each other. They have sought refuge from the city in the only place that offers hospitality in the street. This sense of sanctuary ambiguous and we feel that the figures are no more at ease in the interior of the diner than they would be on the streets outside, and therefore Hopper has distorted our normal perception of the world. We associate a light in the darkness as a homing beacon, an indication of a source of shelter. Hopper's night-time illuminated rooms and buildings work in opposition to this perception as he characterises all spaces in the city as unwelcoming and unfriendly.

The painting focuses on the people within the space of the diner, in particular the couple and the diner attendant. We assume that the male and female figures are a 'couple', as they are sitting close together. Their hands are so close together that they almost touch and the woman idly fingers the pack of matches that the man has to light the cigarette between his fingers. There is no communication between them. Neither one looks at the other; both seem to be absorbed in their own thoughts. Neither of them looks at the attendant, who seems to look up as if to speak to them. This group of three is balanced by another man who also sits at the diner counter with his back towards us. This fourth figure highlights the isolation and anonymity of the night-time diner, as we cannot see his face and he sits apart from the others. This anonymous character is half in shadow and gives a slightly menacing note to the painting.

It is possible that this painting was a response to contemporary American literature and even Film Noir. Once again, Ernest Hemingway's short story *The Killers* (as mentioned in chapter 3), is relevant here, especially acknowledging Hopper's interest in it.[58] There is something similar in the setting and the mood of *The Killers* that evokes *Nighthawks*. Hemingway's tale centres on the character of Ole Andreson, whom two thugs have been hired to kill. Andreson comes to resign himself to the inevitability of his death, and that his fate is inescapable. This short story is set in the evening in one particular scene evokes the scene within *Nighthawks*:

> Outside is was getting dark. The street-light came on outside the window. The two men at the counter read the menu. From the other side of the counter Nick Adams watched them. He had been talking to George when they came in.[59]

Nick Adams could be the shadowy figure that has been placed with his back to the viewer, and Hopper has changed the two men for a couple. It is possible that what appealed to Hopper most about this story was the sense of the impending violence which is anticipated for most of the story and then never takes place. Many of his paintings evoke a sense that something is imminent, this is exacerbated by the stillness of the scene within the painting, as the moment never comes. Hopper's scenes and figures are trapped forever within this impression of impending violence, crime, destruction or death. This negativity and sense of impending death hangs over his work, and is increasingly so through his life. The tension of the story and the atmosphere of *Nighthawks* are complicit within this notion of the impending event.

The title of the painting is also crucial to the psychology of the painting. The tension amongst the people and the knowledge of the impending doom is implied. The title of the painting underlines the sinister connotation of the work. A 'hawk' is a person who advocates an aggressive or war-like policy, or in American slang, someone who 'preys on others'. The verb 'to hawk' also means to hunt (on the wing). By choosing this particular title for this work the artist has deliberately influenced the perception of the viewer as to the 'meaning' or events on the canvas. If the painting was merely intending to portray figures in a late night diner, revealing the social side of the city at night, he could have entitled it 'Night-owls', which would have indicted that the people within the diner were creatures of the night-time city. The use of the word 'hawk' gives the painting an altogether more sinister and predatory effect. It is also an indication of Hopper using symbols within his painting, just as the city is a symbol for his particular vision of the American urban existence. The hawk is an accepted symbol of warlike tendencies or aggression, with predatory overtones, and the owl is accepted as the symbol of wisdom, as well as being the attribute of the personifications of night and sleep.[60]

The treatment of the light in this work, or even the contrasts between the areas of light and dark contribute to the sinister overtones of the painting. The illumination inside the diner offers no refuge to the occupants from the darkness outside. This effect is heightened as the illumination from inside the diner spreads out onto the street, notionally connecting the inside and outside. The darkness outside in the street, particularly in the part of the street that goes between the window at the rear of the diner and the row of shops in the background of the painting, is deep and impenetrable. The ghostly outline of the shop fronts

is just visible through the double layer of glass. This darkness is sinister and foreboding, and intimates the pessimism of the entire painting.

The darkness is more significant than just a lack of light. Raymond Chandler's remark that 'the streets were dark with something more than night,' could be equally applied to *Nighthawks*. The darkness in this painting, as in with other works like *Approaching a City* (1946) (figure 126), *Bridle Path* (1939) (figure 134) and *House at Dusk* (1939) (figure 129) has a greater symbolic use and a psychological significance within the painting which suggests these works indicate Hopper's personal vision of modern America, particularly within the space of the American city.

This painting has a sense of implied drama. Hopper could have perceived the image as if it were a movie 'still'. The 'characters' that have been portrayed here are forever confined to this particular scene in this moment of inactivity. I have made much of the play between artificial light inside the diner and darkness outside it in this work because both, and the contrast between them, serve to heighten the drama of the scene. The composition of this painting also adds to this sense of the dramatic. Hopper has devised a work that uses the full impact of the striking geometry that it employs. The wedge of the diner slices into the composition from the right, and is countered by the solid and regular line of shops in the background. The shops with the apartments above them are characteristic of those repeated in other Hopper paintings, like *Early Sunday Morning* (figure 12). The composition of *Nighthawks* (figure 14) is a geometry of lines which construct the regular frontage of the shops in the background, the diner, and the shadows cast on the streets outside. Just as the composition is constructed in strong lines, so it is painted in blocks of colour. The three customers at the diner counter are placed against the darkness of the night outside, and the attendant, dressed in white, is placed against the pale yellow of the wall behind him. All four figures are trapped in the confines of the diner, caged behind the glass of the window, like goldfish in a bowl. They have as much control over their existence as do goldfish. Hopper has condemned them to a life of inaction and solitude behind the glass.

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[2] L. Goodrich, *Edward Hopper*, New York, 1983, p.68.
[3] E. Hopper, 'Edward Hopper Objects', *The Art of Today*, 6, February 1935, p.11.
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[5] F. S. Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (New York, 1925). Quotation from 1993 edition (Ware, Hertfordshire), 1993, p.44.
[6] L. Goodrich, 1983, p.31.

[7] P. Conrad, *The Art of the City—Views and Versions of New York*, Oxford, 1984. p.103.
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[10] G. Levin,1980, p.198.
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[13] P. Conrad, 1984, p.106.
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[17] L. Goodrich, 1983, p.31.
[18] Record Book II, p. 3. Cited in G. Levin,1995, volume III, p.226.
[19] P. Conrad, 1984, p.108.
[20] Ibid., p.108.
[21] Record Book III, p.45. Cited in G. Levin, 1995, p.342.
[22] Jo Hopper diary entry May 11, 1952. Cited in G. Levin, 1998, p.449.
[23] Ibid., p.449.
[24] Jo Hopper diary entry June 9, 1952. Cited in Ibid., p.450.
[25] Ibid., p.444.
[26] Jo Hopper diary entry April 28, 1952. Cited in Ibid., p.448.
[27] Jo Hopper diary entry August 28, 1952. Cited in Ibid., p.449.
[28] Record Book III, p.45. Cited in G. Levin, 1995, p.342.
[29] Jo Hopper diary entry August 28, 1952. Cited in G. Levin, 1998, p.449.
[30] Arnold Newman from an interview with Gail Levin, September 8, 1993. cited in Ibid. p.346.
[31] Ibid., p.347.
[32] Ibid., pp.411–13.
[33] Ibid., p.169.
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[55] W. Frank, 1919, p.171.
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Chapter 5.

Hopper's Depiction of the American Office.

'The Office' is a major subject within Hopper's paintings of the American city and has a great significance for him. It is a subject that he addressed in his mature paintings on several occasions and helps to form his definition of the pathology of the space of the American city. The use of the office in his paintings can also be traced back to the artist's illustration work; examples of Hopper's depictions of the office can be seen in editions of *System*, such as 'Living up to your Employment System,' and 'Your Business Tomorrow,' both published in September 1913 (figures 14 and 15). This would suggest perhaps, that Hopper's depiction of the office in his mature paintings draws on his earlier experiences as a commercial illustrator.

This suggests that Hopper's depiction of the office in his later oil paintings is a space that is both enclosing and confining, like a cage, to its occupants. The deathly servitude with which the worker pays to the mechanisation of the city, in particular the tunnelled existence of the office worker, this is a monotony of existence that begins at 'nine' and ends at 'five', that begins with the first day at work and ends with retirement. This monotony manifests itself in paintings such as *Office in a Small City* (1953) (figure 17), *New York Office* (1962) (figure 77), *Conference at Night* (1949) (figure 148) and *Office at Night* (1940) (figure 18), where Hopper portrays his office workers trapped within the box of their office. With the exception of *Office at Night* (figure 18), Hopper has accentuated the sensation of being trapped as he has clearly placed the viewer outside the office looking in through the window at the figures he has depicted there, and so he has made a distinction between the space inside the office, which confines his figure and that outside, which is inhabited by the viewer.

The modern American office developed out of the expansion and complex structure of the railroad. By the mid-nineteenth century the railroad had opened the whole of the United States for business and communication, and the organisation of such a group of companies required a new type of complex management structure to oversee individual areas of the railroad system and its business structure. These new offices were designed for ultimate efficiency and staff productivity. By the later part of the nineteenth century the management hierarchy and office structure pioneered by the railroad companies was taken up by the banking industry and insurance companies. These businesses, like the railroads, were all huge and complex organisations, who were geographically dispersed

across the States and were run by a board of directors rather than being a family run business.[1]

The structure of the specific space of the American office required that the jobs within the company were divided into specialised areas and staff were employed to fulfil specific roles; typists to type, filing clerks to file and mail clerks to open letters all day, for example. The reason for this compartmentalisation of the office system was for maximum employee efficiency and to make the maximum profit for the organisation. This method of work processing was pioneered by Frederick Taylor in the 1880s, originally for industry, but his systems came to be applied to the office too. Office staff were closely watched by management to ensure their maximum productivity. Therefore, offices were often large open spaces allowing the management to observe their employees. All staff had to work in silence and some employers even placed partitions between their employees to prevent any communication between them.[2]

This is the vision of the office that is captured in the set of the stage play *Roger Bloomer* (1923) (figure 149) where the set displays compartmentalised automated clerks in small, identical office cubes, and the tedious and stressful nature of the office worker is echoed in Hopper's depictions of the office, where he reveals the monotony of their existence. As has been noted previously in chapter 2, Hopper's visions of modern America have the closest affinity to the America of the Great Depression era of the 1930s and consequently his human figures within the office space need to be considered in these terms as this serves to heighten the monotonous captivity of the office worker as he struggles to maintain his employment at such a crucial time.

In *Office in a Small City* (1953) (figure 17), the man is trapped by the confines of the office, and is cut off from the outside world by the physicality of the concrete of the building. Hopper creates the effect of isolation within the office space in several ways. For example, the man is viewed as part of this specific space as well as being within it. The sense of this entrapment is heightened as he is seen by the viewer from outside the building. Hopper has placed the building between the figure and his audience and the white wall and the window create a barrier between him and the viewer, thus separating them and cutting one off from the other. This effectively contains the man within the office.

This barrier effect is enhanced by the sense that the depicted space is suspended in mid-air; the man has been trapped within an environment that has no visible routes of exit.

Even the windows seem to incarcerate him further, serving only as a vehicle through which to view his situation. The view through the windows to the tops of the other buildings suggests that the office is high up in the building, certainly it is not a ground floor office. The office has become a confining shell around the man; one that he is confined to during his working life. This is, however, a sterile cocoon, not one that gives off sensations of safety and security, or of nurture and protection, as one would normally associate with such an image.

The attitude of the man is carefully constructed by Hopper to underline the feeling of entrapment, as a part of a larger notion of the 'captivity' of the office worker. Hopper made no secret of his loathing for the necessity and the unbearable restriction of the illustration work that he undertook, and yet his male figure does not even seem to muster this amount of emotion for his situation. He appears apathetic; resigned to his imprisonment in the office space. Hopper has given the painting an air of pointless existence, as the man stares vacantly out of the window in front of him. Although he stares out of the window, he is in state of 'looking without seeing'. He stares at the space beyond that of the window in the same manner that a prisoner would stare at the blank space of a prison cell wall.

This figure is reminiscent of Herman Melville's character 'Bartleby', the scrivener or law copyist from his short story *Bartleby, the Scrivener* (1856). In Melville's tale the narrator, Bartleby's employer, describes him as pale, cadaverous, respectable and an 'incurable forlorn'.[3] He is a steady and honest character, and he begins his employment as an assiduous copyist, but he abruptly determines that he 'would prefer not to' work any more.[4] He is resolute in his conviction and even when his employment is terminated he continues to occupy the office; he haunts the building in silence. He is eventually removed to prison, named The Tombs, by a new tenant to the building, where he eventually dies.

The 'Tombs' was the nickname given to the old Halls of Justice in New York, which served as one of the city's principal jails until it was demolished in 1898 and another jail was built on the same site. The jail was primarily a detention centre, but it became associated with death as prisoners who received the death penalty were executed there by hanging. It was built between 1835 and 1840 and occupied the square bounded by Centre, Elm, Franklin and Leonard Streets.

The narrator links Bartleby's fatalistic reaction to life to his having worked in the 'Dead Letters Office', and to the condition of all humanity and therefore it is fitting that he should end his life in a prison entitled The Tombs.[5] He begins this dark period of his life in the Dead Letters Office, and so it is particularly poignant that he die within The Tombs. In the same manner as Bartleby, Hopper's male seems to occupy the office passively and without occupation, and with the morbidity that culminates in Bartleby's demise. This man stares vacantly into space, just as Bartleby did once he had decided no longer to work.

The windowless concrete block in the background can have no visual interest for this man. Its sheer windowless nature excludes him from the ability to look upon the lives of others and further confines him within his office space. The lack of windows in this building obscures any evidence of the lives of any other potential persons in the painting. The building has no indication of human presence and it is cold, hard and almost dead. As such, it is reminiscent of the view from Bartleby's office which was described as 'a lofty brick wall', which, only ten feet from the window, has been made black by 'age'.[6] The half-drawn blinds of the older style office building in the painting, also shield the interior from his (and our) vision.

The older office building appears to date from the nineteenth century and is much more carefully rendered by Hopper than the stark concrete of the building in which the figure is placed. The concrete building in the foreground appears from a detail in the bottom right corner of the painting to have a façade that is intended to make the newer building look more in keeping with the older buildings around it. It also indicates Hopper's interest in the conflict between the old and the new. He has included in this painting both old and more contemporary building styles, and due to the nature of the captivity of the man in the more recent style of architecture, it would suggest that this supports a negative view of this more modern style by Hopper.

The windows of the office incarcerate this person with as much strength as the walls. In as such that they are invisible walls, the windows seem only to serve as vehicles through which the viewer is able to see him and experience his futile captivity. Hopper also manages to increase the sense of the futility and wasted life with the title of the painting. He has not portrayed a successful and powerful business person in their office, but an insignificant white-collar worker, who, like Bartleby, or Mr Zero from Elmer Rice's (1892–1967) *The Adding Machine* (1923), are destined to work within the same office until they are deemed no longer necessary (see figure 150). This man has been confined

within the office space by Hopper and has been condemned to work there for an eternity like Mr Zero, until he too is replaced by a machine. This could also be a reflection of Hopper's personal experiences as he too was effectively replaced by a machine; the camera. He specialised in industrial subjects, as has already been discussed in chapter 2, and his area of work was encroached upon by the developments in photography, and then by the advances in printing technology which effectively made it uneconomic for a magazine to pay an illustrator to do the work of a photographer.[7]

The inconsequential figure in *Office in a Small City* (figure 17) is destined to live forever in obscurity, as his office, according to the title of the painting, is in a 'small' city. He does not work in Manhattan, New York, but in an obscure 'small' city. Hopper has chosen to emphasise the lowly nature of the occupation of the office worker. This painting defines, for Hopper, a negative view of the office and the life therein; for Hopper to specify that this office is in a small city, rather than New York, where he has based the location of some of his other office paintings, only serves to drive home the emphasis on the futility of this office space.

Hopper has also represented this office as a sterile space. The exterior walls of the building and the visible interior walls are painted white, or are made of concrete which appears white in the reflection of the sunlight. Hopper has only really introduced colour into the painting outside the confines of the office, with the blue summer sky and the brown brick work of the buildings facing the man. The whiteness of the office space when seen together with the rolled up white sleeves of the office worker's shirt, serves to tie him directly into the office space. The office and the figure are intrinsically linked. The sterile, and stark whiteness in this painting produces a sense of 'nothingness'. The office worker is pale and insignificant, and reduced to nothing once inside the negative space of the white cube.

It is not only the use of the white on the his shirt that makes him a part of the office. Hopper has painted the man in a brown waistcoat that merges with the office chair in which he is seated. His body appears to merge with the back of the chair. It is as if he has become a part of the office chair as there is no visible sense of his lower body and legs. Hopper has also given the sensation that the man has become a part of the desk and the chair, as his body can only be imagined under the office desk, and the man rests his hand on the desk. Thus, Hopper stresses the all consuming nature of the office space for the non-descript office worker. The man does not stand alone as an individual in the office space, but is as much a part of it as the furniture. One gets the sense that Hopper

is making the observation that the nature of the office strips the worker of his individuality and serves only to confine him to the 'nothingness' of the space. Hopper certainly resented the lack of freedom and creativity that his employment as an illustrator entailed.

When Hopper comes to placing females in his painterly office spaces, he introduces a greater element of psychological complexity and sexual tension. On these occasions he creates a scene that is more reminiscent of a movie 'still' than a painting. Take, for example, *New York Office* (1962) (figure 77). The spatial construction of the painting is in several ways very similar to that of *Office in a Small City*. In both paintings Hopper has depicted a single figure in an office space. They are both contained by the office space and imprisoned within it. The viewer approaches both figures through the glass window that separates them from the outside world. Like the man, the woman is contained within a white concrete building, and in both paintings Hopper has filled the space outside the office buildings with a row of faceless brown buildings.

The compositions are reflections of each other; the office of the male is placed to the left of the composition in *Office in a Small City*, and the office is placed over to the right of the composition in *New York Office*. The overriding difference between the compositions of these paintings, is that the office of the female worker is clearly placed at ground floor level, as opposed to the elevated position of the man's office space. This placement of the woman has major implications for the way in which the painting is read, and creates a vastly different effect to that of *Office in a Small City*.

The woman in *New York Office* stands in the window of the office. There are two other figures hinted at in the composition, but they are insignificant as Hopper has placed the focus clearly on the woman in the window. For that is where she is—in the window. Hopper has positioned her in the window of the office in the same manner that a shop mannequin would be placed in a store window. Hopper has put this female in the window as an enticing view for the viewer. She plays the role of the shop mannequin, as an advertising ploy for the office and for her own attributes. This could be seen in terms of Rachel Bowlby's discussion of the results of the nature of consumer culture in *Just Looking* (1985). She maintains that this 'consumer culture' has transformed the notions of the narcissistic mirror into the shop window, and consequently the glass reflects the idealised image of the woman who stands before it. The woman behind the glass effectively represents the ideal model that the female consumer could buy or become.[8] However, acknowledging the image as the creation of a male artist would suggest that

the woman behind the glass, as a mannequin, represents the ideal model that Hopper desires and wants to obtain. In this sense she embodies the desires of consumerism finding echoes in Salvador Dalí's (1904–89) words:

> The American magazines offer *Girls, Girls, Girls* for the eyes....Mannequins. Immobile mannequins in the electric splendor of shop displays, with their mechanical neuter sensualities and their perturbing articulations. Sweetly simple-minded live mannequins, walking with an alternating rhythm, with hips and shoulders moving in the opposite direction; gripping in their arteries the new reinvented physiologies of clothing.[9]

As such, this female is reduced to the status of a tailor's dummy placed in the shop window. However, just as Dalí's words intimate, this interpretation also has the sense that Hopper has painted this female in such a way as to indicate that in reality this woman is nothing more than 'simple-minded' live mannequin. Essentially she has been positioned thus, merely to be 'seen' and admired for her sexual attributes. If this painting is considered as a movie 'still', as a 'frozen' moment in time, it becomes silent. This silent nature of Hopper's vision of New York is in opposition to the reality. He has removed traffic from the street and any other people from the image. The movie 'still' quality to the image and the silence of the painting all contribute to this sense of the role of this woman as the embodiment of male desire.

The silent quality of his vision of this office in Manhattan can be seen to reduce the female to that of a passive and submissive female, or model, as she too is silent and has no power of speech.[10] As a mannequin, not only has the female become mute, and therefore powerless against the male 'gaze' and desires, but she is also trapped within an immovable body; a body which is designed to be positioned in a shop window purely for the purposes of advertising and to attract the gaze of those who pass by. Hopper's placement of this woman in the window has reduced her to an object.

This woman is most probably a secretary or a receptionist, which were typical contemporary female office roles, and that as such her figure would be the frontispiece for the office, the company or the male worker; and as such a frontispiece she is on display for the public. Hopper has accentuated this element of display by opening the building with a window, in front of which he has placed this woman. The window then operates in the same way that a department store uses large windows to display its wares. She is placed as if she is an advertisement for the office, like a mannequin.

She is framed by the window, and illuminated by the row of electric ceiling lights behind her and the sense that she is on show is heightened in *New York Office* because Hopper has emphasised that this is a ground floor space. This emphasis allows the viewer to observe her in her office in the same manner that they would a dressmaker's dummy in a shop window. She concentrates on the piece of paper she is holding in her hand and as a result is seemingly unaware of the viewer's gaze through the glass window, which creates the same voyeuristic nature that Hopper has included in his *Office in a Small City.*

However, there is something more intrusive and puzzling about the view of the female figure, in contrast to that of the male in *Office in a Small City.* This could be a result of the analogy between the woman and a shop mannequin; because the figure is placed behind the window in such a manner she invites the viewer's gaze, however unwittingly. Her attire also adds to this sense of invitation, as she is clothed in a smart looking dress that exposes her bare arms. She has dressed herself in a way that acknowledges her acceptance of being 'seen' by others. The blue of the dress emphasises and compliments the pale colour of her skin and her hair. This woman is dressed in such a manner that suggests that she is aware that she is an object of observation within the office, that it is part of her role.

The man in *Office in a Small City* is dressed according to his occupation, in the typical style of a middle-class, white-collar worker and his rolled up sleeves indicate that he is in the process of working. There is nothing about the attire of the woman that suggests office enterprise, other than that of being 'seen', because there is no indication or evidence of her daily occupation such as a typewriter or paper on her desk. Her desk is clear, apart from a telephone, and she is standing rather than sitting which suggests that she does not have a specific occupation to perform at that desk, other than being 'seen'. Therefore, her potent nature is that she is dressed to be on display within the office and yet she is also on display to the public and the viewer through the window which looks onto the street. This voyeuristic nature of the painting is strengthened by the knowledge that the female figure has been depicted in such a way by a male artist.

Although she is placed within an office space that has been bleached white by Hopper's use of the sunlight, as he also did with the male figure, in *Office in a Small City* he has softened the colours that he uses by introducing more yellow. This softer use of colour also suggests a softer treatment of the woman. Perhaps the colouring could be seen as being more sympathetic, or underlining the notion that the female role in the office could

be limited, simply by her leaving when she marries. Hopper, perhaps, has deliberately positioned her in a less harshly coloured environment to underline the difference he perceived between her future within the office as compared to the male, whom he has condemned to an eternal incarceration. The white concrete has yellowed in the sunlight that is reflected upon it and creates a more mellow effect. The woman is not visually connected to the office space and the office furniture in the same way that the man is. It is possible that this visual difference is as a result of the difference between the life of the male office worker and that of the female.

Hopper would have been very conscious of the permanent nature of the male office worker's existence—the need of the male to work until his retirement to provide for his family, whereas a female was only expected to work until the occasion of her marriage whereupon she would be provided for by her husband. It is also telling of Hopper's generation and social beliefs that this scenario underlies a painting that he completed in 1962. It is possible that this is Hopper's personal statement on the place of the female. He made no secret of his lack of respect for female artists, including his wife,[11] and was noted to have been disgusted by the election of the female artist Georgia O'Keeffe (1887–1986) to the Institute of Arts and Letters in January 1949 to which he already belonged.[12] His reaction to this election was mainly due to her gender, although the work of the modernist group that had formed around Alfred Stieglitz (1864–1946) found no favour with him either.

Hopper's traditional Baptist upbringing was reflected in his opinion of the role of the female and wife. Hopper prevented his own wife from pursuing her own career as an artist, even though she had acquired more acclaim than him at the time when they came together. In fact, Jo Hopper was instrumental in Hopper's involvement in his first major exhibition of paintings in 1923 ('A Group Exhibition of watercolour Paintings, Pastels, Drawings and Sculpture by American and European Artists'), although he had previously exhibited some of his etchings. This was an exhibition that resulted in the purchase of *The Mansard Roof* (figure 37) by the Brooklyn Museum, who were hosts to the exhibition. Hopper also witnessed the lack of success his own father had in providing for his family, and the reliance that had been placed upon the existing finances of the maternal family. Perhaps it is significant that Hopper married Jo in the same year that he was able to give up illustration work (1924) as he had finally begun to sell enough paintings to enable him to support himself. However, uncharacteristically, Hopper does acknowledge the importance of painting in Jo's life, as he acquired a studio for her at 3 Washington Square North, where they were already housed, (Hopper eventually s quired

the entire top floor of the building for them to live and work, and on several occasions he depicted Jo painting in his own drawings and paintings). So, the woman in *New York Office* is perhaps indicative of Hopper's more traditional perception of the role of the female in the office and the work place in general; and is perhaps all the more significant that he should chose to continue to paint such a scene in the in such a climate of social and political change, as if to reiterate his nineteenth century beliefs in the changing twentieth century.

Whatever Hopper's specific interest in the subject of the office, as with all his thematic areas it acted as a vehicle for the observation of the interpersonal relationships between his figures and allows him to exploit his recurring interest in light. *Conference at Night* (figure 148) is no exception, yet unlike *Office in a Small City* (figure 17) and *New York Office* (figure 77), Hopper has chosen to show an office scene at night. The night-time setting for this painting allows Hopper to explore the relationships between the figures within the office locale, and yet outside the normal boundaries, but most importantly it allows him to experiment with the various light effects resulting from the use of artificial light at night.

Hopper's own words in his record book indicate his primary interest in this particular painting. As he wrote that his 'Chief interest, what shown by a bright shaft of light, artificial light, from outside. Big event where this light strikes a broad white column at left end of canvas. Little concern with color (!).'[13] Hopper made twelve preparatory sketches for this painting and although he used them to arrange and rearrange the placement of the figure within the office interior, one element remains consistent; the interest in the dominant artificial light source.[14] This light, as the artist's own words indicate, is an artificial one which enters the office space through the window on the upper right side of the painting. This external illumination is the only one in the painting; there is no light source inside the office space.

This single powerful source of illumination creates a bright shaft of light across the canvas. The angle of the shaft suggests that the source is at a higher level than the depicted interior, as the light pattern slopes downwards from the window across to the left of the painting. The artificial source of this would have to be of a significant strength to create enough brightness to illuminate the interior in this way, especially as the artist has given just enough evidence of the night outside the window to indicate the darkness.

The power of this artificial light is greater than could be achieved by a street lamp and is very white in colour. Its luminescence suggests that it could be the illumination from an advertising hording, like those that can still be found on tall city buildings, or it could be from the bright illuminations from outside theatres or movie palaces. Hopper mentioned in a letter that his motivation for this painting was:

> The idea of a loft of business building with the artificial light of the street coming into the room at night had been in my mind for some years before I attempted it. And had been suggested by things I had seen on Broadway in walking there at night.[15]

Hopper's mention of Broadway here is crucial. In painting the office, he appears to have included an inferred reference to other subject areas, the theatre or the movies, which were also of great importance to his work. This also confirms that the artificial light that enters into this painting is inspired by the white lights of Broadway, called by the poet Vladimir Mayakovsky (1893–1930), the 'Great White Way' which was alive with 'brightness, brightness, brightness'.[16]

Later in the same letter, Hopper admits that this experience of Broadway might have been the inspiration for a scene that was created in his imagination as he comments that 'The attempt to give concrete expression to a very amorphous impression is the insurmountable difficulty in painting. The result was obtained by improvisation, and from no known fact or scene.'[17] However, Hopper's casual reference in his letter to Broadway may indicate a subconscious acknowledgement to his interest in the world of the theatre. The use of this particular external artificial light source refers to the possibility of an exceptionally bright light beyond the boundaries of the painting; one that could be explained by Hopper's allusion to Broadway at night and the idea of a scene that it sparked in his imagination. It could be argued that this implied reference to the world of the celluloid has manifested itself in other aspects of the use of this particular light source too.

The single light source is clearly intended to focus on the three people placed slightly to the right of the centre of the composition and focuses on them as the primary visual interest in the implied narrative of the painting. This particular method of illuminating figures was one that was used in the cinematic genre of Film Noir, and had been employed by the artist in several of his mature paintings which pre-date the style. The implied narrative of the scene that Hopper has depicted here could have been directly influence by the particular characteristics of the Film Noir of the 1940s. Film Noir used bright lighting to specifically focus on one character or element of action and in reverse

also leaves other characters to 'act' from the shadows. Film Noir uses a combination of light and shadows to give greater effect and dramatic impact to its narrative in the same way that Hopper uses the contrasts for deeper impact in his own work.

Hopper maintained that he did not ever intend any particular narrative structure to be present in his paintings and yet his dramatic uses of lighting and focal figures lend themselves towards a narrative reading of his images. As he gave several of his figures names and attributes, which he noted in his record book it could suggest that they could have existed as characters in his imagination. In writing about *Conference at Night* (figure 148) he describes his figures thus, 'White wall, dark figures in silhouette, man on table in white shirt sleeves–Sammy. Deborah is blond, a queen in her own right....Sammy better looking than here in drawing.'[18]

The man placed with his back to the picture plane is in shadow, except for the profile of his face, which is caught in the edge of the light. He is playing out his role from the shadows. However, Sammy and Deborah perform in the direct glare. Hopper describes Sammy as if he is the good looking hero and Deborah, 'the queen', as the strong, self sufficient, and yet powerfully dangerous *femme fatâle*. Both subscribe to the attributes of Film Noir characters which are discussed in greater detail elsewhere.

Although the light is of primary interest to Hopper in this painting, he also uses the geometric formation of the composition to lead the eye to the focus of the painting. He balances the darkness beyond the window frame with the darkness of the office space to the left of the painting. The darkened area on the left is broken up by a strong vertical presence, which is created by the suggestion of columns, and a wooden partition similar to the one used in *Office at Night* (1940) (figure 18). The lines of perspective in this painting created by the ceiling beams and the lines of the desks all lead to the three figures and the focal point of the composition.

The shafts of light, and the wooden partition are the only elements of the painting that do not follow the lines of perspective, and their draw towards the group of figures. The shaft of light does however lead in towards the figures as well as focusing upon them. The light forms bands across this painting; the main one falls across the back wall of the office and then onto the figures. The second shaft is closer to the picture plane and has two purposes; firstly it indicates the presence of another window, through which this beam of light enters, beyond the boundaries of the composition, and as a result it indicates Hopper's desire to suggest that the scene extends beyond the given boundaries

of the painting. This suggestion heightens the dramatic effect, implying the given scene is a visual pause for the characters in a larger drama; as if the painting were a snap shot, or a movie 'still'. Secondly, this shaft of light places the man with his back to the viewer in shadow, rather than in the strong illumination, unlike his companions. Although his facial profile is slightly illuminated, his placement within this shadow gives him a more sinister quality.

Discussion of a Single Image– *Office at Night* (1940)

One of Hopper's most enduring office image is that of *Office at Night* (1940) (figure 18). This painting is distinctive for several reasons. First, it is Hopper's first major oil painting on such a subject and second, because it has become a seminal image of the office and was parodied in Victor Burgin's image *Office at Night, No.1* (1986) (figure 151). Hopper had become experienced in depicting such interiors as a subject through his work as an illustrator for *System* magazine. Since 1913 he had produced a series of illustrations on such a theme, and by tracing Hopper's development of the painting through the preparatory drawings, of which eight are known to exist, a connection can be made to several illustrations he made for *System*.[19] In particular 'Living up to your Employment System'[20] and 'Your Business Tomorrow' (see figures 14 and 15).[21]

In both instances the wooden partition is reminiscent of the one that Hopper has placed to the left of the composition in *Office at Night* (figure 18). As Levin has already noted in her *Catalogue Raisonné*, the pieces of furniture in this painting are reminiscent of that depicted in Hopper's illustrations of office interiors from the 1910 period, but the woman is clothed in the fashions of the 1940s, the period of the date of the painting.[22] Burgin also dressed his female in a nineteen forties business suit as a reflection of Hopper's secretary, and in his image he places these two women alongside each other.[23]

In this painting, Hopper has clearly made the woman the focus of the composition. Her head is the apex of a triangular composition that features her own desk and that of her male boss as the bottom corners. This specific triangular format stresses the importance of the relationship between the figures within the space of the office. Her attire is modest in design, and yet Hopper has depicted it in such a way that it clings to the contours of her body emphasising the curves of her buttocks and breasts. She is standing at the back of the office, reaching into a filing cabinet. Hopper has accentuated the sexual nature of her position as he has twisted her body in such a manner that the viewer can see her breasts and her buttocks at the same time. This emphasis is clearly a reference to her

sexuality and as such it objectifies her as a symbol of the desires of the man in the office and of the male artist.

As Burgin used the image of the woman at the filing cabinet in his photograph it would suggest that he, too, felt that she was the central focus of this painting, and particularly the relationship that is intimated at between the male and female 'characters'. Burgin juxtaposed the image from Hopper's painting with the photograph of a female in office attire to the right. The photograph imitates the pose of the painted woman, but once she is taken out of the painting and placed beside the photographed female, although she is still sensual and curvaceous, the sexual tension of the narrative of the original painting has disappeared. The woman in Burgin's photograph is an imitation of the introverted and solitary figures that inhabit many of Hopper's paintings.

The preliminary drawings for this painting do not reveal the overt sexual tension that Hopper managed to create in the final oil painting. The preparatory drawings place the man and woman in various positions, yet it is not until the final composition that Hopper creates the tension between them. In the drawings the woman remains rather plain, with no indication of overt sexuality, and not at all like the alluring and curvaceous secretary of the oil painting. Jo Hopper's diary entry for February 1, 1940 however, hints at the direction that the painting was taking when she noted, 'I am to pose for the same [female fishing in a filing cabinet] tonight in a tight skirt short to show legs—Nice I have good legs and up and coming stockings.'[24]

The tension of the painting lies in the implied relationship between the man and the woman. She, although occupied at the filing cabinet, looks towards the male at the desk, while he steadfastly ignores her. Burgin maintains that her gaze is either downcast, 'conventionally connoting modesty, or she may be directing a seductive or predatory look towards the man at the desk'.[25] Her downcast eyes also allow the viewer greater access to her face for 'uninterrupted surveillance'.[26] Whichever the case, her pose suggests that there is some form of implied relationship between the two people, and that the man is attempting to ignore, or deny the sexual tension between them. It is heightened by the night time setting for the painting. The forbidden relationship between the male and his secretary is all the more alluring because in the office at night they are potentially cut off from the busy atmosphere of the day time office and placed in a now quiet and secluded space.

Burgin suggests that the averted gaze of the man, as he concentrates on the piece of paper in his hand, gives the sense that he is the innocent party.[27] It is the woman who is the predatory one, and that if any impropriety should take place the man can feel blameless. Burgin argues that this allows the man, and thereby the male viewer, to enjoy the forbidden relationship 'without blame attached'.[28] This painting evokes the sense of the vision of the impossible affair; the unrequited love of the woman for the oblivious man at the desk. Although Hopper denied any deliberate narrative for this painting, he named his female 'Shirley' in the record book entry of the painting. He described her as ' "Shirley" in blue dress, white collar, flesh stockings, black pumps & black hair & plenty of lipstick.'[29] This description is crucial though, as it underlines Hopper's acknowledgement that his 'Shirley' has taken great care with her appearance, whether it is for the benefit of the male figure or just an acceptance of her role as being 'seen'. The emphasis on the 'plenty of lipstick' seems to confirm this notion of preparation for being 'seen'.

The use of space is particularly interesting in this painting, as Hopper has painted various aspects of it from differing viewpoints. The secretary's desk, the office chair by the partition, and the man's desk are painted from a raised viewpoint, as if from above. The spectator is offered a view of these two desks and the floor as if from the ceiling of the office. However, 'Shirley', the filing cabinet, at which she is standing, and the wooden partition are all painted as if viewed from a lower viewpoint, as we look towards them, rather than down on them from above.

Levin suggests that like many aspects of this painting, Hopper has borrowed the 'bird's eye view of the floor tilted out towards the picture plane' from Dégas' *The Cotton Exchange, New Orleans* (1875) (figure 152).[30] Hopper's office floor slopes upward into the image. The back of the office seeming, as a result, higher than the foreground. Hopper has dislocated the normal perceptions of space in this image to enhance the disconcerting psychology of the work and the alienated relationship of the figures within it. The use of space within this work has been described as an 'abuse of parallel perspective' which is created by the oblique angle of the rear wall of the office in the composition.[31] The severe angles that Hopper employs in this painting distort the space of the composition and give the entire painting a rather unsettling effect. To achieve such a space in three dimensions the office would need to be an unusual shape, even trapezoid, as has been suggested by Gillies.[32] The underlying effect of this disconcerting space is that it makes the entire composition 'float' not allowing the viewer to 'ground' the image.[33]

Many aspects of this painting could be attributed to a direct influence from Dégas' painting, *The Cotton Exchange, New Orleans* (1875) (figure 152), particularly as it is one of the best known examples of an office interior, which is such a rare subject for an oil painting.[34] It could also be argued that even some of the illustrations that Hopper executed for *System* magazine are a debt to this painting by Dégas. Hopper's own explanation for this painting, which he wrote in 1948 to Norman Geske, at the Walker Art Center, the owner of the painting, gives no specific indication to these influences, but states:

> The picture was probably first suggested by many rides in the 'L'[sic] train in New York City after dark glimpses of office interiors that were so fleeting as to leave fresh and vivid impressions on my mind. My aim was to try to give the sense of an isolated and lonely office interior rather high in the air, with the office furniture which has a very definite meaning for me.[35]

The specific reference to the office furniture in the last sentence of Hopper's explanation here could again indicate the relationship between the furniture depicted in *Office at Night* and that depicted in Dégas' painting *The Cotton Exchange, New Orleans*; particularly the office chair that appears in one of the preparatory drawings, but is later altered in the final painting. However, it is also possible that the particular significance of the office furniture is that it serves as a memorandum of the furniture Hopper witnessed and used in the offices where he was employed as an illustrator; a period of his life that held such negative memories for him could not have failed to have made an impression, and held a particular significance for him.

Since the use and the effect of light held such a particular interest for Hopper in all his paintings, the representation of light in *Office at Night* has significance for this discussion. Again, it could be argued that Hopper's experimentation with the effects of light derives from his interest in the work of Dégas. It is also possible that it stemmed from his interest in Dutch paintings. Hopper wrote of his admiration of Rembrandt's *The Night Watch* (1642) (figure 153) in a letter to his mother, after his visit to Amsterdam in 1907.[36] Perhaps it was the potential opposition between, or the contrasts of light at night in this particular painting, which sparked an interest in the composition of the light for *Office at Night*. (Subsequent cleaning of *The Night Watch* has revealed that Rembrandt had not depicted a nocturnal scene as had been previously believed.)[37] However, this French or Dutch influence is not the only explanation; Hopper's preoccupation with light follows an American tradition within painting, which is most notably evident in the work of the American Luminist painters between 1854 and 1880.

It should also be noted that Eakins, who had such an influence on the work of Hopper's tutor Henri, was also greatly concerned with the depiction of light and that he was also influenced by the work of Rembrandt.

Hopper wrote of his preoccupation with the light in this painting in his explanation to the Walker Art Center:

> There are three sources of light in the picture:- indirect lighting from above, the desk light and the light coming from through the window. The light coming from outside and falling on the wall in back made a difficult problem, as it is almost painting white on white, it also made a strong scent of the edge of the filing cabinet which was difficult to subordinate to the figure of the girl.[38]

Of the three light sources indicated by Hopper in his statement, only one is visible; the desk lamp. The desk lamp highlights the hands of the male figure, and as a result stresses the importance of the paper that he holds in them. This is a focus on the social and economic importance of the working male. Seated at the desk in the painting, he appears to be as much a permanent fixture as the desks and other office furniture, and this seems to be confirmed by the use of the visible light source. It confirms and endorses his place in, and relationship to, the office space.

Of the two other indirect light sources, the one which penetrates through the window is the most significant. This light enters the window on the right of the painting from a hidden source outside, and sprays bright white light across the wall at the back of the office. This source is particularly interesting because it enables Hopper to make a play and study of the effect of it on the pale surface of the wall; like painting white on white, as Hopper stated. Its significance is that it also links the figures to each other and connects them within the space of the office. The light across the wall behind the man seems to frame his head and upper torso, and as it travels across the wall to the left of the painting it notionally links him to the woman standing at the filing cabinet.

This beam of light across the background of the composition also serves to link 'Shirley' with the world beyond the office. The light, as with many of Hopper's paintings, is crucial as it accentuates the situations of the characters. In this painting the woman is caught by the light that enters in from the window and as a result she is connected with the world beyond the office. This is in opposition to his treatment of the male who is depicted as being an integral part of the office, and consequently condemned to remain inside it. Hopper's use of light in this way is symbolic. By notionally connecting the

woman to the world outside the office by placing her within the illumination has again alluded to the temporary nature of the her presence within the despised office space.

The perspective and the diagonal angles of the painting all lead towards the figure of 'Shirley', and the light across the back wall of the office is no exception to this indication of the focal point. Hopper has concentrated on the angularity, and the geometry of the space of the office, using varying viewing angles to maximise this effect, and to act as a foil to the curves of the secretary at the centre of the composition. The light, as it falls across the filing cabinet, accentuates its strong and harsh vertical lines, which are juxtaposed against the soft, sensual curves of the woman.

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[1] The Smithsonian Institution Web Site. http://educate.si.edu/scitech/carbons/postwar.html
[2] Ibid.
[3] H. Melville, 'Bartleby, The Scrivener', first published in *The Piazza Tales* in 1856. Reprinted in H. Melville, *Bartleby and Benito Cereno*, New York, 1990, p.9.
[4] Ibid., p.10.
[5] Ibid., pp.33–4.
[6] Ibid., p.9.
[7] G. Levin, *Edward Hopper as Illustrator*, New York, 1979, p.5.
[8] R. Bowlby, *Just Looking*, New York and London, 1985, p.32.
[9] S. Dalí, 'Saint Sebastian' (1927) from *Oui: The Paranoid Critical-Revolution–Writings 1927–1933*, translated by Yvonne Shafir, Boston, Mass., 1998.
[10] C. Brooke-Rose, 'Woman as Semiotic Object', in S. R. Suleiman (ed.), *The Female Body in Western Culture—Contemporary Perspectives*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1985, p.310.
[11] See G. Levin, *Edward Hopper, An Intimate Biography*, Los Angeles, California and London, 1998 for extensive quotations from Jo Hopper's diaries which reveal the extent of Hopper's outright criticism of her work.
[12] Jo Hopper diary entry, January 21, 1949. Cited in Ibid., p.409.
[13] Record Book III, p.29. Cited in G. Levin, *Edward Hopper, Catalogue Raisonné*, New York, 1995, volume III, p.324.
[14] Ibid., volume III, p.324.
[15] Hopper in a letter to Mrs Elizabeth Navas, June 28, 1952, Edward Hopper papers roll D, 251, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Cited in Ibid., volume III, p.324.
[16] W. Woroszylski, *The Life of Mayakovsky*, New York, 1970, p.372.
[17] Ibid., p.372.
[18] G. Levin, 1995, volume III, p.324.
[19] Ibid., volume III, p.273.
[20] Carroll D. Murphy, 'Living up to your Employment System,' *System*, 24 (July 1913) p.18.
[21] Wheeler Sammons, 'Your Business Tomorrow,' *System*, 24 (September 1913) p.235.
[22] G. Levin, 'Edward Hopper's "Office at Night"', *Arts Magazine*, 59, Summer 1984, pp.98–103.
[23] V. Burgin, *Between Victor Burgin*, Oxford, 1986, p.186.
[24] Quoted in G. Levin, 1995, volume III, p.272.
[25] V. Burgin, 1986, p.184.
[26] G. Pollock, *Vision and Difference, Femininity, Feminism and History of Art*, London, 1988, p.133.
[27] Ibid., p.133.
[28] Ibid., p.133.
[29] Quoted in G. Levin, 1995, volume III, p.270.
[30] Ibid., volume III, p.270.
[31] J. Gillies, 'The Timeless Space of Edward Hopper', *Art Journal*, 32, Summer 1972, p. 409.
[32] Ibid..

[33] Ibid.
[34] G. Levin, 1995, volume III, p. 270.
[35] E. Hopper, Explanatory statement for *Office at Night* enclosed with letter of August 25, 1948, to Norman A. Geske, Curatorial files, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis. Quoted in Ibid., volume III, p.273.
[36] E. Hopper, Letter to his Mother, July 27, 1907. Quoted in Ibid., volume III, p.273.
[37] Ibid., Volume III, p. 272.
[38] E. Hopper, Explanatory statement for *Office at Night* enclosed with letter of August 25, 1948, to Norman A. Geske, Curatorial files, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis. Quoted in Ibid., volume III, p.273.

Chapter 6.

Hopper's Depiction of The American Restaurant

During his long career as an artist, Hopper was consistently preoccupied by the restaurant. It was a subject that he explored as early as the age of twelve. His pencil drawing (1894) (figure 154), of a restaurant scene, laid down the foundations for his many mature works on a similar theme. This early drawing reveals Hopper's interest in the relations between the waiter and the diners; indeed, the psychological and social interaction of the scene is of primary interest to Hopper, even at this early stage in his artistic career. Hopper has also paid careful attention to the special arrangement of the scene, another major consideration within his mature paintings.

Hopper's motivations for choosing such were subject was multitudinous. It should not surprise us that Hopper should choose to depict such subject matter as restaurants, cafés and diners. They were all popular subjects with the Henri group, especially John Sloan and William Glackens, the French Impressionists, and most notably Dégas. This connection with France and things 'French' according to Levin's theories cannot be an accident then, as she finds connections between Hopper's paintings and specific Dégas paintings, attributing the latter as an inspiration for the former. So, in light of this, it is not surprising that Hopper should choose to paint the subject of the restaurant. Hopper's painting entitled *Le Bistro* or *The Wine Shop* (1909) (figure 155), was executed after his return from Paris, and indicates his predilection for the restaurant as a subject. *Le Bistro* is a nostalgic reminder of the Paris he had recently left behind. The painting displays a Parisian café scene; a couple are seated at a small table in a street café alongside the Seine. Hopper also etched several scenes set in French cafés, *Les Deux Pigeons* (figure 156) for example, and as an illustrator he represented restaurants and café scenes on many occasions.[1]

In the oil paintings of his later period, however, the Parisian street cafés are gone; they are replaced by the fast-food outlets of the automat and the diner. These American spaces do not have the same social and leisurely atmosphere of the street café. Instead, they are food outlets, specializing in cheap, fast-food and catering for a middle-class (white-collar worker) population. As such, Hopper's paintings on the theme of the restaurant particularly within the space of Manhattan go towards an artistic representation of early twentieth century America. As an artistic visualisation of social history Hopper's paintings of the restaurant have captured an image of urban America, in particular Manhattan, that has vanished. In particular the space of the automat no

longer exists in Manhattan and Hopper's painting *Automat* (1927) (figure 8) captures this environment in a pictorial vision of social history, imbued with his own sense of pathos at the position of the human figure, in particular that of the female, within that environment.

The American nature of Hopper's depiction of the various environments of the American city, particularly Manhattan is emphasised by his choice of subject matter. New York's most famous automat was its first, located in Times Square which was opened by Joseph Horn and Frank Hardart in 1911. These two men, who originated from Philadelphia, were responsible for importing the notion of the automated restaurant from Germany and establishing their first automat in Philadelphia in 1902. They were already well known for serving 'the best coffee in town' as they pioneered the drip brewing method, but they went on to become the forefathers of the fast-food industry in America.[2] The automat provided freshly prepared food which was placed into a bank of heated pigeon holes and so the customer was able to serve themselves. The nature of the 'waiter-less' operation meant that the automat could serve, in the case of the Horn & Hardart's chain, as many as 800,000 freshly prepared meals a day to customers in Philadelphia and New York during the depression.[3] The appeal of the automat was based on its provision of quick, cheap food, as well as its mechanised service and the sociable atmosphere that it provided.

The mechanised interior of the automat is displayed in Berenice Abbott's (1898–1991) *Automat* (1936) (figure 157). In this photograph Abbott chose to represent the restaurant at Columbus Circle, well-known as a night-time gathering place for musicians and cabaret-goers, and also the location of the restaurant that served as the basis for Hopper's *Chop Suey* (figure 68). Abbott's photograph illustrates the restaurant's mechanised character. With the sharp diagonal of coin-operated, Deco-styled windows receding indefinitely into space, the photograph shows food and its consumers on a culinary assembly line. Although the Columbus Circle Automat was still open in the 1970s, most automats gave way sooner to fast-food chains. The last New York automat closed in 1991. In 1989, the entire block between Columbus Circle and West 57th Street on Eighth Avenue was razed for a 56-story apartment tower.[4]

The diner is slightly more difficult to define. Its origin is attributed to Walter Scott, who began to offer prepared food from a converted horse-drawn freight wagon in Providence, Rhode Island in 1872. As a result he unknowingly inspired the birth of what would become one of America's most recognised icons. His lunch wagon was an immediate

success and others copied and improved on his concept. These pioneers helped create an industry that would eventually produce thousands of diners.[5] Essentially it is a restaurant that is reminiscent of the shape of a railroad car. The word 'diner' is a derivative of 'dining car' and many examples reflect the style of the railroad dining car, using a long counter with stools fixed to the floor with bolts, lots of shiny stainless steel and bright Art Deco patterns.[6]

However, in his representation of the distinctive space of the diner or the automat Hopper typically ignores the social element of the environment. These spaces clearly reveal his personal view of the alienation and the isolation of the human figure within the anonymity of the large city. They also seem to suggest that Hopper considered that the automated eateries of the modern city were responsible for the perception of the figure within them as an automaton as revealed by his painting *Automat*. His represention of these modern American spaces are in opposition to his more romantic visions of the social atmosphere of the French café or bistro demonstrated by his *Le Bistro* (figure 155)or *Les Deux Pigeons* (figure 156).

Hopper's painting *Tables for Ladies* (1930) (figure 142), which will be discussed in detail below in this chapter, is also an example of this use of his work as social documentary as the title refers in particular to the social development in the 1920s of setting aside one or two tables for respectable 'ladies'.[7] The reason for this was that women who were unescorted were vulnerable to suspicion of being prostitutes and as a result some restaurants refused to serve them. So by setting aside these specially designated tables unaccompanied ladies were able to dine respectably. This was a middle-class phenomenon created for the growing masses of young working women. Wealthier women would not be out without an escort, nor would they have need to join the increasing numbers of young workers in middle-class white-collar environments in the city. Restaurants that encouraged their clientele to mingle generally attracted the lower classes and were not suitable establishments for these young middle-class working ladies.

Hopper's earliest painting on the subject of the American restaurant was *New York Restaurant* (figure 39), executed around 1922. Although this painting dates from 1922 and predates Hopper's mature period, it is indicative of what he achieved with his mature paintings of this subject; he took a subject that was influenced by his interest in

Dégas, and his love of France, and gave it a totally American sense and style, as he did with paintings like *Automat* (figure 8) for example. This is confirmed by Hopper's own words about this particular painting, one where he deliberately stresses the location. This is a restaurant in Manhattan, and it is the specific nature of that restaurant in New York that Hopper wishes to, as he said, 'In a specific and concrete sense the idea was to attempt to make visual the crowded glamour of a New York restaurant during the noon hour. I am hoping that ideas less easy to define have, perhaps, crept in also.'[8]

This painting reveals the influence of Dégas on Hopper as it also incorporates cinematic devices into its composition. Hopper has placed figures at the edges of the composition in the manner of Dégas. The person on the right of the painting is walking out of the picture plane. This figure is painted in dark tones; it wears a coat and a hat, its face is not visible and even its gender is unclear. This shadowy person echoes the figures that Dégas placed at the edge of the composition in paintings such as *Ballet seen from an Opera Box* (1885) (figure 158), where the female has been cut off the bottom edge of the painting as the opera box is partially out of the composition, and in *Ballerina with a Bouquet, Curtseying* (c.1877) (figure 56), where the artist has cut one of the dancers on the left of the painting partially out of the work. These people in Dégas' paintings indicate his interest in photography, and although the appearance of these cropped figures gives the painting the impression that it has not been carefully composed, they are intended to give it the sense of the photographic 'snapshot'. Hopper also embraces contemporary technology and the placement of this cropped figure in *New York Restaurant* (figure 39) is also reminiscent of the cinematic devices employed by Film Noir.

It could be argued that where Hopper has employed this stylistic method that it is more likely due to the techniques employed by Dégas, and becomes established as a cinematic tool later as movies developed in complexity and style. The cropped figures indicate the focus of the scene as the couple in the centre of the painting. The other persons included in the scene indicate that the space represented in the painting continues beyond the confines of the canvas, but that the artist wishes the viewer to focus on the couple at the table in the centre of the composition.

Hopper's use of light and colour also have a strong effect on the composition of this painting. The light crosses the canvas in a diagonal from the top right of the painting to the bottom left. The sense of it is enhanced by Hopper's use of colour to clearly define its path from its source in the top right of the canvas. This diagonal strip of illumination

is stressed by the use of bright colours which are in distinct contrast to the much darker palette used over the remainder of the canvas. Even this diagonal strip is divided into two colour areas; the top right is defined by earth tones of yellow, red and green, and the bottom left by tones of white and grey. This diagonal band across the painting draws the focus of the entire composition, and the dark clad figures outside this band, including the man seated at the central table to a certain extent, recede into the background of the composition. Hopper uses the areas of dark colour as visual foils to the bright areas, each enhancing the other. This augments the sense of the melée of figures in the busy restaurant; they give the sense of bustle that Hopper wished to achieve.

As so often with Hopper's paintings, the most dominant focal point of the composition is red. The red appears to be so dominant simply because generally the palette used by Hopper is composed of pale and light tones. In this particular painting he has chosen the hat of the woman at the central table. She is seated with her back to the picture plane and yet she draws the viewer's attention with the dominant colour of her hat.

The composition of this painting is dominated by Hopper's use of geometric elements which create, typically, a strong emphasis on the vertical aspects of this scene. The upright bodies of the figures, and the upper bodies of those that are seated, the plant by the window, the door and its frame, and the window frame. The only horizontal counters that Hopper has placed in the composition to this vertical emphasis are the panes of the window and the curtain rail.

This painting appears to be a realistic representation of a New York restaurant, as the title suggests, and yet on a closer examination the space that Hopper employs in his painting is not akin to realist approaches. The space of the restaurant is ambiguous as it is spatially distorted. The floor that is painted in such warm tones so as that it rises up to meet the viewer, seems to slope too steeply for the implied space. It seems to incline away from the picture plane and up towards the doorway at the rear of the composition. This sharp slope is echoed by the table between the central couple. As Hopper has used the same colour tones for the floor and the doorway, there appears to be no clear distinction between where the floor ends and where the walls begin. The plant is placed in a pot on the floor, in front of the yellow curtains. The space that Hopper has created here suggests that the curtains reach the floor behind the plant pot and reach along to the door frame. Yet, if this is the definition of the space that he intended, the door handle is placed very low on the door. However, the left side of the door frame seems to reach a more logical distance, placing the handle at the height that one would expect to find it.

This steep rising floor is very 'Gauguin-esque', and the artist has created this disconcerting, yet subtle, disparity in the spatial definition of the composition with the most understated changes in the colouration of the canvas.

Hopper clung to the familiarity of his surroundings and applied it to his paintings. Hopper's 1929 canvas *Chop Suey* (figure 68) is a prime example of this. In 1923, Hopper and Jo Nivison were spending an increasing amount of time together, and they began to frequent a Chinese restaurant on Columbus Circle, an area of Manhattan that was synonymous with the night-life of the musicians and singers of the cabaret circuit and which is captured in Abbott's photograph *Columbus Circle* (1936) (figure 159).[9] It was an inexpensive restaurant based on the second floor of the building. This favoured restaurant was not the only influence for this painting. Both the use of the restaurant as a theme for the painting and its composition can be attributed to Hopper's many illustrations on the same theme.

Hopper's painting of the Chinese restaurant in *Chop Suey* can be compared to that of Max Weber (1881–1961). In Weber's *Chinese Restaurant* (1915) (figure 160) he has depicted a restaurant in a style inspired by Cubism. He has distorted the space of the restaurant, as Hopper did with *New York Restaurant*, but in a much more exaggerated manner. The gold and black squares which cover the lower half of the painting represent the linoleum on the restaurant's floor. The painting is dominated by red and gold, the traditional colour scheme of a Chinese restaurant, and throughout, Weber incorporates textures and patterns taken from elements of the restaurant's decor. At the centre of the image he has included fragments of faces to give a sense of the crowded interior and the hustle and bustle of the waiters. This painting is full of the bustle of the restaurant and the suggested movement resulting from the disjointed elements of the work re-create the frenetic pace of modern life in Manhattan. Both Weber's painting (figure 160) and Hopper's *Chop Suey* depict a Chinese restaurant, yet the results are strikingly different. Where Weber's image is vibrant and full of the hustle and bustle of a busy restaurant and conveys the movement and noise of the social space, Hopper's restaurant is frozen in a single moment that isolates the figures within the space.

In this work, Hopper has placed the main focus of the painting on two young women seated at a table in a Chinese restaurant. These two central characters appear to be young office girls dressed smartly in the fashion of the day, who have dressed with care and attention, aware that they will be seen by others. They are women who are aware of the possibility of their being the objects of observation and have attired themselves

accordingly. They have removed their coats, which hang on a peg on the wall in the centre of the composition, and exposes their smart office attire. They still wear their fashionable 'Flapper' style hats. The two young women are placed facing each other over a table, so that the female closest to the picture plane is sitting with her back to the viewer. Her companion faces out towards the viewer, and yet does not engage with the viewer. She appears to be lost in contemplation, as she stares out into the distance. There appears to be no communication between the two women. The one in the foreground with her back to the viewer, by this action alone cuts herself off from any actual or implied communication with the viewer and the absent look on the face of her companion implies a barrier to the communication between the two of them.

They are not the only diners; in the background Hopper has placed a couple in the shadows. The man is dressed in a dark business suit and as a result his body almost disappears into the shadows of the wall. The skin of his head and hands are more visible against this dark background even though they are still in the shadows. This male looks down at his hands, silent, focussing on the cigarette that he is holding in his hand.

Hopper's treatment of his companion is particularly interesting because all that is visible of her body is the 'mask like' profile of her face as she appears to lean towards her companion, as if to speak over the table. Her body is completely outside the picture frame. Her face is in complete contrast to that of her male companion. Her face is as much in the light, as his is in the shadows. Again, Hopper has blocked the human interaction, or the social interchange, between this couple by depicting the man as looking down, absorbed in his cigarette and not his companion's conversation.

Hopper's composition of this painting is cinematic in style, and particularly alludes to the cinematic genre of Film Noir. Hopper has used every part of his canvas for his painting, that is to say that by placing figures off centre, as with the main pair of females in the foreground, and the placing of the third woman, with the exception of her face, being just outside the boundary of the painting, the image suggests the coming genre of Film Noir. Both Hopper and Film Noir use the anti-traditional *mise-en-scène* in their composition. This cinematic device cuts the characters off the edge of the scene, places two characters together at the edge of the scene, or films two characters together off centre, to dislocate the action and create a sense of unease.

This is a device that Hopper uses frequently to unsettle and disorient the viewer of his paintings. This technique is all about the viewpoint for the scene or the painting; for

example, cutting the edge of the scene or the edge of the canvas, or the film, at odd angles and positions, and Hopper is a master at this. On many occasions in his mature work he will cut half a character off the edge of the canvas, or place two seemingly central characters off centre which distorts the accepted balance of the painting, creating an unsettling sensation.

This is the case with *Chop Suey*. The two main female characters are placed slightly to the left of centre, from the viewer's point of view. This is enhanced as the focus mainly falls on the one that looks out of the painting, and she is placed the further to the left of the two. Hopper then completes this sense of *mise-en-scène* with the couple in the background in the left of the composition. Particularly, as all that is visible of the woman is a rather ghoulishly white face that floats into the composition from the left of the painting.

The greater part of Hopper's work, particularly that where he has included figures, invites the viewer to be complicit with the action of observation: the viewer becomes the voyeur. Where the female is depicted in the public space, particularly in the case of the one in *Chop Suey*, with her carefully made-up face, she is wearing her 'public face'; she is 'dressed' to be 'seen', and consequently prepared to be the object of observation indirectly, or directly. When we observe these figures it is with the sense that we are intruding on the privacy of their solitude (even when they are not alone), and invading their still and silent space.

Hopper's use of light in this painting indicates one of his primary concerns in his paintings. It is depicted in such a way that it allows the artist to heighten the sense of visual intrusion upon his figures. He uses it to focus on the figures and place them clearly for the scrutiny of the viewer. The open voyeurism of the paintings is harsh and oppressive, even when the figures are placed in a public space. The light echoes this sentiment because it is also harsh and oppressive. In *Chop Suey* it streams through the windows on the right of the painting. It illuminates the presence of the people in the restaurant. The light is bright and stark and serves to whiten the pale skin of the young woman facing out of the painting. It cuts across the canvas; the rays of light bear down on the figures. Of the two main female figures in this painting, the light rests heavily on the back of one, and directly across the face of the other. On the main visible female face it bleaches her skin to accentuate her pallor and it also emphasises the blank expression on her face.

Hopper cleverly manipulates the light and the colour in this painting to enhance the 'drama' of the painting and to focus the viewer's eye on particular areas of the canvas. He appears to have used an external source, or natural light, as it enters the composition from the top right of the painting, through the windows and across the canvas. The sunlight has hit the stonework of the outside of the building and has bleached it white. This sunlight then streams though the window in strips focussing on quite distinct areas of the canvas. It is placed in such a way that it clearly focuses on the females within the painting, leaving the man to merge into the shadows of the background.

In one sense Hopper has made a visual connection between the exterior of the building and the interior of the restaurant, but more importantly he has used this harsh lighting to impact upon the psychology of the painting. This harshness on the exterior of the building bleaches the stonework, in a sense attacking it and it is an effect that is repeated within the interior. As the light falls onto the table tops, bleaching them in this manner, it reflects up into the faces of the two women whose faces are visible, or partially visible to the viewer. As a result their faces also become bleached and ghostly in appearance. The bright white of the tables acts as a harsh and cold, almost sterile, barrier between the pairs of diners.

Hopper has further enhanced this effect with his use of colour around the ghoulish faces. The one that faces out of the composition is dressed in a green top or dress that is deep and rich in colour on her left shoulder and graduates into the dark shadows of the background of the painting down the right side of her outfit. Her close fitting black hat frames her face and emphasises the pallor of her skin. Hopper has introduced his favourite accent colour to great effect in this painting. Not only does he use it to emphasise the bold lettering of the restaurant sign outside the window, which again refers to his use of graphics as a result of his illustration experience, but he employs the colour red in specific areas of the interior of the restaurant scene to enhance and strengthen the composition.

The main focal figure is typical of this use of the accent colour. Hopper has made, with his treatment of the light and the use of the white areas in the painting, the visible skin of this woman as pale as possible. He then uses a red accent colour for her lips, and for a touch across her cheek under her right eye, to reinforce the almost deathly pallor of her skin. Here again, Hopper reinstates the relationship between colour areas as he did with the pale face and bleached table top, as he has placed a red tea pot on the table. This

placement strives to further bleach the table top and also link the contrast of the pale shades with red on both the tables and the two visible female faces.

It is a similar situation with the other visible female face. The edge of the white table top and her facial profile are the only bright, and light areas of colour in what otherwise is an area of deep shadow. This pallid face appears on the edge of the painting emerging out of the shadows. It echoes the colour of the table top and the bleached stonework of the exterior of the building. Again, Hopper has emphasised the pallor of the skin by placing it in an area of shadow and by introducing bright red as a contrast colour in the lady's hat and in her lipstick.

Once again, there is a connection between Hopper's painting and Film Noir, as he has placed key characters in his work in direct light and yet the man in the painting plays his role entirely from within the shadows in the background of the painting. Just because he is placed in this situation does not suggest that he is insignificant in this composition, as his role is paramount to Hopper's observation of the relationship between him and his dinner companion. As Borde and Chaumeton maintain, in their essay, *Towards a Definition of Film Noir* (1955), an actor may play a scene silhouetted against an illuminated background, or play it totally in shadow.[10] It is this very stylistic direction that Hopper has employed in this composition, and many others, when Film Noir was only in its infancy.

Alongside Hopper's specific use of lighting and colour, and the spatial arrangement of the figures, which enhance the same feelings of alienation and communicate to the viewer the painting's rather unsettling nature, he employed the geometry of the painting to augment this emotional response. The top section of the composition of this painting is a series of dominant verticals, which form the walls and the window frames, and the restaurant sign, which can be seen through the window. In the lower third of the painting the composition is not dominated by the use of the vertical. Instead, Hopper has placed the almost luminously white tables in such a manner that they help create a diagonal in towards the focal point of the painting, from left to right. The lower edge of the window frame and the window sill also form part of this diagonal force into the focal point from right to left in the composition. These sight lines converge at the corner point of the window frame, which is between the two main female figures in the painting.

The composition of this painting is dominated by these strong verticals in the top two thirds of the painting, and Hopper has enhanced their strength with his use of blocks of

colour. This gives the composition a realist, hard edged crispness and yet in his representation of the two main female figures, Hopper has used some softer curves as foils to this strong geometric construction. The woman who is seated with her back to the viewer reveals this; she is seated on a chair that has a curved back which is echoed in the curve of her shoulders, and then the curve of the scarf around her neck. The rounded shape of her close fitting hat completes this visual move through these softer curves as the viewer's eye moves up from the bottom of the composition following another sight line into the focal point of the painting.

The treatment of the female that faces the viewer is similar to her companion at the table. The curved sweep of her shoulder and the curves of her hat, as it frames her face, and again as it curves over her head, all serve to soften the angularity of the scene in which she is placed. This is further developed by the soft curves of her breasts, which Hopper has highlighted with his use of the light and shade across her outfit and the small bowl which he has placed on the table between the women. These curves soften the angularity of the composition and are juxtaposed against the harsh lines of the table placed between them.

The geometric nature of Hopper's compositions and his clear interest in the careful study of the local architecture is continuously apparent in his work. He completed many works, such as his Lighthouse series, or his studies of Weehawken, which are loving reproductions of the architecture that he experienced around him. His treatment of the architecture of New York is no different and even in a painting like *Sunlight in a Cafeteria* (1958) (figure 161), where it is not the primary concern, Hopper has painstakingly reproduced the style, the lines, the angles and the rigid geometry of the architecture seen through the window of the cafeteria. It was Hopper's treatment of light in this painting that impressed Jo Hopper the most when she said that he could make 'the light on the walls and the table tops so much more important' than the other elements in the work.[11] For her, this included the psychological interaction between the two figures.

However, this obvious interest in the architecture is an interesting parallel to his other concerns within his painting. This is most apparent in Hopper's work where he presents the viewer with a seemingly empty space, with no figures present at all, and yet always leaves the suggestion, or hint of their presence, with a light from within a room, or as in the case of *Sunlight in a Cafeteria* (figure 161), half-closed blinds in the rooms above the shops. This emptying the canvas of all visible signs of the human figure is one that

he perfected towards the end of his life and culminates in images such as *Sun in an Empty Room* (figure 3) of 1963.

In *Sunlight in a Cafeteria* (figure 161), Hopper has included two people and the primary focus of the painting seems to be the implied interaction between them. Although they are the only people in the painting, there is the inferred presence of others. However, the presence of other possible figures seems ghostly or uneasy as they are hidden behind the half closed blinds of the apartments opposite the cafeteria or automat. This gives the sense that the viewer is perhaps being watched by an unseen observer, which completely subverts the accepted experience of the viewer as the voyeur of the painting. It creates an uneasy quality to the composition. There is the sense that Hopper has not placed his viewer in a position of anonymous observation of the scene before him, but hints that there might be hidden observers within the scene. It is with this subversion of the accepted and the comfortable, that Hopper aids his portrayal of the city. He clearly observes, that all within this environment are subject to scrutiny, by a viewer who can be seen, or unseen.

In this painting Hopper has created what could be seen as a movie 'still'. The inclusion of figures within this particular setting lend themselves to speculation on the 'drama' that is evolving between them. There is no direct communication between the two people and yet Hopper manages to create the sense that although neither one looks at the other, they are both aware of the presence of the other and are perhaps covertly observing each other, as in fact the viewer does.

The woman appears to be looking down at her hands, which are inactive, but seem to totally absorb her attention. At first glance she could be assumed to be totally absorbed in her own thoughts and contemplation of her fingers; but Hopper has tilted her head just slightly toward the man who is seated at the table across from her. This smallest inclination towards the direction of the man is enough to indicate a furtive glance in his direction, whilst attempting to maintain her concentration on her hands. This action is rather demure, as she does not turn her head towards him but catches a glimpse from the corner of her eye. Hopper is more brazen with the man. He has clearly placed him twisted in his seat and looking towards the woman. He does not look at her directly, and covers his observation of her with the impression that he is looking beyond her to the window. His placement in such a manner recognises Hopper's acceptance of the woman as the recipient of the male gaze and his maintenance of the subjugated demure female, who cannot be so brazen as the man.

They are aware of each other visually, both physically and psychologically. The tilt of the body of the man indicates an attempt to speak, yet the whole scene is filled with the sense of silence. The placement of these figures in a such a stance is probably as close as Hopper gets to a depiction of explicit sexual tension within his painting. However, Hopper has maintained the respectability by placing furniture between them, creating space within the composition. This space is physical, but is also psychological as it prevents the man from speaking to the woman and joining her at her table. It also prevents her from meeting his gaze. This all adds to the sexual tension.

Again Hopper represents an almost deserted city. The two figures are the only visible inhabitants of the automat, and accepting any implied human presence in the buildings outside, the street, and what appears to be shops opposite the automat, seem deserted. Hopper portrays a sense of peace and tranquillity, albeit one fraught with anxiety and a sense of tension, that none of Hopper's contemporaries show in their visions of New York.

This silence that is experience by the viewer of this painting, and Hopper's other work, could be attributed to a recognition of the work of the nineteenth century American Luminist painters, but it seems more possible that the stillness of the composition and the silence that it conveys as a result can be more attributed to the personal vision of the observed scene by the quiet and introspective nature of Hopper himself. It also perhaps indirectly alludes to movie stills or photography.

The stillness of this scene could also be attributed to the focus of the painting on the two figures, in the sense that because the man and woman have become engrossed in the observation of each other, they have become caught in a vacuum which only contains them. Hopper has created this notional vacuum around them, as they are contained within the space of the automat, to express the connection they are experiencing as two humans, and that at this particular moment in time, hence the tranquillity of the scene, their total absorption in each other renders them cut off from all other elements of the outside world.

The scene might be viewed as if it were a movie screen if the viewer was placed in the buildings opposite the cafeteria. The large glass window would act as a movie screen. Hopper's absent, but implied figures would have the benefit of this particular view. This dramatic view onto the world within the automat is created by Hopper's use of rigid

geometry within the composition. The background of the painting is dominated by the verticals of the walls of the automat and the shops with their apartments above to the left. The scene of the buildings through the automat window is a carefully observed celebration of the architecture of the city and forms a block of tones of greys, greens and blues in the left of the paintings. This darker block of colour is directly contrasted with the next 'block' against it which is formed from the window frame and the interior wall of the automat. This next area of the composition is bleached by the sunlight, which enters the composition from the top left, and is formed of light tones of yellows and creams. This tonal composition continues across the background of the painting, creating the rear wall of the cafeteria. Hopper has used the change in tones from the shadows to sculpt the wall around the corner. The only exception to this light coloured expanse is the rotating door at the back of the scene, which is depicted in warm and rich tones and complements as well as highlights the lighter areas around it.

It is interesting to note that in most of Hopper's paintings of the automat or diner, he chooses to portray his characters sitting in contemplation over their coffee, or even seated at a seemingly empty table. It is another example of Hopper's ability to subvert the normal, or the expected. As with his portrayals of the theatre where he chooses to concentrate on the moments before the performance, or in the interval, with his restaurants, he also prefers scenes during moments of inactivity. In *New York Restaurant* (figure 39), Hopper hints at the consumption of food, as the waitress is pictured clearing away a pile of plates, but other than this exception the only concession that Hopper makes to his figures actually dining within the establishments in which he has positioned them, is the placement of the cup and saucer on the table or counter.

The figures seated at the table in *Tables for Ladies* (1930) (figure 142) follow this pattern. They have been portrayed either at the moment before they have consumed anything, or afterwards. However, in this particular painting, Hopper has paid a rather unusual amount of interest to the display of food in the restaurant window. The composition has been designed in such a way that the glass of the window has become invisible. The viewer is placed in the position of being in the street outside and gazing through the window at this rich display of food; an interesting array of fruits and meat. They form a 'voluptuous still life' which Jo Hopper described as a window display of 'grapefruit, ginger ale bottles, raw meat (chop) on the plates and century plant....and Bee basket [a gift from Bee Blanchard] with red apples and the pineapples. I'd shopped all over to lay in for the occasion.'[12] Jo's words indicate the important role she played in the composition of Hopper's paintings. This seems to recall her theatrical ambitions

from her life as an actress, before her marriage. By helping her husband in this way she is able to play the actress again, but also the various other roles of set designer, 'prop' lady, and to a certain extent the director. She almost became a one-woman theatre company.

To an extent Hopper's treatment of his wife in his paintings could be seen as similar to the role that the photographer Cindy Sherman (b. 1954) gives herself in her own work. Her work, in particular her early work from the late 1970s, where she created a body of work called *Untitled Film Stills*, is developed around the roles that she created for herself. These roles are derived from the stereotypical images of women portrayed in black and white B-movies of the 1950s.[13] Sherman dresses herself and poses to emulate the stereotypical images from advertising, pin-ups and movies, like the starlet, the *femme fatâle*, and the housewife (see figure 162). Her work is overtly critical of the way in which women were portrayed in these media. Although Hopper portrays his wife in roles similar to those acted-out by Sherman in her series of *Untitled Film Stills*, his work is not intended to be critical of them. Hopper displays contemporary stereotypes as perceived from a male point of view, one that now allows his work to be subject to the same criticisms that are levelled at these 1950s female stereotypes by Sherman. One result of this film 'still' quality in his paintings and the use of stereotypes which occur in contemporary movies is that they serve to highlight the elements of theatricality within Hopper's work, which is examined in greater detail in the next chapter.

In *Tables for Ladies* Hopper has used the colours within the array of foods to frame and draw in the focus of the painting. The yellow grapefruits in the front of the window display are placed neatly in a line and mark out the edge of the window along a diagonal in the bottom right corner of the painting. This yellow line echoes the right edge of the painting, which forms the side of the window, and the top of the painting, which is the painted wall above the mirror and wood panels along the side of the restaurant. This strong yellow colouring frames the painting, and brings a unity of colour to the canvas, as well as drawing the focus of the image into the centre of the painting where the figures are placed.

Hopper has placed the focus on the waitress in the foreground who is attending to the window display. Her gaze is averted from that of the viewer, and any of the other figures in the composition. She is involved in what she is doing and is unaware of the presence of the viewer on the other side of the glass. Hopper has positioned her so that

she is in the process of touching the display, and as a result she seems by implication to be connected with it. It seems as if Hopper has placed her on display along with the other items in the window. She becomes subject to the same admiring looks and sensations of desire as the foods with which she has become associated.

The admiring gazes that she receives from the implied male audience are as a result of the notion of consumption to which she has become subject. The reasons for this parallel between the perception of this woman (whom Hopper nicknamed Olga) and the consumption of the foodstuffs in the window are several. Firstly, she leans over, tending to the display and as a result he has created a visual pun between the size and the shape of the grapefruits, and the other spherical fruits, in the window and her breasts. She is bent over, leaning into the display, which allows Hopper to reveal her cleavage and a tantalising glimpse of her breasts. Therefore, he has, by implication, displayed her breasts in the window, alongside the fruit, and as a result he has reduced her to an 'object' for the visual gratification of the viewer.

Hopper has also emphasised the connection in the painting between the food and the materialistic consumption of goods, by objectifying this blond female in the foreground of his composition. She is visually compared to the food on display and she has become available to the gaze of the implied customer passing by the window as well as the viewer. She is on display in the window as just another object that is available inside the restaurant to be consumed, not physically, but visually. She could be considered to be playing a role akin to that of a shop mannequin. She is a vessel to advertise the wares available inside the restaurant, and as a result the placement of her breasts has resulted in their being 'advertised' alongside the fruit in the window.

The artist has also made a great play of the parallel between the consumption of the food and its more sensual connotations. The temptation of the fruits on display is a purely sensual one; comparing the consumption of food to carnal pleasure. Hopper has almost carried this analogy to a point of parody with the inclusion of the two raw pork chops on display amongst the fruit and vegetables, as it has been suggested that their inclusion could be a pun on the expression 'lick your chops'. An expression which has a clear connotation with the anticipation of carnal desire.[14] Consequently, not only has Hopper objectified this woman with her placement in the window display, but he has clearly emphasised her sexual attributes and the viewer is therefore intended to see her as an embodiment of sexual desire.

Perhaps this emphasis, or even the over emphasis, could be seen as bordering on the cheap and vulgar. However, Hopper recognised that the subject lacked what he called a certain 'nobility'[15] and it has been maintained that the choice of the names for the 'characters' in the work are a reference to the 'types' of European immigrants that were arriving in New York in the early 1930s.[16] Yet, this use of stereotypes for the characters and the over emphasis on the vulgar sexual nature of the visual pun was to achieve a specific purpose, one that was noted in Jo Hopper's diary when she said that her husband had 'wanted the vulgar color of cheap restaurants—for local color.'[17]

Hopper has achieved more with this woman than merely placing her in the window as an object of desire. He has managed to place her in such a way that she begins to merge into the fabric of the interior of the restaurant. She is dressed in a white waitress outfit and as she bends towards the window display she begins to merge with the table cloths behind her. As a result of the electric lighting from above the underside of her body as she leans over is in shadow. The shadows upon her white attire are created with tones of grey which then echo the chequered floor tiles of the restaurant. In this way Hopper has managed not only to trap her within her own quiet thoughtfulness, he has trapped her within the fabric of the restaurant itself.

Hopper achieves a similar effect with the other female member of staff, the cashier, who was named Anne Popebogales, as he has placed her behind the till at the counter in the corner of the restaurant.[18] Just as the arms of the other woman connect her directly to the display of food, Hopper has placed the arms of this other staff member over the keys of the till as if she is in the process of operating it. However, we can only see half way up her forearm, and it is as if her arm has become directly connected to the machine; she has become a part of the till, and therefore the fabric of the restaurant. She is also clearly trapped behind the counter; she has no means of escape. Both of these members of staff are trapped by their environment, but their environment has also separated them from each other.

The two other figures in this painting are a couple placed either side of a dining table, and are named as Max Scherer and wife Sadie.[19] Their faces are unclear, and they appear to be secondary in importance to the two female staff members. This dining couple could be quietly conversing, or they could be contemplating their own solitude. Their purpose in this painting is as a foil to the other two figures. This couple whilst apparently together, trapped in the silence and stillness of Hopper's vision of the city restaurant, they have the notional ability to leave, unlike the two attendants who have

become an integral part of the furniture of the establishment. This couple is also indicative of one of Hopper's favourite motifs in his mature paintings; the lonely couple.

Hopper's placement of the clock in this painting serves to heighten the sense of timelessness within the painting as it will forever read the same time. This clock is only half in the composition, and as only one hand is visible the time could be five to eight or twenty to twelve. There is no indication whether this is a morning or evening scene as the light source is clearly artificial, and Hopper has given no other clues as the restaurant interior covers the entire canvas. Charles Burchfield noted when he was describing Hopper's work in general that it contained a timeless silence, when he noted that, 'Somehow [he] managed to take a particular moment, a split second almost, to make time stand still, and to give the moment an enduring, universal significance.'[20]

This comment could be equally applied specifically to *Tables for Ladies* or his paintings in general as this movie 'still' quality is apparent across his body of work. Whatever the time, the clock seems to emphasise the stillness of time and the notion of the movie 'still' where the scene is just a small glimpse out of a greater unknown narrative. As a result this reinforces the incarceration of the figures within space. Consequently, Olga is also condemned to a permanent placement as the object of desire in the window alongside all the other comestible goods.

Perhaps the reason why the female figures in Hopper's work can be seen as synonymous with the sexual pleasures of consumption within modern America is due to the indigenous nature of his work. The relationship between his work and that of the cinematic genre of Film Noir has already been alluded to, but here it would perhaps also be wise to view his depiction of the female figure in terms of another indigenous form of imaging the female; the pin-up, which also had links to Hollywood with its starlet subject matter.

The significance of the pin-up in relation to Hopper's paintings is for several reasons. Firstly, it is a particular type of representation of women which has derived from early American advertising illustrations. Secondly, it was largely an indigenous invention of twentieth century America, and finally, by the 1930s it had become a mainstay of American mass culture.[21] As such, the implications of its place within twentieth century culture, particularly in relation to advertising and Hollywood, have to be accepted as being influential on the work of artists such as Hopper.

The early precedent for the pin-up evolved from the illustrations of the 'Gibson Girl' who was created in 1887 by Charles Dana Gibson who 'dipped his pen in the cosmic urge and tried to draw a girl so alluring that other young men would want to climb into the picture and sit beside her' (see figure 163).[22] This imaginary female character was used as an advertising illustration until around 1910, and was the precursor for the 'ideal' American woman that was represented by the pin-up girl. The Gibson Girl 'character' was featured as a model to advertise fashion, but came to take on a much larger role and eventually became a fictional role model for contemporary women, telling them how to dress, walk, sit and behave. She was also a valuable merchandising asset, as Gibson Girl hankies, skirts, blouses and shoes were produced in her name.[23] Her style and influence could not have gone unnoticed by Hopper as a young commercial artist, as she was a the status symbol of the masses and epitomised what was perceived to be the 'American Beauty'.[24] She was independent, yet she conformed to a type, and was described as 'domineering and manipulative; she got what she wanted'.[25] The merchandising that came about from the Gibson Girl and her marketing potential meant that she had a power and an aloofness, and in a sense we can see her as an early prototype of the Film Noir *femme fatâle* characters of the 1940s.[26]

In one such example, (figure 163), of the Gibson Girl entitled, *A North-easter: Some look well in it* (1900) she is portrayed as being at one with nature and the elements, as her hair is streaming in the wind and her arms are raised above her head as she succumbs to its strength, whilst maintaining the accepted norms of propriety and decorum. It should be noted that the use of free-flowing hair in the representation of a female is an accepted sign of allowed disorder, and is conventionally an indication of her sexuality.[27] Although sexual disorder is referred to in this depiction of the Gibson Girl, it has a rather Victorian sense of decorum about it. The position of the her arms above her head is echoed in Munch's lithograph *Madonna* (figure 63), which was discussed in chapter 1, and in both cases it alludes to an expression of sexual ecstasy.

The popular image of the Gibson Girl was as an alluring 'ideal' young American girl, and when she died out in the 1910s she was not really replaced until the arrival of the mass produced pin-up girls of the 1930s. The earliest sources for the pin-up can be seen to have evolved, in very simplistic terms, through the development of the printed illustration in Europe and in specific areas of popular art, like cigarette cards, postcards and prints,[28] but, essentially it emerged as an image of popular culture as a result of the ability to mass produce images, plus its close links with advertising and the world of Hollywood have made it an essentially American phenomenon.[29]

Another source for this form of image was the magazine called *Tit-Bits*, which was founded in London in 1881. It featured photographs and drawings of nudes and was classed as a semi-pornographic magazine. By 1900, the publishers realised that the pictures were made more appealing to men if they ascribed the female a name, thereby giving her a personality. As a result their readers were able to extend the fantasy they had with the model and engage in an imaginary dialogue or encounter with her.[30] This was a practice that was taken up by the pin-up producers of the 1930s–60s, as the models who were generally hopeful starlets, were ascribed names and potted biographies.[31]

Perhaps, then, the reason that Hopper ascribed names to his 'characters' in his paintings was to make them more 'real' to him, and to enhance his ability to fantasise about them. It could also be suggested then that although he produced these females to be the objects of male desire, he keeps the enhancement of this desire to himself as he kept the naming of the figures to the privacy of his record book, or they are noted in his wife's diary. Therefore, he held back this additional information about his painted females so that he was able to engage in a private fantasy with them.

The starlets, like Betty Grable, whose image is reproduced in what is probably the most definitive pin-up image (see figure 164), and Marilyn Monroe, who were seeking attention, craving the desire to be noticed, to achieve their goal to become actresses, willingly posed for these pin-up images. The pin-up, not only developed out of the advertising medium but it also became an advert or a brand product in its own right; the subject of which was the particular young starlet in question who was seeking fame. Therefore, these women are not only flaunting their bodies for the sole purpose of attracting the attention of men, but are also advertising themselves as consumable goods. They display themselves in a similar vein to the way that we see the female figures that Hopper placed behind glass or a window, like a shop mannequin. In *New York Office* (figure 77) and *Tables for Ladies* (figure 142), both of these women are placed on display in front of a window and essentially promoting themselves. The pin-up objectified the female body, particularly, as the 'model' was a complete fantasy, with an invented name and biography, in the same way that Hopper does with his female figures in *New York Office* and *Tables for Ladies*. Both the pin-up and Hopper's images can be seen as feeding into the culture of the contemporary movie world, as well as being influenced by it.

The pin-up image is defined essentially as a depiction of a female figure in a provocative and sensual pose. This is an image type that has been described by the English writer, Geoffrey Wagner, as a 'provocative, but proper' way to reveal the female body, consequently one that was morally and socially acceptable, and perceived as all-American, wholesome 'good, clean fun'.[32] The image of the pin-up girl was one of mass culture, and therefore her representation had to be addressed carefully, as she could not be in any way pornographic. She symbolised the perfect American girl; the cheerleader 'type', who was healthy and athletic with a friendly smile and big white teeth.[33] As a result the pose had to be carefully controlled. It was required to be 'inviting, but not seducing' and 'revealing by suggestion while concealing in fact.'[34] This is demonstrated by Betty Grable (figure 164) as she is photographed in a bathing suit that covers, but leaves enough skin showing, in particular her famous legs. The pose is rather coquettish and coy, but displays her sensuous curves around hips and buttocks and her shapely legs.

The women in these pin-up images and Hopper's clothed females are sensuously alluring, but they keep their inner thigh hidden, their navel covered, and only show a limited amount of cleavage. They wear close-fitting outfits which are designed to tantalise by suggestion or inference as is demonstrated by the Betty Grable image and Hopper's female figures like Olga in *Tables for Ladies* (figure 142) and the women in *High Noon* (figure 44), *Summertime* (1943) (figure 165) and *Office at Night* (figure 18). This method of portrayal of women in pin-ups has been described as 'revealing some portion of the feminine anatomy in a manner that is provocative, but proper.'[35] This is equally applicable to Hopper's representation of the females in his mature paintings. Therefore, the importance of the pin-up must be seen within its cultural context and although there is no direct proof that it was an influence upon the way that Hopper portrayed his women, there is much similarity in the way that he perceives the female figure, particularly when she is clothed, and definitely when he places her on display behind a window as in *New York Office* (figure 77) and *Tables for Ladies* (figure 142).

This analogy can also be applied to almost all his clothed solitary females if the picture plane is considered to act as if it is a window on to the world. This is particularly potent if Hopper's paintings are considered akin to movie 'stills'. They function as a part of a perceived narrative that is also completely fictitious. The women function as fantasy females within a fantasy world. As such, they can be seen as symbolic of all females as certain 'types', but they are all essentially illusions. Perhaps the 'types' that he depicts on his canvases can be attributed to an influence of mass culture, from the pin-up or the

movie world, but they do represent a glimpse of the feminine ideal as perceived by the artist. Baudelaire suggested that the notion of 'woman' was as an ideal being, when he said:

> Woman is for the artist in general...Rather she is divinity, a star...a glittering conglomeration of all the graces of nature, condensed into a single being; an object of keenest admiration and curiosity...she is an idol, stupid perhaps, but dazzling and bewitching...Everything that adorns woman that serves to show off her beauty is a part of herself....
>
> No doubt woman is sometimes a light, a glance, an invitation to happiness, sometimes she is just a word.[36]

Baudelaire's words echo the tendency towards misogynism that Hopper expressed at times as a result of his Darwinian beliefs.[37] These beliefs resulted in the objectification and idolization of the image of woman as described by Baudelaire; its result is seen in the pin-up, the Film Noir *femme fatâle* and also in Hopper's female figures. Essentially, these elements of mass culture that filter into Hopper's paintings reduce the female to a symbol; a sex symbol, designed for the gratification of the male artist.

The notion of a sex symbol and her role as one was rather drolly analysed by Marilyn Monroe in one of her last interviews when she said, 'I never quite understood it—this sex symbol. I always thought symbols were things you clashed together. That's the trouble, a sex symbol becomes a thing. I just hate being a thing...' She continued, 'But if I'm going to be a symbol of something, I'd rather have it sex than some of the other things they've got symbols of.'[38]

Her words indicate the polemic of the identification of the female figure as a symbol, or ultimately as just an object. It reduces the female to a comestible item available to be possessed and consumed, as Hopper did with Olga, in *Tables for Ladies* (figure 142). She becomes powerless, and consequently, subject to the will and the possession of the male.

Discussion of a Single Image: *Automat* (1927).

This image (figure 8) is definitive of Hopper's vision of the human existence, in particular that of the female, within the city; in this instance an automat at night. As with many of his paintings, Hopper's representation of Manhattan was at odds with reality. This painting is no exception. It reveals his vision of the silent and alienated world of the city, rather than the accepted loud, busy and populous metropolis of New York City.

In this painting he chose to depict a solitary female seated at a table. She is enclosed and isolated within the space of the interior that Hopper has portrayed on canvas; that of the automat. This is a night scene and he has placed his figure in what should be a social environment, but he has deliberately chosen to paint a solitary figure into his composition. This heightens the poignancy of the effect that Hopper wishes to create with this painting, as she is alienated within her environment and passive to the scrutiny of the viewer.

This woman is trapped and isolated within a social space with the same poignancy that allows Hopper to paint figures trapped within a railroad carriage in *Chair Car* of 1965 (figure 166). The people in *Chair Car* are depicted in a railroad carriage so that one assumes that they are travelling somewhere. However, there is no scenery visible through the windows, just light. It is as if they are travelling through a tunnel of light and although they are allegedly travelling the lack of view beyond the carriage indicates Hopper's opinion that the transient nature of the American culture will not result in a resolution of the human condition. These people, like the woman in *Automat*, cannot escape their fate, and ultimately death. They are condemned to live within the space in which they are depicted for eternity. Hopper has emphasised this in *Chair Car* as there is no handle on the door at the end of the carriage, so they may be able to travel on the train, but they cannot escape from the confinement of the carriage.

The woman in *Automat* (figure 8) is outlined against the darkness outside the window. There is no other life inside the automat, or in the street outside. The viewer observes her as she stares absentmindedly into her cup. Her state of self absorption serves to heighten the sense of her alienation within the scene and within the city as a whole. Hopper seems to have trapped her within the confines of the automat by placing her against the dark background. The lights reflected in the background show that it is a piece of glass. We cannot see through the glass to the city beyond, and it acts as another psychological barrier between the woman and the rest of the world.

Hopper has also placed a psychological barrier between the figure and viewer, as he has placed her on the opposite side of the table to the picture plane. This placement of the furniture clearly separates her from the viewer and contains her within the scene. Hopper has made a poignant point by placing another chair on the opposite side of the table to the young woman which accentuates her isolation by its unoccupied presence.

The only illumination in the painting is that from within the automat, created by the strip lighting on the ceiling, which is reflected in the window, behind the figure. These lights appear to disappear into the distance; but this is a deceptive distance because it is created by a reflection. The implied continuation of the illumination is indicative of the monotony of existence. This is reflected in the title of the painting, *Automat*. It signifies the automated cafeteria where the woman has bought her coffee, but it is also an indirect reference to the automation of the modern world and a criticism of modern life; hence the woman is an automaton.

The woman is confined within the space of the automat by the lighting, as she is placed in an artificially illuminated space and set against the background of darkness from the night. Her confinement is enhanced by the opposition between the darkness of the night and the brightness of the artificial light. Her placement, seated at a table, in the automat also serves to confine her. She is separated from us by the table at which she sits, and caged within the café by the glass of the window. Her face is expressionless, as she looks down into her cup, absorbed in her own thoughts. The fixity of her gaze is reflected in the stiffness of the position of her body at the table.

Hopper has used the lighting in this painting as a dramatic tool, in the manner as would a movie director. He has used a high light source that clearly focuses on the central 'character' in his scene. It not only serves to focus on her but also seems to oppress her. There is a harshness to the electrical light which appears to make the young woman seem more vulnerable in her isolation. It also attacks her from underneath as it reflects off the table top. The lightness of the table top is reflected in her face and heightens the pallor of her skin. Hopper has accentuated this by his use of colour on this focal figure. He has given her attire dark colours and deep tones to contrast explicitly with her pale skin. Her right hand is bare, the left is gloved. And the darkness of that gloved hand contrasts with the pale skin of her face, throat, right hand and legs.

It is interesting that the largest area of the canvas is the large dark colour block behind the female that makes up the window of the automat. This large dark area is like a cavernous abyss which is poised to suck her in. The ceiling strip lights, which are only present by implication, due to their reflection in the window, form a path into this abyss, or indicate to its tunnel-like infinity. The bottom edge of the window frame and the line where the bottom of the wall meets the edge of the floor forms a band across the canvas which encloses the table at which the figure is seated. By placing the furniture thus, it enables Hopper to force the focus onto the figure, as her upper torso is placed against

this area of darkness, or nothingness. The only interesting foil to this is the bowl of fruit that has been placed on the window sill very close to the body of the woman.

The composition of this canvas can be divided into two halves. By taking a diagonal line through the canvas, from the top right of the composition down to the bottom left, two distinct areas of the painting emerge. The top left of the painting is full of strong lines, mainly verticals, which form the background of the composition, and by contrast the bottom right of the painting is softer and mainly curvilinear, and forms the greater part of the foreground of the composition. Hopper has formed curves to soften this part of the composition with the curve of the chair back, the sweep of the rounded table, the cup and saucer, the shape of the hat and the fruit bowl, and even the fruits contained within it. Each curve complements and enhances the others, and serves to create a cocoon of softer edges in the circle of the canvas that contains the woman seated at the table. Each half of the painting serves as a foil to the other.

However, these softer curves can also be seen as forming composition lines which also serve to focus the viewer's gaze in towards the focal point of the painting. A sight line runs through the back of the chair, the table, the cup and saucer, and up to her face which is framed by the curving sweep of her hat. The diagonal force of the reflected strip lights also forge towards the woman. Even the golden railings on the right of the painting, which perhaps hint to a staircase in the corner of the interior space, move in from the right edge of the canvas in her direction.

All the elements that Hopper has exploited within this painting, the structure, the colour, the lighting and the psychological implications focus on the female figure and heighten the isolation of his lone figure. By implication she defines the alienation of all people within the city as perceived by Hopper. This isolation of the human figure is particularly acute because he has placed it within an apparently social space, in this instance an automat.

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[1] G. Levin, *Edward Hopper, The Art and the Artist*, New York, 1980, p.11.
[2] Horn and Hardart Web Site, http://hornandhardart.com/history.htm
[3] Museum of the City of New York Web Site, http://www.mcny.org
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Chapter 7.

Hopper's Depiction of the Theatre and the Movies.

Hopper's treatment of the theatre and the movie theatre are an important part of his vision of the human figure within the city. In fact, Baudrillard saw the movies and the American city as almost synonymous with each other:

> The American city seems to have stepped right out of the movies....to grasp its secret, you should not, then, begin with the city and move inwards towards the screen; you should begin with the screen and move outwards towards the city.[1]

It also indicates the importance of the movie palace in the city and within the American city and society.

It is crucial at this point to establish the type of theatre that Hopper depicted in his paintings. As with the majority of his subject matter he focuses predominantly on the middle-class environments of the modern American city, such as the one he inhabited. Hopper's theatres are not opera houses, they are what can be defined as 'legitimate' theatres of the middle-classes and they were the home of variety performance and vaudeville and straight theatre.[2] Many of these 'legitimate' theatres were taken over from 1905 onwards by Nickelodeons or ran in direct competition with them. Hopper's movie theatres are the lavishly expansive interiors of the Movie Palaces which developed in the 1910s and which were designed to appeal to the middle-classes as family entertainment.[3]

Robert Henri encouraged Hopper to go to the theatre, hoping that it would inspire Hopper to love the same passion and raw liveliness that Henri, and the other members of the Eight, loved in the city.[4] Hopper and his wife were both fans of the theatre and the movies, and in particular Hopper used it as a means of escape when he felt unable to paint.[5] He once told a friend that; 'When I don't feel in the mood for painting I go to the movies for a week or more. I go on a regular movie binge.'[6] However, Hopper did not respond to the theatre, and as a result the city, in the way in which Henri had intended. For Hopper, the theatre and the movies became a symbol of something quite different; Peter Conrad describes it as a 'wistful absence'.[7] Instead of being a part of the raw and passionate city, Hopper's figures retreat to the theatre in search of a play. They go to the theatre or the movies to escape the reality of their daily lives and to seek solace or refuge in the fantasy world within. Peter Conrad terms Hopper's figures as 'characters', and as such, these characters are constantly, and will be eternally, searching for a play, either to

watch, or in which to perform. Hopper has captured his figures within this distinct environment where they are eternally waiting to be taken into the fantasy world offered, yet not able to enjoy the temporary escape that it provides.

Hopper's figures appear to be captured within a single moment which perpetuates this eternal search, as his paintings of the theatre characterise the moments before the performance begins, or during the interval, when there is no action for the figures present to watch or in which to participate. This is compounded by Hopper's painting *The Circle Theater* (1936) (figure 131) as he has depicted the building from the outside. Not only are we excluded from the escape offered within, Hopper has also placed an obstacle between us and the theatre, in the entrance to the subway. The roof of the subway entrance is in front of the lettering so that the name is obscured, all but the 'C' at the beginning an 'E' at the end. Hopper does give a clue to the identity of the building, other than in the title of the painting, as the shop next to the entrance is also entitled 'Circle'(or 'Circle Jewellery').

The Circle Theater is represented at a time when it is closed, as indicated by the closed door to the front. This is thematically therefore in keeping with most of Hopper's other theatre images because it shows the subject at a time when it is least characteristic; the moment before the performance, or as in *The Circle Theater*, when it is closed and empty. There is none of the usual hustle and bustle that would normally be associated with an open theatre. There are just two figures in the painting; a male standing at newspaper stand, round the corner and a female looking at the advertising board. The fantasy world of the theatre is, for the moment, also closed to these figures.

In this painting Hopper tantalises us with the escapism that we desire, but which is out of reach because we are outside and our view of it is obstructed. Like the people in his paintings we desire to go inside to escape the city, and therefore escape reality. The movie palace and the theatre are refuges from the city, and reality. However, because Hopper paints a time before the performance, or during the interval, he is admitting that this refuge is false and that there is no real escape from the condition of the city. What we see in Hopper's paintings of the theatre is a paradox of reality and unreality, and we can begin to question how we define 'reality', particularly within his paintings.

Hopper uses the colour red in this painting to draw the viewer's eye into the painting, and towards the entrance of the theatre. The colour in this painting is built up by using dramatic contrasts; most of the buildings and surrounding area are depicted in pale blue

and green, with white, but Hopper draws the focus of the attention to the centre of the painting by using black and red. There are touches of red, on shop signs, traffic lights and advertising boards, which lead into the almost hidden wording of the name of the theatre. The use of the dark colours, leading to black, has the same effect. Hopper gradually draws the viewer's attention through gradation of the dark colours through the shape of the subway entrance, which helps give a triangular formation to the composition of the bottom half of the painting; the subway entrance, and the theatre sign behind it, are the apex to the geometry of the composition.

Hopper has carefully reproduced the lines and shapes of the buildings surrounding the theatre, and has been attracted by the way the lines and colours lead into the centre of the composition towards the entrance of the theatre. The concentration on the geometry, line and colour in this painting is the focal interest for the artist. Although Hopper placed two figures into this composition, unusually they are not the focus here. In fact the lack of figures, considering the subject matter, is more crucial. This gives the painting less of a narrative feel than some of Hopper's other paintings on the subject of the theatre, as this work is primarily concerned with the architecture of the scene and the angularity of the shapes within the composition, rather than being a psychological study of the figure, or figures, placed within the social space of the theatre.

Whenever questioned about the narrative content of his paintings, Hopper would always deny that any specific narrative had been intended. For example, he concluded his description of the painting *Office at Night* (1940) (figure 18) by saying that, 'Any more than this, the picture will have to tell, but I hope it will not tell any obvious anecdote, for none is intended.'[8] Even accepting this denial of intended narrative included in his paintings, the actual paintings seem to indicate otherwise. They continually lend themselves to being read in the same manner as movie 'stills'; a captured moment from within a greater period of action or narrative. They could also be considered in the same way as the illustrations that Hopper executed in his career as a commercial artist, when he made illustrations for novels and short stories, such as [*A Theater Entrance*] (c.1906–10) (figure 167), [*At the Theater*] (c.1916–22) (figure 168), and [*A Couple Dancing*] (c.1917–20) (figure 169). These illustrations appear to represent a 'snapshot' of a greater action or narrative that is taking place, and having suggested the strength of the influence of his early illustrative work on his mature paintings, throughout, it is possible to infer the presence of the same type of implied narrative.

The two illustrations [*A Theater Entrance*] and [*At the Theater*], in particular, seem to open themselves, when seen in isolation, to a greater discussion of their narrative content. In [*A Theater Entrance*], two young people are depicted engaged in a conversation outside a building, which the title tells us is a theatre. The scene is ambiguous when seen out of context, but evokes the same tantalizing desire in the viewer to deliberate upon the nature of the conversation between the couple. [*At the Theater*] also contains a similar ambiguous narrative quality, as, Hopper has drawn three fashionable young people, two male and a female, seated in a theatre box. They all appear to be looking out to the left of the scene. This gaze directed off to the left suggests that they are looking towards the stage and are watching the performance. Not only do both these illustrations indicate the use of an implied, albeit ambiguous, narrative that will become a key element of Hopper's paintings, but they also predict the nature of his portrayal of the theatre or the movies as a later choice of subject matter. This choice of theme for his paintings allows Hopper to explore the notion of 'looking' and of 'visual consumption'. This idea has been considered in much greater detail in chapter 6 on Hopper's depictions of the restaurant.

These early examples of Hopper's use of the theatre as a theme in his work indicates the play he exploits between the sense of looking at the performance of the play, or film and then the notion of the figures portrayed in the illustrations themselves becoming subject to the same scrutiny. This is particularly pertinent when considering the female figures in the image particularly within this thematic context, as they could be seen to engage with the viewer in the same way that an actress does with her audience. In a sense his figures, are themselves performing a role on the canvas for the benefit of the viewer.

Hopper's penchant, however unintentional, for painting scenes that lend themselves to a dramatic or narrative analysis may be connected to his enthusiasm for the theatre and the movies, an enthusiasm that was nurtured by Henri,[9] and so it is also quite possible that Hopper's interest in the plays of Henrik Ibsen (1828–1906) was fuelled by him as well, as he was noted to admire Ibsen for portraying 'a state of life and questions as to the future of the race'.[10] This notion of manifest destiny becomes complicit with Hopper's images particularly with those executed towards the latter part of his life that seem to ponder on the inevitability of death, like *Sun in an Empty* Room (1963) (figure 3), for example. Henri also described Ibsen as 'supreme order in verbal expression' in his book *The Art Spirit*.[11]

Hopper made both a drawing and an illustration relating to Ibsen. Both are concerned with the problems of spiritual being, an ethos which can be applied to the work of both Hopper and Ibsen. Hopper's drawing (figure 170) and illustration (figure 171) are of the same subject. One, (figure 170) is possibly the preparatory work for the other (figure 171). In both instances there are several figures; a couple, of whom the female regards an event or scene that is unseen by the viewer, through opera glasses, and the main focus of the definitions, a lone male figure. In both examples the moment of representation is before the performance, or during the interval, as all the other seats in the auditorium are empty. Therefore the woman is not only observing something unseen by the viewer through her opera glasses, but is focused on something when there is 'nothing' to see. In the drawing the solitary male also stares toward the same unseen area of interest as the female, but in the illustration he looks towards the picture plane. He does not make eye contact with the viewer; his eyes seem glazed, as if he is not looking at anything at all, but absorbed in self contemplation.

Ibsen pondered on the human condition and the nature of human isolation in his writing, as Hopper did in his painting, and concluded that 'Castles in the air – they are so easy to take refuge in. And easy to build, too'.[12] Hopper's isolated male in these Ibsen related images reflects this sentiment. The man has taken refuge in the introspective, private world of self contemplation, and as such, is representative of all of Hopper's human figures. This is his own castle in the air. Hopper and his wife saw a performance of Ibsen's *Master Builder* (1892) on December 15, 1925 directed by Eva Le Gallienne.[13]

Hopper's admiration for Ibsen must have also found parallels with his work, particularly his use of symbols within what is seemingly a context of realism. Perhaps Ibsen's style of writing could be considered an influence on Hopper's creation of realist oil paintings which are imbued with implied meaning. Hopper would have also enjoyed the confrontation between Solness, the Master Builder and God, when he said 'in future I too will be a free Master Builder. In my own sphere. As Thou in Thine. I will never build churches for Thee again. Only homes for human beings,'[14] as Hopper had periods in his life when he 'mistrusted religion'.[15]

Hopper even pursued his passion for the theatre when he was in Paris. His letters to his mother, who was also a theatre enthusiast, recalled his visits to the opera. He also saw Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* at the Odéon in Paris, as well as the celebrated French actor Contant-Benoit Coquelin as 'Cyrano de Bergerac.'[16] When Hopper married, he found in his new wife, a former actress and fellow theatre enthusiast. Together they would often

visit the theatre and go to the movies. As Hopper frequented the middle-class environments of the modern city, so he patronised middle-class legitimate theatre and the 'Movie Palace'. He did not, as far as I am aware attend the opera, and he and his wife always sat in the cheapest seats. The Hoppers patronised the Theatre Guild, which developed out of the Washington Square Players, with whom Jo had acted before her marriage.[17] This had two effects on Hopper's painting. Firstly, it supplied him with the theatre as subject matter, and secondly, it influenced his composition. Here, I wish to look specifically at Hopper's interpretation of the theatre and the movies as subject matter, but also consider the influence that the particular nature of each had in his compositions; the influence of stage lighting, set design and also the cinematic devices such as scene cropping and unusual angles of vision (which may be found across his oeuvre). The latter issues are particularly pertinent in relation to the influence of Film Noir in Hopper's paintings.

Most of Hopper's paintings of the theatre define a moment before the performance begins, or during the interval. There are exceptions to this; namely *New York Movie* (1939) (figure 9), *The Circle Theater* (1936) (figure 131) and *The Girlie Show* (1941) (figure 4). Hopper's earliest painting on the subject of the theatre is a *grisaille* dating from 1902–4 (figure 172). Hopper has placed a solitary figure in his theatre scene, one seated in an empty theatre in front of an empty stage, or possibly a blank early movie screen. This early image typifies Hopper's paintings of the subject, and is in direct contrast to paintings of the same subject by his contemporaries, like John Sloan. Sloan in his *Movies, Five Cents* (1907) (figure 173) is in complete contrast to Hopper's focus on the individual, quiet concentration of the theatregoers, and was more interested in the lively and spontaneous interaction of the audience with their surroundings and entertainment.

Sloan noted in his dairy of June 29, 1907, that he 'went into a five cent show of kinematograph pictures on 6th Avenue. Think it might be a good thing to paint.'[18] He allows the viewer to see that it is the interior of a movie theatre as the screen is visible in the top left of the composition. He has also noted the ethnic mix of society, something that Hopper almost completely ignores throughout his career, as Sloan included an African American in the bottom right of the painting. This scene is a social and anecdotal one, as he has placed a sleeping figure in the centre and another woman looks out of the image to meet the viewer's gaze. It is much closer to the representation of the social side of the city prescribed by Henri.

Sloan's *Movies, Five Cents* (figure 173) depicts the interior of a Nickelodeon, which was the precursor to the movie palace; named after the entrance fee of 5 cents or a nickel.[19] Merritt defines the Nickelodeon as 'a pioneer movie house...and a national institution that was quickly turned into a state of mind,'[20] which created a permanent home for movies as they were generally established in existing buildings, such as barber shops, or vaudeville theatres.[21] They attracted both a working- and middle-class audience and were acknowledged as 'democracy's theater' and included a variety of 'acts' which included a one reel moving picture.[22] They attracted a mass audience that continued to support the movie palaces that came to be established during the 1910s.

The popularity of the Nickelodeon amongst the American working- and middle-classes made it a commercial success and gradually the price of the entry ticket was raised to ten cents, which eventually propagated the movie theatre as a middle-class phenomenon.[23] By 1910 there were over 10,000 Nickelodeons across the United States which were patronised by over 26 million Americans (26% of the population) each week. As the Nickelodeon became increasingly popular as a form of middle-class family entertainment audience sizes rose and by 1914 they numbered at least 49 million American each week.[24]

In 1910, for example, more than 25% of the population of New York City attended the Nickelodeon on a weekly basis.[25] In response to this popularity and the rising number of the middle-class families attracted to the Nickelodeon, and to accommodate the developments in the moving picture, or movie, new, larger and more exotically decorated buildings were created to house this growing audience. In Manhattan, for example, in 1913 the Regent Movie Palace was built to seat 2460, in 1914, the Strand which seated 3500, they were followed by the Rialto in 1916 (seating 1900), the Rivoli in 1917 (seating 2100), the Capitol in 1919 (seating 5300) and in 1927 the Roxy which could accommodate 6200 people. These Movie Palaces superseded the Nickelodeon and featured a organ, an orchestra, a chorus and/or opera singers, as well as ushers to show the patrons to their seats, and lavishly decorated interiors.[26] The Movie Palace became a middle-class domain. The working-classes could no longer afford the ticket prices, which could go as high as two dollars for a reserved seat, neither were they permitted by their long working hours (on average 60 per week) to spend three hours at a time in a movie theatre.[27]

In contrast to Sloan's 1907 depiction of the Nickelodeon, Hopper's paintings of the movie theatre are based on the predominantly middle-class spaces of the Movie Palace.

Two on the Aisle (1927) (figure 144) is Hopper's first major painting on the subject of the movie palace or theatre. The painting features three figures; a couple in the process of seating themselves at the front of the auditorium and a solitary female in a box at the side of the auditorium. The viewer is placed at the back of the auditorium looking down the slope of the theatre towards the stage. The scene that Hopper has most likely represented is the period, before the performance; a couple, early arrivals in the theatre, are in the process of removing their coats and seating themselves. The young woman in the box has already removed her coat and seated herself, and is seen absorbed with what is, presumably the programme.

Hopper uses colour to great effect in this painting, just as he did in *Circle Theater* (figure 131). He has divided the composition into two halves with his choice of palette. The left side of the painting, which includes the stage, with the dark curtain drawn across it, and the rows of dark fabric covered seats, has been notionally separated from the right side of the painting by a predominantly dark colour range. The couple that are seating themselves are as much a part of this colour composition as the fixtures and fittings of the auditorium as they are attired in dark outfits; the woman wears a dark dress and the man is clothed in a black dinner jacket. This dark and sombre tonal choice is in direct contrast to the lighter, brighter choice of colour on the right side of the painting.

The lone young woman in *Two on the* Aisle is the focus of the lighter side of the painting; she becomes the central focus of this section. Hopper has composed this side of the painting with tones of white, through to grey, and vivacious reds. She is directly linked to the décor with her pale skin and her bright red dress. Hopper has again used red as a central colour to direct the focus. The architecture of the auditorium assists the colour of the painting in creating this notional divide down the centre of the composition. The edge of the stage in the top centre of the painting divides the dark seating area from the boxes.

Hopper has represented the more expensive seating in the boxes in brighter tones than the more common place seating in the stalls. The choice of red gives the boxes, and therefore the woman seated there, a sense of greater opulence, luxury and general indulgence. He then has portrayed the stalls in drab and ordinary colours, indicating the less exclusive nature of the seating. The Hoppers, themselves, were extremely frugal and they almost always bought the cheapest seats in the balcony, a practice they

continued even when Hopper's earnings from painting sales had increased substantially.[28]

As the artist has made such a clear distinction in his composition between the seating areas perhaps it could be argued that the figures he has placed in these areas are also to be considered as part of this distinction. In many of his paintings Hopper appears to be stating his observations on the nature of human interaction and solitude, particularly in relation to couples. Therefore the placement of the woman in the box, and her association with all that is bright, luxurious and comfortably contemplative is as deliberate as the placement of the couple in the drab and ordinary stalls.

The young woman on the right of the painting could reflect Hopper's preference for the quiet solitudinous life of his taciturn bachelor days, whereas the couple represent the awkward, drab and not least the thrifty nature of married life. Could then, the lone young female represent for Hopper the beauty and freedom of unencumbered youth? This could be his perception of marriage after three years. This woman seems relaxed and at peace with her solitary state as she is absorbed in what she is reading, and yet the couple are depicted as ill at ease. This is accentuated as Hopper has represented them in the process of removing their coats and so they are posed in awkward positions as they struggle to remove their outer garments before sitting down.

This uncomfortable positioning of their bodies appears to be deliberate, as it serves to accentuate the self-conscious and awkward nature of the relationship between them. Hopper has indicated this as neither of them meets the gaze of the other and they both seemingly look at nothing. The woman is concerned with smoothing her coat over the back of her seat, and the man looks above her head into the unseen area of the auditorium out of the picture frame. The physical distance that he has placed between this couple is characteristic of the psychological distance that Hopper sought to suggest that there is between them in their relationship.

If this reading of these characters is assumed then the choice of the colours in this painting is all the more significant; not only has the artist divided the composition by his use of opposing bright and dark colour tones but he has used them to highlight the nature of the relationships between them. The solitary female is bathed in warm, rich tones and the alienated couple struggle with their coats, themselves, and their relationship in the cold, dark and drab tones that Hopper has used on the left of the composition. Perhaps

again, we could assume that the middle-aged couple represented in the midst of their dissociated relationship represent Jo and Edward Hopper.

The moment that Hopper chooses to portray here is the 'quiet before the storm.' These are the first of the audience to arrive and seat themselves quietly in the large and presently peaceful auditorium. He has placed his characters in a still and quiet setting, one which will become full of bustle and noise as the majority of the audience arrive and settle themselves. They are placed in a setting that is conducive to contemplation, due to the empty and quiet nature of the theatre at this time, and as such is endorsed by the deep attention of the young woman in the box towards the programme.

The theatre is generally perceived to be a place of noise, human hustle and bustle and atmosphere, like the auditorium depicted in Sloan's *Movies, Five Cents* (figure 173), yet none of these elements are present in Hopper's painting. He has taken his theatre auditorium out of reality and placed it within a silent and stationary cocoon. He has represented a 'reality', but at the same time it is the antithesis of 'reality'. He has mirrored the experience of the theatre, or the movies, and created a silent parody of the original, this is especially potent when it is considered that movies were in fact 'silent' until 1928.[29]

In the scene, the viewer experiences the same false reality that would be seen on a stage or a movie screen, and yet the scene portrayed in all cases is not a actuality at all, just an imitation. It is human nature to 'see' things in relation to human experience, and this is the case with both Hopper's painting and the theatre and the movies. We 'see' in relation to ourselves, in terms of real or unreal. The theatre or the movie creates a false 'reality', the security of the familiar or real where there is none. His painting is also an illusion; it also creates this sense of falsity. However, this illusion is double edged in his paintings of the theatre because he depicts a place that is synonymous with this idea of false 'reality' or illusion. So Hopper paints a composition that is a false 'reality' depicting a false 'reality'.

Peter Conrad claims that the theatre acts as a metaphor for Hopper's city because 'it renders experience unreal' and 'abstracts you from yourself'.[30] This is what we see the figures in Hopper's paintings of the theatre desiring. They have retreated to the scene of the fantasy world to escape themselves and the reality of their lives, just as any movie or theatre-goer does. The only difference is that in Hopper's world the figures can never escape, as they find themselves trapped in an eternal limbo.

Thus far I have outlined the importance of the theatre and the movie theatre as subject matter for Hopper's paintings and now I aim to demonstrate the influence that the theatre, and the movies, and in particular the cinematic genre of Film Noir, had upon his paintings. Film Noir is a problematic genre of film in a similar way to Hopper's painting; both defy a straight definition of style. Borde and Chaumeton in their 1955 essay, *Towards a Definition of Film Noir*,[31] claim that Film Noir was a cinematic response to a particular time and place. In this work they laid down several distinct areas that they considered to be definitive characteristics. Hopper's paintings and movies of Film Noir share many of these distinctive characteristics in common. Some of these characteristic have already been discussed, where they are pertinent to other thematic areas in Hopper's painting.

The general boundaries of this film genre are seen as beginning with *The Maltese Falcon* in 1941 and ending with *Touch of Evil* in the mid 1950s.[32] The particular genre of films made in this period, which generally portray the dark world of the city streets at night and the crime and corruption upon them, were born out of a combination of a delayed reaction to the Great Depression of the 1930s which was halted by the Second World War, and a disillusionment in response to the war and post-war period.[33] The films resulting from this contemporary dissociated mood have definitive characteristics, and the potent points are discussed here in relation to Hopper's paintings.

Perhaps the primary defining quality of Film Noir is the presence of crime and on one level Hopper's paintings do not seem to have this in common—at least not explicitly. I have already noted in chapter 3 and 4 the probable inspiration for the 1942 painting *Nighthawks* from Hemingway's short story *The Killers* (1927).[34] In this painting, his placement of the figures within the night setting intimates the presence of danger just beyond the confines of the canvas. Hopper does not portray the elements of 'blackmail, accusation, theft, or drug trafficking' or even murder, that 'set the stage for a narrative where life and death are at stake.'[35] However, the ambiguous narrative qualities possessed by his paintings can be seen to refer to them by implication, as is perhaps demonstrated by *Nighthawks* (figure 14).

Both Film Noir and Hopper's paintings contain a nihilistic element. Borde and Chaumeton wrote that 'sordidly or bizarrely, death always come at the end of a tortured journey. In every sense of the word a *noir* film is a film of death'.[36] This can also be applied to Hopper's paintings when considering his entire body of work. His solitary

figures and alienated couples live out their tortured journey through life on canvas ultimately ending in death in the paintings executed before his own death in 1967. Works like *Sun in an Empty Room* (1963) (figure 3), for example, represent the death at the end of the journey; a journey travelled by the figures in the painting, as well as himself. His paintings could be described as paintings of death, particularly when they culminate in images such as that in *Sun in an Empty Room*.

Due to the movie 'still' quality that Hopper's images have, an implied narrative can be perceived in the works, as a result the figures that he portrays on canvas can be read by the viewer as 'characters'. In this sense the potential characters that Hopper paints have similarities to those that are considered characteristic of Film Noir, particularly in the case of those characters portrayed in the films as the victims. These characters are ambiguous, as they are difficult to define, they blur the boundaries between who is a victim and who is not; who is deserving of the viewer's sympathy or who is not. These so-called 'victims' are not totally innocent themselves, like the character Walter Huff, the insurance salesman, in *Double Indemnity* (1944). The screen play for this movie was adapted from the short story called *Three of a Kind*, by James M. Cain (1892–1977), by Raymond Chandler and the director Billy Wilder and shows the decline of the young insurance salesman as he succumbs to the power of Mrs. Phyllis Dietrichson, the *femme fatâle* (see figure 174). Consequently Huff is destroyed at the end of the film, as Film Noir is subject to the old adage that 'crime does not pay'.[37]

This is one reason why the private detective became a popular image of Film Noir as he crossed the boundaries between what is perceived to be good or bad. He did not represent the police, so he is not totally good, but neither is he subject to the bribery and corruption that is portrayed in Film Noir within the police force, indicated by the character of the Inspector in *The Asphalt Jungle* (1950) The Private detective, or P.I., is a dangerous, yet alluring character. He walks mid-way between the lawful society and the criminal underworld. He is unscrupulous but will put himself at risk, on the side of right and justice in the end. This type of character was typified by the Film Noir roles of the actor Humphrey Bogart, particularly his characters Sam Spade, Rick Blaine and Philip Marlowe (see figure 175), and is reflected in Hopper's painting *Nighthawks* (figure 14). The male seated at the counter beside the sole female figure in the painting, is representative of this dangerous hero-type character who treads the fine line between the lawful and the lawless and whose greatest weakness is the *femme fatâle*.

The *femme fatâle* is not only a defining characteristic of Film Noir, but also of Hopper's mature oil paintings. In Film Noir, the female character is central to the intrigue of the film and are defined by their overt sexuality. They are represented as desirable, yet dangerous to the male characters in the film.[38] These are the women that Hopper depicts in paintings such as *Nighthawks* and the 'wise tramp'[39] in *A Woman in the Sun* (1961) (figure 43). These females are defined by their sexual power and the men by the relative success they have in being able to extricate themselves from the powerful lures of these women.

In films such as *Double Indemnity*, the character of Huff, the insurance salesman, is completely dominated by the *femme fatâle* (see figure 174). She disables him completely with her sexual allure. The males that Hopper depicts within his works are not generally the Humphrey Bogart clones that succumb to the sexual wiles of the *femme fatâle* but eventually manage to free themselves without being destroyed. Hopper's males are anguished, tortured and alienated by their experience with the *femme fatâle*, and they are left crushed by their impending or actual psychological destruction as a result of their liaison. This sense could be defined by the male figures in paintings such as *Summer in the City* (figure 47) and *Excursions into Philosophy* (figure 11). These dissociated and alienated males are the victims of the *femme fatâle* by implication or by their depicted dejection which is described by their 'post-coital melancholy', as in *Summer in the City* (figure 47).

The *femme fatâle* is described as a new type of woman, she is manipulative and as 'hard bitten as her environment'.[40] She is defined by Hopper as the figure in paintings like *A Woman in the Sun* (figure 43), where she is portrayed as harshly as her environment by the light that weighs down upon her. This is partly acknowledged by Hopper's description of her as a 'wise tramp'. He clearly refers to her overt sexual nature but, also to her 'wise-ness'. This word, 'wise', due to Hopper's Darwinian based chauvinistic tendencies, probably indicates her worldly-wise-ness, or her independence and her ability to use her attributes to manipulate and control the male through the use of her sexuality, rather than intelligence.[41] What is also interesting in relation to Hopper's depiction of females is that Borde and Chaumeton suggest that although the *femme fatâle* is defined by her sexual power, that she is probably frigid.[42]

This finds parallels with Hopper's female figures that were discussed in chapter 1, particularly in relation to his drawings of his wife, indicating the sexual tension between them. Perhaps Hopper felt a parallel between these potentially frigid, yet sexually

demonstrative and powerfully independent women of the Film Noir genre and the females that he depicted. It could be argued that the sexual tension implied on the canvas is of a biographical nature. Perhaps he recognised a parallel between the promise of the *femme fatâle* and her potential frigidity and his wife, an essence that he captured in *Josie lisant un journal* (c.1935) (figure 52), where he refers to her sexuality, and one that Jo Hopper reveals in her diary entries that she felt she was unable to provide for him.

The treatment of the female figure in Film Noir is overtly sexual and so it can be argued that this sense is present in Hopper's female figures too. Both in Film Noir, and Hopper's paintings, she is portrayed for the gratification of the male viewer, and Krutnik has maintained that the sexual objectification of the female is employed as a strategy within Film Noir.[43] This is also what occurs with the overtly sexual figures in Hopper's paintings; they are aggressively subjected to the implied presence of the male gaze. This is most apparent when the woman is placed behind a window, or glass, as with *Nighthawks* (figure 14), and *New York Office* (figure 77), or when she courts this male attention as suggested by the solitary female figure in *High Noon* (1949) (figure 44), where the she stands in the doorway partially exposing her body, revealing enough to suggest that she is naked underneath the blue robe, or in *Summertime* (1943) (figure 165) where Hopper has placed the light so that it falls on her skirt so that it reveals the sensual shape of her legs under the material.

The potential danger of the *femme fatâle* has already been discussed in relation to Hopper's nudes and the notional similarities they have with Munch's female images which exude death and destruction. There are other reasons for this type of representation in both Film Noir and Hopper's paintings of this period other than an underlying misogynism, and this is partly due to the changing roles of women in the post-war era. Perhaps this is why Film Noir has been seen as an allegory of post-war 1940s America.[44]

The Second World War period saw women leaving domesticity behind and abandoning their traditional roles as the nurturing female as they entered all areas of the American workforce to keep production and manufacturing going, particularly in industry, during a time when the male employees were absent while serving their country. They were openly encouraged to do so by the government, who used the fictional character 'Rosie the Riveter' in their propaganda campaigns.[45] This period of employment for women allowed them to question their role in society. Most women happily relinquished their

employment after the war allowing the war veterans to return to their jobs and were again encouraged in this action by the Eisenhower administration of the late 1940s and early 1950s.[46] The effect this period had on society was that women started to realise the potential that they had in the work place and the desire to work outside the domestic environment of the home. Many returning veterans were unable to find employment and saw the temporary female workforce as being to blame for this. Therefore, the dominant and manipulative *femme fatâle* is seen as defining the fear of this new type of female by the American male in this post-war period. It is perhaps why the *femme fatâle* is often destroyed and replaced at the end of the film by the nurturing mother figure to reinstate the status quo.[47]

The overwhelming sentiment and perhaps the most distinctive characteristic of Film Noir is that its aim is to create an atmosphere of alienation.[48] The sense of alienation in Hopper's paintings is overwhelming, whether he intended the effect or not, and both his paintings and Film Noir suggest that the cause of the alienation is as a result of female sexuality.[49] Perhaps his depictions of the theatre and the movies demonstrate this point most strongly, as this sense of alienation both in Film Noir and in Hopper's paintings is most poignantly felt where the human figure is placed in isolation within a public space. Film Noir heroes roam the city at night at the mercy of the *femme fatâle,* searching for salvation, finding only confirmation of their state of alienation. Hopper's figures are caged within the city space depicted on his canvas; his male characters can never escape the draw of the *femme fatâle*, and they are all isolated and alienated within the downward spiral of their destruction.

It is not only characteristics which Hopper's paintings share with Film Noir, but also its style. Some writers on the genre of Film Noir maintain that to classify it as a reaction to sociological explanations such as 'post-war disillusionment', 'fear of the bomb' and modern alienation are not far reaching enough and do not define Film Noir adequately.[50] In fact it is claimed that:

> the characteristic Film Noir moods of claustrophobia, paranoia, despair, and nihilism constitute a world view that is expressed not through the films' terse, elliptical dialogue, nor through their confusing, often insoluble plots, but ultimately their remarkable style.[51]

This is equally applicable to Hopper's paintings.

The most definitive element of Film Noir is that the films are in black and white; Hopper's oil paintings are of course in colour. However, there are two etchings by

Hopper that emphatically link his work and the genre of Film Noir. They are *Night Shadows* (figure 176) and *Night in the Park* (figure 177) both of 1921. In them he explores the notion of alienation from modern American urban life and as such these works are a precursor to images of a similar theme in his oil paintings. Both etchings are of nocturnal scenes inhabited by a solitary figure. These solitary males either sit reading the paper under a street lamp, as in *Night in the Park* (figure 177), as if waiting to meet someone, or walk the lonely *noir* streets of the city, as in *Night Shadows* (figure 176). In *Night Shadows* the perspective of the bird's-eye view heightens the mystery of the ordinary and essentially allows us to question the motives of the unseen viewer looking down on the scene.[52] Although both these images both date from 1921 and predate the genre of Film Noir by twenty years, they serve as a precursor to this *noir* style, both in Hopper's paintings and in the cinematic genre. The black and white tonality of these etchings adds to their intensity, and as a result could be story board images from the plot of a Film Noir movie. The significance of these etchings could also be seen as a defining influence on his oil paintings for the reasons already stated, but also because Hopper also acknowledged the significance of his etchings when he said, 'After I took up etching, my paintings seemed to crystallize.'[53]

Like the protagonists of Film Noir, Hopper's painting is more interested in 'style' than 'theme'.[54] Many critics, like Levin, have approached Hopper's work from a thematic point of view, but this is limiting and does not allow for a full and enriching view of his work. The aim of Hopper's work is stylistic rather than thematic; the themes have occurred as a result of Hopper's representing his own life on canvas and the life that he experienced around him. In this sense we can distinguish the Film Noir style within his paintings.

The illumination that Hopper uses in his paintings is also reminiscent of the low key lighting used in Film Noir. This is a distinctive form of lighting devised by Film Noir. The usual form of film illumination is made up of three types, called 'key light', 'fill light' and 'back light'. 'Key light' is composed of a primary light source directed on to the main character, usually from high and to one side of the camera. This is very similar in essence to the technique used by artists since the Renaissance. 'Fill light' is created by a soft, or diffused or indirect light that 'fills in' the shadows created by the 'key light', and the 'back light' is a direct light shining onto the actor from behind, which creates interesting highlights, and emphasises the form of the actor by defining him from the background.

Directors use, and have used, a combination of these to create the varying effects that we see in films. The dominant trend in the period of the late thirties and early forties, just before the main era of Film Noir, was to use less 'key light' in ratio to the 'fill light' to create a softer appearance to the faces of the actors. This popular form of 'high-key lighting' softened the harsh shadows created by the 'key light' and gave a heightened sense of reality. By contrast, Film Noir, used the opposite form of illumination to create heightened shadowing across the movie scene. In this 'low-key lighting', the ratio of 'key light' to 'fill light' is great. As a result, the film is full of rich black shadows that hide faces, rooms and buildings; they allow the familiar to become unfamiliar. As an extension of this the motivations, and the 'characters' of the figures on screen, are in shadow and darkness, which is imbued with the mysterious and the unknown.

The actors in Film Noir may play a scene silhouetted against an illuminated background, or play it totally in shadow; this is something that Hopper uses in his compositions. In Film Noir, the characters predominantly exist in the world of the city after dark. Their movement in and out of the shadows enhances this sense even in an interior setting. Although *Nighthawks* (figure 14) could perhaps be seen as Hopper's definitive Film Noir image, where the figures are illuminated in the interior of the night café, silhouetted against the darkness of the night outside. The female in *New York Movie* (figure 9) defines this Film Noir use of lighting. She plays her role in the dim illumination coming from the entrance to the auditorium and she is silhouetted against the shadows of the dark auditorium.

Both Hopper and Film Noir use a notable sense of *mise-en-scène* in their composition. This is simply the process of cutting of characters off the edge of the scene or filming two characters together off centre. This is a ploy that Hopper uses frequently to unsettle and disorient the viewer. This technique is all about the view point for the scene or the painting. By cutting the edge of the scene off the edge of the canvas or the film, so that it creates odd angles and positions it disorientates and alienates the figures in the scene or image, and the viewer. Hopper is a master at this. On occasions he cuts half a character off the edge of the canvas, or place two seemingly central characters off centre which distorts the accepted balance of the painting, creating an unsettling sensation.

In *Chop Suey* (figure 68), he deliberately cut a female figure off the edge of the composition. The only part of her that remains in the image is her face, which with its white or pallid colouring appears on the edge of the image like a ghostly apparition. He also applies this to the focal female figure in *New York Movie* (figure 9), where he has

deliberately placed this woman over to the right of the composition so as to enhance her alienated position in relation to the false sanctity of the movie, the outside world and in effect within modern America.

This relationship in Hopper's paintings with the cinematic genre of Film Noir seems to indicate a negative view of the city and in particular his portrayal of the human figure within it, especially the female. We get a sense that his characters are oppressed and are afraid of being obliterated by the city. To counteract this, the idea of 'reality' can be seen as a mask. For example, just as people give themselves a 'false front' to either project a particular image of themselves to others, or to protect themselves from others, Hopper's characters, act in just the same way when they are placed alongside others in a painting; this operates both in private interiors and public spaces. His portrayal of women within this thematic area, particularly with the parallels that his work has to the genre of Film Noir, is synonymous with the emblematic *femme fatâle*. This ability to see them within the terms of the cinematic *femme fatâle* imbues them with a deeper significance, demonstrating their ability to operate on more than one level. They are synonymous with the contemporary male paranoia of the period of the 1940s and the fear of the sexual allure of the female that resented her perceived growing independence and assurance of her position within society.[55]

Discussion of a Single Image–New York Movie (1939).

Having said that most of Hopper's paintings on the subject of the movie or theatre reveal a time before or after the performance in *New York Movie* (1939) (figure 9), Hopper has unusually painted a movie auditorium while the picture is showing. Although we are aware that there are figures in the audience watching the film, the artist has focussed our attention on the usherette who stands at the right-hand side of the auditorium. She leans against the wall, bored, with her head resting on her hand. The movie is playing, but she does not watch; she looks to the floor instead, in solitary contemplation. She, like Hopper, realises the false nature of the escape. The enticement of the fantasy world is no longer interesting because she has seen it, or experienced it, too many times before.

This young woman is central to this painting. She typifies the sense of *ennui* that is portrayed by many of Hopper's figures and the psychological isolation that is endemic in his paintings, and as such she represents the alienation of the human within modern America. She is emblematic of the depression and dissociation felt by all Hopper's figures, particularly as she is depicted in an environment, the movie theatre, that should provide a welcome distraction, or enjoyment of the fantasy world, temporarily at least.

She cannot find solace in the fantasy world of the movie and actually seems marginalized by it, as she is neither within it, nor totally excluded. Her placement in the movie theatre is key, as she is not enticed by the film that is playing on the screen, and she is cut off from it by her position; but she is also excluded from the reality of the world outside, again, by her position at the bottom of the entrance/exit stairs to the auditorium.

The position of this young woman as she leans against the wall allows Hopper to explore the underlying relationship between the subject of the painting and the image itself. The subject can be defined clearly as the interior of a New York movie theatre, in which Hopper has positioned a central female figure, who, to borrow Pollock's analogy, is the spectacle offered to the viewer of the painting.[56] Yet, unlike the examples of Mary Cassatt's work that Pollock uses in her article, *Lydia in a Loge, Wearing a Pearl Necklace* (1879) (figure 178) and *At The Opera* (c.1879) (figure 179), Hopper's female is painted in a way that makes her seem more problematic. This usherette is not engaging with anyone or anything, unlike Cassatt's two females, one who seems to be engaging with her fellow companions in the Loge, and the other who watches the action on stage through her opera glasses. Hopper's usherette is alienated within her environment. She is uninterested in the film, and her surroundings and so her introspection gives greater depth to the psychological aspects of the work and as a result she is unaware that she has become the object of the gaze of the viewer. Consequently the gaze upon her seems more intrusive as it intrudes upon her private world of self contemplation.

The other less significant figures are painted in dark tones which give the impression that they are merging in with the upholstery of the movie theatre seating. Hopper has created the effect that they have become a part of the movie theatre; they are absorbed by the fantasy world of the movie theatre and the movie that it is showing, for the duration of the film anyway. In the finished painting these minor figures in the darkness seem to be painted in a free and in a less defined manner that other areas of the painting around them and yet his preparatory drawings indicate the careful planning of the female that can just be made out in the darkness of the auditorium (figure 180). Jo Hopper commented on the two figures in the auditorium, for which she posed, 'in a black hat with veil & fur coat, then little brown cloth hat with gala feathers & linen collar', that 'They are to sit in the dark, but if any stray ray hits them they must be right.'[57]

The preparatory drawing shows the development of this person from the sketch of his wife, Jo, seated in a chair reading, to the final figure of the lady in a coat and hat that he transposed to the painting in a lot less detail than his preparatory drawing. These sketches indicate that even though these murky characters in the darkness are almost invisible to the viewer and seem insignificant, they were obviously of great importance to Hopper and his idea of his composition. It also again indicates the significance of the human body to Hopper and his painting, and that of the female in particular.

This is a painting of dramatic contrasts and geometry. Firstly, the lighting illuminates the figure of the usherette on the right, whereas the only illumination in the left half of the painting is from the movie screen. This creates a dynamic vertical division between the two halves of the painting, with the dark shadowed pillar of the auditorium as its centre, separating the young woman from the indistinct figures intently watching the film. She is clearly separated or excluded from their fantasy world. The illumination also highlights the stairs that lead out of the auditorium back to the outside world. The usherette stands pensively at the bottom. The stairs indicate the route between the real and the unreal.

Hopper has used the illumination in this painting to enhance this effect. In contrast to the usual effect associated with light and darkness, where areas of light are generally associated with safety and security, peace and tranquillity, and darkness with ideas of a more sombre or sinister nature, here the darkness, albeit falsely, exudes an air of warmth and security and comfort in front of the movie screen as the spectators are transported into the celluloid fantasy world. As a result the illuminated areas speak of the harsh reality of the world outside the escape of the movie theatre. Hopper has enhanced this sense of the safety of the spectators as they are cocooned in the darkness of the auditorium, as if a part of the furniture. The illumination is above and away from them, indicating their safety in the darkness away from the harsh reality of the light.

Hopper's wife acknowledged the difficulty of working on such a subject when she wrote that,

> E. in studio wrestling with a dark movie interior. It is such a difficult subject. Dark is always so difficult. Not to be there to work as he looks—& not even taken from any one theatre—bits from all of them. So far it seems not so dark to me. Will get everything placed & developed I suppose before he lets the dark descend. He would have everything there & know where it is—the way we know where all our things can be laid hold off in the dark. I keep well out of the way.[58]

As Jo's earlier words indicate, and are confirmed here, his figures were worked out in detail in preparatory sketches and then applied to the canvas before they then gradually merged into the darkness and ambiguity of the auditorium (see figures 180 and 181). She also reveals again Hopper's practice of working from an idea based in his memory or imagination for the theatre itself. This auditorium is not based on a particular location but is an amalgamation of his many personal experiences of the theatre and movie palace in Manhattan; a fusion of his imagination and personal vision.

It is this use of illumination which focuses on the usherette and enhances the sense of the uncomfortable nature of the world outside the movie theatre. It is an artificial light that beats down on her blond hair. It is a forceful illumination which beats uncomfortably upon her, revealing her reflective boredom with her surroundings. Again in this painting Hopper has given a significant placing to his use of the colour red. The lights above the indistinct figure in the auditorium are red, as are the lampshades on the wall behind the usherette, which issue such a harsh lighting upon her; but most significantly Hopper has used red for the curtains that reveal the stairway leading to the exit. Not only has Hopper used red here for the curtains to emphasise the focal draw of the painting, but to drive home the significance of this entrance/exit between the movie theatre auditorium and the outside world.

The dramatic use of visual geometry in this painting is a key to its strength and impact as an image. It contains dynamic diagonals which drive across the canvas from the right to the left, leading to a focal point which is off-centre and located at the bottom-right corner of the movie screen. The ceiling lights and the architectural decoration of the auditorium also follow this focus. It is however, very significant that the ascent of the staircase is in opposition to the flow of diagonals; a visual flaw in the geometry of the scene. The staircase back to the reality of the world outside the theatre is in opposition to the focal draw towards the fantasy world offered by the movie.

The geometric structure of the painting leads the viewer's eye to the focal point at the bottom-right corner of the movie screen and yet the emphasis that Hopper has placed on the colour red of the curtains also draws the eye towards the right of the painting and the bottom of the depicted staircase. This dual focal domination is deliberate and demonstrates the complex nature of the composition of the painting. It is a deliberate ploy by Hopper to confuse the eye as to which part of the painting is the real focus. The significance is the disparity between the two. The geometry leads the eye into the central point in the auditorium, as Hopper guides the viewer into the cosy fantasy world

of the movie, but in reality the red curtains and the stairway to the outside world are the primary focal point, as they reveal the false nature of the escape offered by the rest of the painting. This visual imbalance serves to perpetuate the question of what is perceived to be real or unreal.

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[2] R. Merritt, 'Nickelodeon Theaters 1905–1914', from T. Balio (ed.), *The American Film Industry*, Wisconsin and London, 1976, p.77.
[3] J. Belton, *American Cinema, American Culture*, New York, 1994, p.12.
[4] G. Levin, *Edward Hopper, An Intimate Biography*, Los Angeles, California and London, 1998, p.95.
[5] G. Levin, *Edward Hopper, The Art and the Artist*, New York, 1980, p.238.
[6] R. Lahey papers, 'Artists I Have known,' Archives of American Art, roll 378, frames 919–1053.Lahey (1927–61), a painter and friend of Hopper's, reported this conversation in his memoirs as having taken place in front of the original Whitney Museum on Eighth Street. Quoted in Ibid., p.70.
[7] P. Conrad, *The Art of the City—Views and Versions of New York*, Oxford, 1984, p.106.
[8] G. Levin, 1980, p.70.
[9] G. Levin, 1998, p.47.
[10] R. Henri, *The Art of Spirit*, Philadelphia and New York, 1960, p.188.
[11] Quoted in H. Appleton Read, 'Racial Quality of Hopper Pictures at Modern Museum Agrees with Nationalistic Mood,' *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 5th November 1933, p.12.
[12] H. Ibsen, 1958, Translated by Una Ellis-Fermor. From *The Master Builder* (1892), London, 1958, Act 3, pp.197–8.
[13] G. Levin, 1998, pp.195–6. Hopper diligently collected the ticket stubs from each performance that he went to and wrote the name and date of the production on the reverse.
[14] H. Ibsen, 1958, p.205.
[15] G. Levin, 1998, p.193.
[16] B. O'Doherty, 'Portrait: Edward Hopper', *Art in America*, 52, December 1964, p.72.
[17] G. Levin, 1998, p.196.
[18] R. Elzea, *John Sloan's Oil Paintings: A Catalogue Raisonné*, Newark and London, 1991, volume I, p.79.
[19] J. Belton, 1994, p.10.
[20] R. Merritt, 'Nickelodeon Theaters 1905–1914', from T. Balio (ed.), 1976, p.59.
[21] M. Valentine, *The Show Starts on the Sidewalk, An Architectural History of the Movie Theatre*, New Haven and London, 1994, p.6.
[22] R. Merritt, 'Nickelodeon Theaters 1905–1914', from T. Balio (ed.), 1976, p.63.
[23] Ibid., p.61.
[24] Ibid., p.75.
[25] Ibid., p.63.
[26] J. Belton, 1994, p.16.
[27] Ibid., p.16.
[28] G. Levin, 1998, p.196.
[29] R. Merritt, 'Nickelodeon Theaters 1905–1914', from T. Balio (ed.), 1976, p.79.
[30] P. Conrad, 1984, p.106.
[31] R. Borde and E. Chaumeton, 'Towards a Definition of Film Noir' (1955) in A. Silver and J. Ursini (eds), *Film Noir Reader*, New York, 1996, p.19.
[32] Ibid., p.11.
[33] P. Shrader, 'Notes on Film Noir' (1972), in Ibid., p.54.
[34] 'The Killers' was published in Scribner's magazine in March 1927.
[35] R. Borde and E. Chaumeton, 'Towards a Definition of Film Noir' (1955) in Ibid., p.19.
[36] Ibid., p.19.
[37] Ibid., p.20.
[38] E. A. Kaplan (ed.), *Women In Film Noir*, London, 1980, p.3.
[39] Record Book III, p. 75. Cited in G. Levin, 1995, volume III, p.368.
[40] R. Borde and E. Chaumeton, 'Towards a Definition of Film Noir' (1955) in A. Silver and J. Ursini (eds), 1996, p.21.

[41] G. Levin, 1998, p.206.
[42] R. Borde and E. Chaumeton, 'Towards a Definition of Film Noir' (1955) in A. Silver and J. Ursini (eds), 1996, p.20.
[43] F. Krutnik (ed.), *In a Lonely Street—Film Noir, Genre, Masculinity*, London and New York, 1991, p.63.
[44] D. Reid and J.L. Walker, 'Strange Pursuit: Cornell Woolrich and the Abandoned City of the Forties' in J. Copjec (ed.), *Shades of Noir*, London and New York, 1993, p.58.
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[48] R. Borde and E. Chaumeton, 'Towards a Definition of Film Noir' (1955) in A. Silver and J. Ursini (eds), 1996, p.25.
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[51] Ibid., p.65.
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[56] G. Pollock, 'Mary Cassatt: Painter of Women and Children', from M. Doezema and E. Milroy (eds), *Reading American Art*, New Haven and London, 1998, p.285.
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Chapter 8.

Hopper's Depiction of the Apartment Building.

Hopper's representation of the apartment building as a subject area is crucial to his overall vision of life within the American city. The 'interior' has been painted many times as a subject, perhaps most significantly in Dutch art, which was influential during his formative years as an art student and during his visits to Europe between 1906 and 1910. Henri had encouraged Hopper, like all his students, to study Dutch art, and the inspiration that he derived from it can be seen in his apartments interiors; particularly the highly detailed paintings of Jan Vermeer (1632–75) with their precise geometry and vibrant play of light. Interior domestic scenes were also a part of Hopper's illustration work, and as many of his mature paintings revive thematic areas covered by his commercial illustrations it is not impossible to assume that this earlier use of the subject area served as an inspiration for the later paintings.

His interest in the apartment as a thematic subject is partly because it enables him to define the landscape of the city around him; but it also allows him to explore the private space of the figure within the city. The apartment building, although a European invention, has become a definitive living space within urban America, and the apartment generally constitutes a suite of rooms, which are usually rented.[1] He explores the apartment building as an American city 'space', or even as a study of the architecture, from the outside in paintings such as *House at Dusk* (1935) (figure 129). Yet, in paintings such as *Apartment Houses* (1930) (figure 182) and *Room in Brooklyn* (1932) (figure 183) he chooses to take a completely different focus and observe the world within the apartment. This allows him to focus on the figure within the private space of their apartment. This closer focus allows Hopper to concentrate on the voyeuristic nature of city living and the psychology of the private space of the city dweller. This perhaps culminates in key paintings like *Room in New* York (1932) (figure 6), where the couple are placed within an apartment setting allowing Hopper to explore the implied dysfunctional relationship between them.

Hopper's interest in the form of the city, and in particular his careful rendition of the particular architecture he experienced around him, all form part of his very personal view of the city. Many of Hopper's mature paintings are voyeuristic in approach and sentiment, focusing on an intimate moment within his city, and the people he observes there. Perhaps Hopper's city vision can be defined as a particular type of painting, where he places the viewer in the position of being able to look in on the private

moments of the city dweller, whether that be in the public space of the restaurant or in the more intimate reveries of the interior of the apartment. In *House at Dusk* (1935) (figure 129), Hopper has presented the viewer with an array of what could be seen as individual 'Hoppers'.

This is a painting of an apartment building seen from the outside. The architecture of the building is from the nineteenth century, and this is the only building in the composition. The artist has painted the building from a high view point as only the top storey and part of the one immediately below are visible. This building comes into the canvas from the bottom left corner; its off-centre placement gives the entire composition a rather unsettling nature. This building is placed against a dark and rather forbidding background of trees, with a lighter, evening sky beyond them. Levin suggests in her biography of Hopper that this painting was possibly inspired by the growing frailness of his mother. The combination of the evening setting and the foreboding woods in the background are an allusion to death.[2] Hopper read and enjoyed poetry, and was known to quote, in particular from Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's (1749–1832) *Wandering Night Song* (1821) which is particularly pertinent to this painting. The extract reads as follows:

> 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.[3]

The poem, which was described by Hopper as 'an extremely visual picture', describes the silence and stillness of the evening and evokes the parallels between nature and the inevitability of human death.[4] This extract also reflects the juxtapositions in Hopper's painting as it describes the silence within nature which is also present in *House at Dusk* (figure 129). His mother died just two months after he completed this painting in March 1935.

There is no indication of the height of the vantage point of the viewer, nor the number of the storeys of the building. Both the visible upper area of the building and the viewer seem to be placed as if floating in mid-air. It can be assumed then, that Hopper has painted the scene from memories of journeys on the Elevated Railway, and as such the 'El' becomes central to his viewpoint, or from scenes inspired by the view out of the windows in Washington Square. The specific architecture of the building within the painting also allows other assumptions to be made. If this in fact a nineteenth century

brownstone then it can be assumed to be about three storeys high. This knowledge of the particular architecture of New York grounds the painting.

This type of architecture does not lend itself to being many storeys high like a skyscraper and so it lessens the floating notion of the composition; but even accepting this, Hopper has isolated these interiors by cutting the image in the way that he has. It uses an element of artifice that has already been explored in the previous chapter. This artificial element once again underlines Hopper's fascination with movies, and he displays in his paintings a similar type of view of the intimate interior space that it is possible to create through the use of boom cameras and specially constructed studio sets. So, even if the basis for the image is a building that is only three storeys high, he has introduced a reference to the artifice of the camera, or of the movie, which enabled film directors to create a specific and intimate view into the private world of the apartment. Thus Hopper selects his scene and paints it with the vision of a film director, creating a particular view for the purposes of his work.

Hopper has composed this painting by characteristically using three bands, which divide the composition horizontally. The band at the bottom of the painting contains the building, the middle the bank of trees and the top of the paintings is dominated by the evening sky. The crucial element of the painting for Hopper is his observation of light. He has chosen to represent both natural and artificial light in this painting. In the bottom section of the painting he has carefully observed the artificial illumination which plays out from the various apartment scenes. He carries this interest across to the street lamp in the bottom right of the painting, which illuminates the base of the steps which lead up into the wooded area.

This observation of the play of artificial light is juxtaposed against the careful rendition of the evening sky at the top of the painting, and in a sense it represents the opposition of the natural and the manmade. The inclusion of the artificial light could also be attributed to the influence of film and theatre. As each window 'scene' is illuminated separately, they suggest that each represents an individual stage set, each with their own individual narrative. So in this sense the artificial light within each 'scene' is also a reference to the artificiality of the world of the theatre or film. It reduces the lives that exist behind the window frames in this apartment block to single 'scenes' within a greater narrative; that of the life of the human figure within the modern American city.

This juxtaposition is crucial to the composition of this painting, and represents a recurring sentiment in Hopper's work. In several paintings where Hopper has included architecture he juxtaposes the old versus the new; nineteenth century buildings against those less decorative, and taller buildings of the twentieth century. Here the juxtaposition is within the forms of light themselves; the contrasts between the tones of yellow between those created by the artificial illumination and those created by the sunset. There is also another deep contrast between the upper and lower bands of the paintings as the varying tones of the areas of light are played against deep resonance of the threatening band of trees. Hopper uses the illumination from the sky above to define the bulk of the trees.

Within the building itself Hopper has created various points of interest; some of which are more dominant than others. He has once again created here the illusion of being able to look beyond the façade, and see a private world behind it. In this sense the façade is not just the exterior of the building, but the one which the figure occupying the space of the city presents to the outside world. Many apartment windows are visible here; all have varying degrees of interest. The least visually commanding are those where the viewer has been given a hint of life beyond the window, but either the blinds are drawn or the lights are out, and so nothing is visible beyond the window itself. These private worlds have been closed to voyeuristic observation.

In addition, Hopper has offered a tantalising hint of the presence of life behind some of the windows, where he has indicated lights beyond the blinds. This is emphasised by the apartment on the extreme right of the building, at the top, where the window shades are up allowing a small glimpse of the illuminated room beyond. However, human presence in this interior is still only by implication, as no figure is visible, just a hint of some furniture. Then the eye is lead to the focal window space where the reward is a female looking out of the window.

The nature of the composition is such that the varying areas of interest force the eye to skip over the separate window areas, finally coming to rest on the woman; having sought and found a human presence. It is perhaps ironic that Hopper has portrayed this particular female in the process of looking out of the window, and so is therefore in the process of observation. Her face is turned away from the viewer and she seems to be looking either down into the street, or perhaps into another apartment building.

In a sense, she has made herself available to the scrutinizing gaze of the viewer by her position in the painting. Although, she does not return the gaze she has been caught in the act of looking. She is reminiscent of the underlying sentiments in Mary Cassatt's (1844–1926) *At The Opera* (c.1879) (figure 179) as both paintings depict a female who is engaged in the act of looking, whilst unaware that they have become the recipient of another's gaze, and it also acknowledges the reference to the theatre in Hopper's work. In Cassatt's painting we see a young woman dressed in black sitting in a loge, concentrating, presumably, on the action on stage, or perhaps activity elsewhere in the theatre, and Hopper's female looks out of her window at something beyond the picture plane, effectively onto the 'theatre of life'. The curvaceous sweep of the auditorium allows Cassatt to direct our eye to the other incidental figures in the theatre, who in turn link back to the main female, as they allow us to follow the direction of her gaze. Cassatt has incorporated another element into this work, one which Pollock maintains questions the idea of the female as the spectacle and the viewer as spectator because further around the auditorium she has included a man who has been captured in the act of training his opera glasses back on the focal young woman.[5] This female is absorbed in the act of looking and is unaware that she has become the focus of the gaze of this man, while also being scrutinised by the 'alleged' male viewer.

Cassatt's young woman is dressed for a night out at the theatre. She is a pillar of French middle-class respectability. She is attired and positioned in such a away that although she is unaware of the gaze of the male in the painting, she is 'dressed' to be seen. Therefore, by implication she accepts that she could be subject to the scrutiny of others. This sense of surveying herself is described by Berger as the act of becoming the 'surveyor' and 'surveyed' within herself. He maintains that the woman,

> has to survey everything she is and everything she does because how she appears to others, and ultimately how she appears to men, is of crucial importance for what is normally thought of as the success of her life. Her own sense of being in herself is supplanted by a sense of being appreciated by another.[6]

However, Berger's work on the way in which the female figure is depicted is now considered 'misguided' and 'presumptive' as his work assumes the presence of 'a pre-constructed male viewer in a relationship of opposition and oppression to the female subject' and as a result is 'deeply flawed'.[7] This said, his discussion of the way in which the female surveys herself, in the knowledge that she displays herself to be seen be others, and the 'other' in herself, is still useful here, as the argument is equally valid whether the viewer is male or female.

Both of these women, the one in Hopper's *House at Dusk* (figure 129), and that in Cassatt's *At The Opera* (figure 179), therefore accept the possibility of their being subject to the scrutiny of others, just as they scrutinise themselves. The woman in the Cassatt painting is subject however to the surveying glance of the male within the painting, as well as, the unseen viewer. The difference between these females, even accepting their implied knowledge of their role in these works as the *surveyed*, as well as being the *surveyor* of unseen events, is that Cassatt's woman is dressed to be out in public, whereas Hopper's female is looking out of the window of her private space. Therefore, the viewer's gaze upon her is more intrusive and voyeuristic, as within this private space she would be less prepared to be subject to the gaze of others. However, accepting the differences between the representation of a woman in the bourgeois space of a Parisian theatre in Cassatt's painting and that of Hopper's middle-class American female in her private apartment space, the comparison here, I feel, emphasises the importance of the role of the theatre in his work even when it is not specifically the subject. Hopper's female is captured in the act of 'looking,' as if she were in a theatre, at a unknown event beyond the confines of the canvas.

The composition of *House at Dusk* (figure 129) lends itself to creating an unsettled sense of intrusive voyeurism within it. The building is placed so that only the upper part of it is visible as it moves into the bottom of the painting, and it is pushed over to the left. This confuses the primary focus of the painting. At first the structure appears simple and uncomplicated, with the three distinct bands of the composition, moving from the foreground through these bands to the background of the sunset. However, closer observation reveals a greater complexity to the painting, as the viewer has been given several focal points within the apartment building. The window with the young woman being the primary one, and yet there is also another area of interest at the base of the painting on the right, where the artist has illuminated with a street light the base of a flight of steps which lead up into the band of trees. This pathway is reminiscent of the tunnel in *Bridle Path* (1939) (figure 134) and *Approaching a City* (1946) (figure 126), where the artist has offered the possibility of an escape from the boundaries of the painting, although it appears sinister.

The eye becomes drawn to this pathway which disappears into the trees. The path meets the band of trees at its darkest point. The area where they merge is one of complete darkness, nothingness or oblivion. This point in the painting is the reality of the path of

life, dark forbidding and sucking the city dweller into the monotony of existence; this is contrasted to the illusion of the safety and warmth of the interior of the apartment house.

When Hopper paints the apartment and reveals the domestic or private world within, he places the viewer in the special position of being able to see into the private space of the city. In general, he chooses a high aspect for these views, thus allowing a clear line of sight into the private world within. This high view point suggests that the artist was painting from the experience of witnessing these scenes from this particular view. Such a high vantage point could be achieved from another building or from the window of the 'El' train as it passed the building. *Apartment Houses* (1923) (figure 182), is one such painting where this method has been applied.

In this particular painting Hopper gives the viewer the intimate position of being able to see directly into an apartment from the outside. The scene has been painted as if from above; the viewer looks down into the room from another window that is even higher, or perhaps from the elevated railway. Hopper has made us aware of this high vantage point as the top of another window is just visible in the bottom right of the painting. Thus he defines the voyeuristic tone of the painting as the viewer is able to look down into the interior space whilst remaining hidden.

The sinister nature of this observation is perhaps more pronounced to a non-New Yorker, or at least those who are not familiar with the closeness, and special nature of apartment block living. The nature of New York living places people in close confinement within the city and their apartment buildings. A room in an apartment on the twentieth floor, for example, gives a sense of being away from the street and a sense of privacy along with it; free from prying eyes. But this is not the case, as the next apartment building may also have an apartment on the twentieth floor. This brings the windows on a level with other people again. The ability to look from one apartment building to another and to see into the rooms of apartments below is accepted by the city dwellers.

This does not mean that all residents engage in this voyeuristic practice of their neighbours, but the ability to do so quite freely should be accepted. It is an ability that is commented on in Hopper's paintings and in films such as Hitchcock's *Rear Window* (1954). In this film the central character L. B. Jefferies, a photojournalist, who is played by James Stewart, finds himself confined to a wheelchair in one room of his apartment with a broken leg after an accident. As a result the activities of his Greenwich Village

neighbours become his obsession. While watching their comings and goings, he suspects that one of them, a jewellery salesman called Thorwald, (Raymond Burr) has murdered his wife. With the aid of his girlfriend Lisa Fremont (Grace Kelly) and his nurse, Stella (Thelma Ritter) he continues to watch Thorwald's actions until the evidence is discovered that he did, indeed, kill his wife and dispose of the body. The film explores the human fascination with the action of looking and the pleasure derived from the voyeuristic actions of the characters.

The film is derived from the short story *It had to be Murder* which was written by pulp fiction author Cornell Woolrich (1903–1968) in 1942 (written under the pen-name William Irish).[8] As with Hopper's paintings of the private space of the apartment, the film is concerned with the pleasure and problems of looking, but also addresses the concepts of voyeurism and exhibitionism, and explores the interconnection between them. This must also be considered in relation to Hopper's works as the figures that he places in his paintings can also be considered to exhibit themselves to the viewer or in the particular case of *House at Dusk* (figure 129), the woman is in the process of *exhibiting* herself whilst engaged in act of *looking* at others.

Hitchcock's film *Rear Window* explores the processes whereby the act of looking which derives from a human curiosity of others, becomes contagious. This is achieved in two ways. Firstly, Stewart's character looks out of his rear window at the actions of his neighbours with the naked eye. As he becomes more engrossed he begins to use binoculars, and finally he resorts to his telephoto lens. Secondly, the film explores the contagious way in which Jefferies' interest grows to involve his girlfriend and his nurse. Initially, Stella, the nurse condemns this voyeuristic act of looking at the private lives of others, claiming that, 'We've become a race of peeping Toms'.[9] This reveals the elements of intrusion, and even power that are involved in this voyeuristic act of looking. However, her statement is also an endorsement as she too becomes involved and starts to watch the activities of the neighbours with Stewart's character. The action of voyeurism gives Stewart's character, especially given that he is currently an invalid confined to one room, the power and domination over the private lives of others.

The power of the voyeur consequently is passed to the viewer, both in the case of the movie audience and the spectators of Hopper's paintings. Both Hitchcock and Hopper make their viewers complicit in the voyeuristic action depicted on the screen and on the canvas. The only difference being that members of Hitchcock's audience are also unseen voyeurs to the action that takes place in Jefferies' apartment, and so the dominant

male character of the film becomes subject to the same scrutiny to which he has subjected others.

The images reproduced here, the advertising poster for the film (figure 184), the photograph of the stage set (figure 139) and the still from the movie (figure 185) have a great affinity with Hopper's representation of the apartment building. Hitchcock's set for *Rear Window* (figure 139) is reminiscent of Hopper's vision in *House at Dusk* (figure 129) as it too, allows the viewer to penetrate into several private interiors. Just as Hopper's painting seems to contain many smaller 'Hoppers', Hitchcock achieves the same sense within his movie set. It is also worth noting that the film was set in Greenwich Village, the area around Washington Square, and so the apartment building that is reproduced in the movie set is of the same nineteenth century brownstone type employed by Hopper in his paintings.

So, in the painting, *Apartment Houses* (figure 182), as with *House at Dusk* (figure 129), Hopper gives the viewer the same license to pry into the private lives of others from this completely safe, and invisible position, beyond the picture plane, just as Hitchcock's viewer surveys the events from beyond the silver screen. In the real city, as the voyeur, the viewer could be subject to the same scrutiny from elsewhere, but the placement of the picture plane puts the viewer beyond this. Therefore, the picture plane acts, in this sense, as a barrier between the observed world and that of the observer, and consequently gives the viewer carte blanche to observe the scene with the complete safety of anonymity.

Hopper deliberately includes particular elements in this painting which enhance the voyeuristic nature of his meaning. The room into which the viewer's gaze is invited appears to be that of a bedroom, which could be considered as one of the most private and intimate spaces of an individual. Hopper has placed a solitary female figure within the space of this bedroom, who is in the process of making what appears to be a bed. The piece of furniture in the background of the room appears to be a large dressing table with a mirror above it, confirming this as a bedroom.

In this voyeuristic sense then, it is no accident that Hopper has altered the angles of vision within the composition so that the viewer can see 'down' the top of the dress of the woman. Hopper has placed the viewer slightly above the level of the window, just enough to give a clear view into the room, and yet the female is portrayed in a way that

forces the viewer look down onto her. This allows Hopper to give this illicit view of her cleavage, just visible at the lowered neckline of her dress as she bends to make the bed.

This woman is unaware of the gaze of the viewer and she does not conform to the visual stereotype, usually recipient of the attentions of a voyeur within art history. She is not a nude, nor is she portrayed in a manner that could be considered to be inviting the 'gaze' of the viewer, as she is unaware of the gaze and she is painted in her private space. This woman is simply going about her business within her private space and has become inadvertently subject to an unseen gaze (that is, by her). The gaze of the viewer is oppressive because it is forced down onto the top of her head, due to the change of angles created by Hopper within the interior.

To complete the voyeuristic nature of the painting the windows in the background building are equal in significance to those in the foreground. Nothing can be seen through these secondary windows as the shades are half pulled down and the curtains are drawn across revealing only the placement of a plant on the windowsill. Although the viewer is prevented from visually penetrating the interior behind this window, there is the implied presence of other figures.

The geometry and the colour of this painting are both carefully constructed to focus the viewer's attention on the scene within the room. Hopper has carefully rendered the angularity of the outside of the building and the windows, both on the primary building and the one in the background. The rigidity of the lines of the composition indicate the austerity and coldness of the exterior of the building. The strong lines of the windows act as frames to the visible interior and the implied interior. This use of the framing device is most obvious with the window through which the interior is viewed. The grey painted sills and woodwork of the windows acts as a frame to the scene beyond them; the focus of the painting.

The architecture of the building and the window frames form diagonals across the composition. These diagonals either construct a box around the figure or aid the directional focus of the painting. These lines within the painting lead the eye towards the right corner of the room. Then the other window in the back of the room follows the direction of the diagonals of the background through the room leading the eye into the scene inside the room, and the figure.

Hopper employed tones of whites and greys to mould the exterior of the buildings into the vision of rigidity on the canvas. The warmer tones which he uses inside the room heighten this opposition. However, these warmer tones that should give the impression of warmth and security are touched by the harsh white light that also gives them the sense of coldness and austerity. The placement of the female within this space compounds this sense; she is attired in a grey-blue dress covered in a white apron, which serves to bring the coldness of the colouration of the exterior into the interior of the room.

His exploration of the private space of the apartment is the most sensitive area of his observation of the city because it allows him to delve into the most intimate space inhabited by his figures, and expose them at their most vulnerable moments. This vulnerability is increased by Hopper's particular observation of specific areas of the city. His focus on particular public areas, such as 'the office', 'the automat' and 'the theatre', displays the knowledge that his figures, although placed in their own psychological solitude, are aware of 'being seen', in contrast to the exposed vulnerability of those figures in their private space.

Hopper exploits the psychology of 'looking', both within the painting and by the viewer. As his painting came to maturity in the early nineteen twenties so America becomes *the* major capitalist power. Many contemporary artists and writers responded to this capitalist dominance and prosperity in their representations of the rising supremacy of New York City. Some focussed on the rising New York skyline, some captured the frenetic pace of the city's existence in literature, and others reacted to the negative side of this advancing pace of life. Hopper takes a perspective of his own within the art world, but echoes the sentiments of the work of writers such as Stephen Crane (1871–1900), John Dos Passos (1896–1970) and Raymond Carver (1939–88), as he focuses on the dislocation of human existence within this world.

Hopper's basis for his vision of the city as a whole is rooted in his personal experiences as an illustrator (see chapter 2),[10] which honed his awareness of the art of consumerism. His experience made him completely aware of the devices used to attract observation and how to exploit it. Hopper's figures are also aware of this oppressive and consumer oriented society. They dress to be 'seen' and to observe others: they are accepting of this 'gaze'. This observation, or visual consumerism is derived from modern capitalist society. New York in the early twentieth century had become a centre of modernity, one that was ultimately overwhelming.[11] In the urban landscape created by a combination of

electricity, steel and commerce lay an indigenous reflection of American democracy and ingenuity and as a result 'the city', and primarily New York City, became the expression of the new America; a symbol of prosperity, vitality and the future.

As I discussed in chapter 7, this capitalist society embraced the ethos of consumerism, and it filtered over into the arts. By 1907 the development of the motion picture was at a stage whereby every city, and nearly every town, had a 'nickelodeon', which provided a reel of about half an hour of short films accompanied by the projection of song slides, for the price of one nickel. This art form was tailored for working- and middle-class audiences and formed the basis for the development of the film industry as a new medium of mass entertainment.[12] By 1914 the film industry had developed to the point where it could claim to attract mass audiences, and by 1916 its biggest stars like Mary Pickford and Charlie Chaplin were earning millions of dollars a year.[13] By the time Hopper reached his mature period, the movie industry was well established as an icon of the prosperity of America and it sold its dream to the masses on a huge scale.

Hopper incorporates this notion of consumerism and the ethos of the capitalist States into his paintings. The areas that he chooses to paint reveal his personal vision of the city. He focuses on the commercial area of 'the office', where the worker is required to engage with the daily industry of the modern city. Where, as already discussed in chapter 5, the office environment consumes, or even devours, the lives of its employees as Elmer Rice (1892–1967) reveals in his 1923 play, *The Adding Machine*, where Mr Zero has worked in the same office for twenty-five years and has become almost an automaton, acknowledged by him when he says 'What do you think I am—a machine?', only to discover that he is made unemployed, having been superseded by an automated adding machine.[14] Or, as also demonstrated by Murray Schisgal's (b. 1926) 1960 play, *The Typists* where the play is set on one single day in the office focusing on the characters of the two typists, and yet they age during the progress of the play from their early twenties through to their sixties indicating the monotony of their working lives and displaying the repetition of their conversation and existence over the whole of their working lives.[15]

The idea of mass consumerism is perhaps more obvious in the area of the restaurant as it implies the ingestion of the food, as a product, within, by the figures that are placed in the restaurant or automat by Hopper. This is nowhere more obvious than in *Tables for Ladies* (1930) (figure 142), where the display of food in the window draws the viewer into the scene visually, and psychologically, with the implied reference to the consumer

driven nature of city existence. It also refers to the susceptibility of the figures to the consuming gaze, both psychologically and physically, by their companions and fellow diners, and most importantly by the viewer. Hopper has made the viewer complicit in this 'all devouring' environment, which was discussed in detail in chapter six.

Then, Hopper's paintings of the apartment building, and most particularly the apartment interiors, reveal the extent to which his figures are subject to this process; one which he suggests leads to their annihilation at the hands of the city. The private space of the apartment interior is not portrayed as a sanctuary from the excesses of the life of the city, but as an integral part of it. The figures are not able to find refuge within their apartments, but find themselves subject to the 'all-devouring' gaze of any unseen observers who may be watching them from another apartment, or from a carriage on the elevated railway, or the viewer of the painting.

Hopper acknowledges this notion in his painting *Room in Brooklyn* (1932) (figure 183) where he has depicted a woman in an interior, seated in front of the window with a view of the building across the street. He has placed her, in what appears to be a rocking chair, facing out of the tall windows in front of her. The viewer shares the same vista through the windows as the scene is observed from behind the figure. The irony here is that as Hopper acknowledges the opportunity of the woman to observe the scene before her, she is subject to unseen scrutiny from behind. However, because she is depicted seated in this high backed chair in such a position, it is unclear whether she is looking out of the window, reading or just sitting in quiet contemplation. Hopper's figures generally are either reading or in quiet self-contemplation. It is probable to assume therefore that she is thus occupied. Therefore she has the opportunity to observe the actions and private worlds of others and yet is absorbed in her own private reflection. However, she falls subject to the gaze of the unseen observer, or viewer, and consequently is prey to this consuming gaze herself. Hopper has taken the traditional subject of a woman sewing, one that was popular in eighteenth and nineteenth century art, and gives it a contemporary feel by turning the woman away from the viewer. She has then become as anonymous as the Brooklyn tenement buildings outside the window.[16]

This painting was executed during an unprecedented period of productivity for Hopper, as he was feeling particularly optimistic at this point in his career, as 1931 had seen an annual income of $8,728 from sales of thirty of his paintings.[17] When he spoke about this work he revealed that the conception for this solitary female within the urban

interior 'was largely improvised'.[18] The title of the painting suggests that the work was based on Brooklyn. Jo Hopper, in a letter, reveals that Hopper's original intention to include a view of Brooklyn Bridge was lost as he worked on the image, probably because its resonance would have been outside his terms of reference. This method reducing his images to the bare minimum of detail became an increasing influence on his drawing practices as his career developed. This is why his paintings from his early mature career, like *Room in New York* (1932) (figure 6), contain a much greater amount of what he would gradually come to consider as extraneous detail. Detail that he would eliminate from his later works. Jo Hopper's words indicate this working practice in operation when she wrote that he:

> intended to have Brooklyn Bridge in full view of the window in back. But when he got round to it, he thought that the bridge would clutter up the picture. He loathes clutter, so left out the bridge—(& more or less Brooklyn or maybe not)[19]

It is this process of reduction in an image, or paring down his painting to the bare essentials that results in works such as *Sun in an Empty Room* (1963) (figure 3).

Another interesting aside to the discussion on this painting is that it is the only painting of an interior in which Hopper includes flowers. O'Doherty quoted him as saying that, 'In all the work I have done there's only one painting with flowers, *Room in Brooklyn*, a little vase on the table with flowers...The so-called beauty is all there. You can't add anything to them of your own—yourself.'[20] What is interesting is that Hopper wanted to paint in a way that allowed him to put something of himself on the canvas and the representation of flowers to him seemed to be something more suitable for 'lady painters'.[21] This clearly was a point of contention between the Hoppers because Jo liked to have fresh flowers around the apartment to use for her paintings, and Hopper never missed an opportunity to criticise or belittle her work. Hopper's comments indicate not only the antagonism between them over the issue of flowers, but also his dismissive opinions of his wife's work.[22]

The composition of this painting is dominated by the verticals within it. The window frames and the walls either side of them create a rigid vertical division across the canvas. The white walls of the apartment frame the edges of the composition and push the focus to the windows and the view they offer beyond. This vertical dominance is broken by the placement of the small round table with the vase of flowers on it, and the seated figure over to left of the painting. Hopper has created a very rigid and ordered composition in one respect, and then has deliberately placed elements within this to

suggest tension or discord. The focal point of the interior is slightly off to the right of centre in the painting, created by the angle of the windows coming together and the placement of the table and flowers. The round table with its angled legs, fluted table cloth, and curvaceous vase, combined with the arc of the head of the female and the curved back of her chair all serve to soften the angularity of the painting.

The woman, although central to the psychological effect of the painting, is placed over to the left of the painting away from the focal draw and seems to unbalance the composition, deliberately unsettling the interior scene. This disconcerting nature is enhanced by the table, covered in a red table cloth, which breaks into the painting from the left, in the immediate foreground, and the blinds which all hang at different levels in the tops of the windows. The table draws the eye significantly with the use of red. The red complements the earth tones of the painting and raises the focus of the building seen through the window. The placement of such a dominant colour in the corner of the foreground is odd, and visually disconcerting here, simply because it leads the eye to an area of the painting that is away from that indicated by the focal draw. The angles and straight lines of the window panes, walls and skirting boards lead in towards the corner of the windows where Hopper has placed a table with a vase of flowers upon it. The dominant red tablecloth which emphasises the placement of the figure is placed over to the left of the composition.

This juxtaposition of emphasis in the painting; the figure placed with the dominant red colour behind her, as opposed to the small table and vase of flowers which is positioned in the perspectival focus, has been deliberately employed by the artist to achieve a dislocation in the psychological effect of the work. The off-centre placement of the figure and the use of the dominant red colour is intended to dislocate the otherwise restful sentiment of this work and give it a more jolting element, a sense of the ill-at-ease.

The windows in this interior allow a view of another building which seems to be a nineteenth century brownstone apartment building. Hopper gives just the slightest intimation of human occupation behind the rows of visible windows. The vague suggestion in the distance of the varying levels of the window blinds intimates the presence of unseen figures within the rooms. The scene is typically painted from a higher viewpoint; the windows appear to look down onto the brownstones visible through them. This allows the artist to indicate the possibility of the expanse of the city beyond that which is clearly visible. The roofline of the building is covered in

chimneypots and Hopper has given just a hint of many more disappearing into the distance.

The vista across the city rooftops is enhanced and made possible by Hopper's use of light, which plays off the chimneypots onto the roofs opposite, but its most dominant use is within the apartment itself. It enters the interior from the window that is angled to the right and falls in one straight beam that focuses on the table of flowers and the woman, affirming the focal areas of the painting. The harsh light Hopper employs here falls directly on the back of the woman's neck as her head is slightly inclined forward, highlighting her pale skin. It seems all the more oppressive for falling on the back of her neck and bleaching her skin. It falls upon this figure as a spot light, and seems somewhat theatrical in use, as she appears to be illuminated as if seated on the stage and the windows of the building opposite, the potential audience. Otherwise, she could be seen to be illuminated as if she were seated in front of the stage presented before her, in the form of the view from her windows. In either case she could be seen as the performer or the audience, or performing both roles at once. Again, the idea of this particular figure executing a theatrical role within this painting fulfils Hopper's observation of the consuming gaze that is apparent within his city.

Discussion of a Single Image: Room in New York (1932).

This painting (figure 6) may be viewed as the culmination of Hopper's observation of the space of the apartment and its place within the city. In this chapter I have already discussed the observation of the particular space and psychology of city living, within the apartment. *Room in New York* allows Hopper not only to examine the psychological space of the apartment, but the interpersonal relationships of the figures that he places within this interior space.

This is one of Hopper's earliest paintings on the subject of a couple existing in a state of alienation. It is quite possible that it was inspired by the tempestuous domestic tensions that existed in the Hopper household. Hopper unusually painted the work in just three weeks and maintained that he was able to work this quickly as the idea for the painting was already fully developed in his mind before he began.[23] He explained the conception of this painting with the words:

> The idea had been in my mind a long time before I painted it. It was suggested by glimpses of lighted interiors seen as I walked along city streets at night, probably near the district where I live (Washington Square) although it's no particular street or house but is really a synthesis of many impressions.[24]

The composition of this painting is designed in such a way as to indicate the scene that is before the viewer is a freeze-frame or a fleeting glimpse and as Hopper's words suggest, one gained from walking around his local area and just absorbing his surroundings. The notion of this freeze-frame, or movie 'still' quality, is created by the artist's use of *mise-en-scène* where the composition of the entire scene is placed off-centre on the canvas. *Mise-en-scène* is a visual tool that is greatly employed in Film Noir cinematography.[25] It creates an unsettling and uneasy psychological balance within the work, which is achieved by the placement of the stonework that makes up the window frame, at the bottom and on the left side of the canvas. The stone 'framework' pushes the scene in the interior of the apartment over to the right. The off-centre structure of the composition gives the effect that this is an illicit, passing glimpse, and as a result produces an unsettled nature to the entire painting.

The off-centre composition employed by Hopper in *Room in New York* also serves as an indication of the unsettled nature of the relationship between the two figures. The relationship is as dislocated, and as ill at ease as the composition. The focus is clearly placed upon the interior of the room and then upon the couple placed within it, as the room is illuminated against the darkness outside. Hopper has indicated the scene as taking place at night, as the viewer has been positioned outside the window of the apartment, giving a view of the darkened stonework as well as the illuminated interior. The stone of the building is mostly in shadow, and as a result it indicates the darkness outside the room, and it also serves to frame and centre the attention into the lighter interior of the room.

The lighting in this painting is crucial to the psychological make-up of the work; it is implied and not visible, just as the tension and spatial dislocation is also suggested within the work. There is no visible light source in the painting and yet it appears that there are at least two; each beyond the boundaries of the canvas. The main source which illuminates the interior of the room appears to be above and slightly behind the man as the light falls directly onto the back of his chair, the top of his head and his shoulders. His face is in shadow and the shadow under the paper is short, which suggests a high light source.

However, the use of a high light source would not be consistent with the lighting in relation to the woman. It falls onto the top of her right arm and neck as if the source is placed high in the room and behind her, the same as the male, but her lower right arm

and left arm should be in partial and total shadow, respectively, if this were the case. As the light falls on these limbs it suggest that she is illuminated by a light source that is either directly above her head, unseen in the painting, and high up in the room, or it would have to be placed somewhere close to her right shoulder. Hopper has also chosen to illuminate part of the stonework outside the 'invisible' window. The light falls in such a way on this stonework, that it suggests that it is coming from the right of the interior of the room, which would concur with a second light source above the female figure.

The specific location of any given light source is not the important point here. It is that Hopper has chosen to create more than one which heightens the sense of unease within the scene, and directs the viewer's eye to more than one area of importance in the painting. He has highlighted the two figures together within the interior and then individually, so as to suggest their isolation from each other. The illumination of the stonework beyond the interior is to place the couple within a particular type of building indicated by the highlighted architecture. Hopper has indicated the building as being part of the late nineteenth century style of brownstone apartment buildings. It places the apartment around the area of Washington Square in Manhattan, spatially and in age, and it locates the couple as being from the middle classes, and the male as a white collar worker, again Hopper's familiar territory both in subject matter and location. The location that served as inspiration for this work is confirmed by Hopper's words which were quoted above.[26]

It is not only the lighting that creates the sense of isolation and dislocation in this work, as the spatial arrangement of the work also heightens this effect. The figures are separated from each other by the furniture that has been placed in the scene. The visible space has been filled with this furniture and so it not only separates them but encloses, or cages them within a defined space. They are divided by the table placed between them and the exceptionally tall door behind them. These items clearly divide the composition into sections; which are further defined by the yellow walls behind them. The man has been enclosed within the space of the easy chair and the woman at the piano. The tension of the couple is demonstrated by their body positions, which convey a sense of agitation.

The woman is perched on the piano stool. Her body is twisted around; her legs indicate that she was originally seated facing in towards the centre of the room, but she has twisted at the waist round to the piano. She rests her left arm on the piano as she idly

tinkers with the keys with the index finger of her right hand. The man is not seated any more comfortably; he sits forward in his chair reading his paper. He has not relaxed back into his easy chair, but finds himself hunched forward over his paper. The twisted position of the female and the hunched position of the male both indicate that these figures are not comfortable in their surroundings, nor with each other. Hopper has played with the popular stereotypical roles of male and female. He is portrayed as intellectual and pragmatic as he is seated reading his newspaper. She however, has no intellectual pursuit, but appears to be about to play the piano which would be an indicative of a reference to the stereotypical notion of the feminine tendency towards the more emotional and expressive, indicated by music.[27]

The composition of the painting is dominated by a series of straight lines. The lines and the geometric forms of the composition give an aura of the rigid, regular and restrictive nature of the lives of the figures within this space. The angularity of the space reflects the uncomfortable regularity of their everyday lives. The rigid stonework of the building cuts across the right side and the bottom of the composition both serving to push the focal scene within the room off-centre, and to create this dark, but dominant, area of colour in the corner. The form of the tall door, the paintings on the walls, and the regular shape of the yellow colour patches created on the walls all combine to enhance the sense of the perpetual monotony of the lives of the figures, and in effect the pathology of the existence of the human figure within the modern city.

The only softer shapes within the composition are the table in the centre and the easy chair. However, although the rounded shapes of these items act as a visual foil to the angularity of the rest of the painting, they do not soften the harsh and rigid nature of the painting. This is because the table is placed between the figures, acting as a physical barrier embodying the psychological barrier between them, and the male is unable to find a comfortable position in which to sit on the soft, easy chair.

Hopper uses a limited palette to great effect. He employs varying 'muddy' tones to create the dark areas of the architecture and the piano to frame the focal area of the painting. It is his crucial use of the lighting that forms the detail and interest of these secondary areas of the work. Within the main area he uses reds, yellows and browns, with a little white. Although he has used these warm colours the effect that is created is neither warm, nor comforting. Hopper carries the use of the red from the dress of the female, through the lamp, just visible behind the piano, to the easy chair occupied by the male. The red is at its deepest resonance in the lamp shade and through his application

of the light, it pales through the dress to the chair where it appears more pink. The yellow employed in this painting seems to have lost the normal associations of warmth and welcome, and seems instead to be rather stark and hard.

The overriding element of this painting is one of silence. Hopper's friend Charles Burchfield (1893–1967) noted of it that, 'The element of silence that seems to pervade every one of his major works...can almost be deadly, as in *Room in New York*'.[28] Burchfield's words are all the more significant as a personal friend of the Hoppers and would have been only to aware of the sometimes 'deadly' atmosphere between them.[29] The silence which is inherent in this work is made more poignant by the placement of the woman at the piano. Even though she touches the keys, there is no sound, only silence, and it is a stillness that is heavy with the tension between the couple. The tense silence in this work also relates to the treatment of the female as an object. Christine Brooke-Rose has noted that 'To reduce the woman to silence is to reduce her to powerlessness; that is how the masculine will to castrate operates.'[30] By portraying a female as mute, Hopper has then reduced her to a token, or an object, and as such she becomes passive and therefore 'available' to the male. There is a precedent for the portrayal of mute women in French comedy, such as the work of Jean-Baptiste Molière (1622–73), for example, in his *Médecin Malgré lui* (1667). Hopper's interest in French literature and poetry has already been noted, although whether he was aware of this particular work is unknown.

As Burchfield's words indicate the potential autobiographical element to this painting stemming from the tense and often volatile relationship that the Hoppers had, it could also be suggested that this could be behind the silence in the work. O'Doherty noted the antagonism in the relationship that the Hoppers had, saying that 'he and she were so opposed to each other in temperament that they were a continuous source of life and dismay to each other.'[31] It is possible then that the silent couple in the painting are representative of Hopper and his wife, and that by silencing the female figure he has in turn silenced his wife and as a result she has become more passive, and the analogy is further enhanced by the knowledge that Jo Hopper, as always, was the model for the female figure in the painting.

In conclusion, this painting defines Hopper's vision of the city apartment and the existence of the figures within it. They find themselves trapped in the monotony of their daily lives, in an echo of Modernist literature. Hopper's figures find no escape within the privacy of their apartments, just an acceptance of their psychological isolation and

dislocation within the American Dream. Such scenes are indicative of the result of the contemporary consumer culture and economic 'boom' period, and at a time when all Americans were searching for their national identity, Hopper's paintings strive towards a definition of 'type', within the understanding of Walter Lippmann's definition of the 'stereotype', which he pioneered in the nineteen twenties.[32]

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[1] G. Moorhouse, *Imperial City, The Rise and Rise of New York*, Sevenoaks, 1989, p.123.
[2] G. Levin, *Edward Hopper, An Intimate Biography*, Los Angeles, California and London, 1998, p.266.
[3] Cited in B. O'Doherty, 'Portrait: Edward Hopper', *Art in America*, 52, December 1964, p.80. Here O'Doherty also gives Hopper's translation of the poem.
[4] Ibid., p.80.
[5] G. Pollock, 'Mary Cassatt: Painter of Women and Children', from M. Doezema and E. Milroy (eds), *Reading American Art*, New Haven and London, 1998, p.286.
[6] J. Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, London, 1972, p.46.
[7] M. Pointon, *Naked Authority: The Body in Western Painting 1830–1908*, New York and Cambridge, 1990, p.33.
[8] J. Belton (ed.), *Alfred Hitchcock's Rear Window*, Cambridge, 2000, p.5.
[9] M. Chion, 'Alfred Hitchcock's *Rear Window* The Fourth Side', in Ibid., p.110.
[10] G. Levin, 1998, p.48.
[11] B. Haskell, *The American Century—Art and Culture, 1900–1950*, New York, 1999, p.47.
[12] Ibid., p.76.
[13] Ibid., p.76.
[14] E. Rice, *Three Plays*, Clinton, Massachusetts, 1965, p.10.
[15] M. Schisgal, *The Typists*, 1960, from C. Marowitz (ed.), *New American Drama*, London, 1966.
[16] R. Hobbs, *Edward Hopper*, New York, 1987, p.42.
[17] G. Levin, 1998, p.241.
[18] E. Hopper to C. C. Cunningham, letter of March 21, 1935. Cited in Ibid., p.241.
[19] Jo Hopper to C.H. Edgell, letter of September 24, 1932. Cited in Ibid., p.241.
[20] B. O'Doherty, 'Portrait: Edward Hopper', *Art in America*, 52, December 1964, p.80.
[21] Ibid., p.80.
[22] G. Levin, 1998, p.241.
[23] Ibid., p.241.
[24] E. Hopper, quoted in 'Such a Life', *Life*, 102, August 1935, p.48. and 'Artist Edward Hopper Tells Story of "Room in New York" ', Lincoln (Nebraska) Journal and Star, March 29, 1936, Section C–D, p.7.
[25] J. Place and L. Peterson, 'Some Visual Motifs of Film Noir', A. Silver and J. Ursini (eds), *Film Noir Reader*, New York, 1996, p.68.
[26] E. Hopper, quoted in 'Such a Life', *Life*, 102, August 1935, p.48. and 'Artist Edward Hopper Tells Story of "Room in New York" ', Lincoln (Nebraska) Journal and Star, March 29, 1936, Section C–D, p.7.
[27] G. Levin, 1998, p.242.
[28] C. Burchfield, 'Hopper: Career of Silent Poetry', *Art News*, 49, March 1950, p.17.
[29] G. Levin, 1998, p.142.
[30] C. Brooke-Rose, 'Woman as a Semiotic Object', S. R. Suleiman, *The Female Body in Western Culture—Contemporary Perspectives*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, U.S. 1985, p.310.
[31] B. O'Doherty, *American Masters: The Voice and The Myth*, New York, 1988, p.17.
[32] W. Lippmann, *Public Opinion*, London, 1949, pp.79–158. (Originally published in 1929)

Conclusion.

The focus of this thesis has been on Hopper's human figures and his placement of them within a series of what I have shown to be definitive environments of the contemporary American city, concentrating in particular on his representations of the female figure. They are rooted in Hopper's experience of the world of advertising, from his time as a commercial illustrator during his early career, and are considered in relation to Hollywood figures in pin-ups from the 1940s, and the *femme fatâles* of Film Noir. His human figures also acknowledge the role of 'types' (or stereotypes), of which he was aware as a result of his work as a commercial illustrator and which were defined by Walter Lippmann in his *Public Opinion* (1929).[1] The influence of advertising and modern American consumer culture on his work combine with the distinctive American environments of the white middle-class worker in Manhattan which is central to what I discussed as the American nature of his paintings. Hopper's vision of America is considered here within a very small area of his work, as it focuses on what I have referred to as his mature paintings, and those which are primarily concerned with the depiction of the human condition, as he perceived it, within the modern America city.

I have discussed Hopper's human figures as definitively American and his depiction of them reflects the influences upon his work of contemporary popular culture. The Great American Nude within Hopper's paintings can be seen to be derived from the artistic traditions of the female nude within Western art, and in particular the nudes in modern French painting. His nudes have been considered in relation to Matisse's *Blue Nude* (1907), Manet's *Olympia* (1863), Bonnard's depictions of his wife Marthe, and the work of Dégas and Cassatt, all of which are representative of artistic developments in the representation of the female figure. Such references allude to the strengths of the influence of French art upon Hopper's work, influences which are borne out by his early subject matter, whether executed in Paris during his visits there (between 1906 and 1910) or after his return to America, which is mainly in the style of the French Impressionists and suggests a preference for French subject matter. Once Hopper had established his mature style which, although it had distanced itself from the Impressionist influences of his earlier work, still appears to contain references to modern French painting, that of Dégas in particular. Consequently, I have shown that the period around 1924 represents a watershed period in Hopper's paintings as there is a distinct change in his working style, validated by studies executed at the Whitney Studio Club between 1923 and 1924.

Matisse's *Blue Nude* (figure 25) is especially pertinent as it has been demonstrated to be instrumental as a defining moment of Hopper's painterly progression. The exhibition of this painting in 1924 at the Brummer Gallery in New York has to be recognised as an influence on the changes that take place in Hopper's female nudes between 1923 and 1924. There is a clear response to the *Blue Nude*, and Matisse's drawing *La Luxe II* (figure 35), in Hopper's single line drawing *Reclining Nude* (figure 24). This drawing is a turning point in Hopper's representation which is defined in his oil paintings by females which are less moulded and sculpted by tone and shading, and are more clearly defined by line.

Hopper's nudes also benefit from the American vernacular tradition. They may be viewed as a fusion of the anatomical tradition of Western art which influenced Hopper through the teaching of Eakins and Henri, as well as the contemporary portrayals of the female figure in advertising in the guise of the 'all American' Gibson Girl. The popular style of the image of the Gibson Girl emerges in the pin-up girl images of the 1940s, which reflect the female figure as both signifying and celebrating heterosexual male desire.[2] Essentially, Hopper's females, like the pin-up images, are indebted to both fine and mass art.[3] The popular images of mass art, like the pin-up, rely strongly on the conventions of the reclining nude, which again refer back to paintings such as Manet's *Olympia* and Matisse's *Blue Nude*.

In consequence, the developments of Hopper's female figures as definitively American can be recognised as an influence on artists such as Tom Wesselmann (b.1931) who repeatedly worked the idea of the iconic image of the 'all American' girl in his series of *Great American Nudes* (1961–73) (see figure 186). This particular interpretation of the female figure, as derived from both the traditions of Western European painting and the images of popular culture also features in the work of Marjorie Strider whose *Triptych* (1963) (figure 187) portrays a contemporary female figure, clad in a bikini, and Mel Ramos' (b.1935) *Ode to Ang* (1972) (figure 188), derived from Ingres' *La Source* (1856) (figure 189), which represents a young woman whose body reveals where she has been sunbathing, now after the removal of her bikini the image shows the contrast between the tanned skin and the pale skin colour where the model had been wearing a bikini in the sun, in a similar way to Wesselmann in his *Great American Nude* series. Both Wesselmann and Ramos demonstrate a reference to traditional Western European art and the popular images of the pin-up girl, but they have made the images definitively American, as did Hopper.

My reference to 'American-ness' that derived from popular culture is a debt to Hopper's representations of the American female within a modern American context. Both Ramos and Wesselmann, in particular, are aware, as was Hopper, of the relationship between the female nude and the consumer world and both define her in relation to commodities such as food and fashion. This is demonstrated by Wesselmann's *Great American Nude* series of which figure 186 is an example and Ramos acknowledges the obvious reference to sex in advertising in his *Brand Name Beauties* series (1964–5). However, the relationship between the female figure and consumerism is more subtle in Hopper's paintings. Tom Wesselmann may have entitled his series of nudes as *Great American Nudes*, but Hopper artistically pioneered the subject of the distinctive, and totally American, female icon in his mature paintings.

Hopper's mature paintings also owe a debt to his experiences as a commercial artist and his early illustrations remain influential throughout his career, as has been shown throughout this thesis, as both an influence on his choice of subject matter and in the way that he paints his human figures as representative of certain 'types'. In consequence Hopper's experience as a commercial illustrator made him more aware of advertising and consumer power and desire. Thus his human figures, especially his females, are influenced by this experience, and this is most apparent when he places a woman in a window, as he does in *Tables for Ladies* (figure 142) and in *New York Office* (figure 77), as if they were shop mannequins. As such they effectively represent the ideal model that the female shopper could buy, or become, and in this instance as an object depicted in the window they represent the ideal female as perceived by the artist.[4]

I have considered Hopper's females in terms of the rising tide of consumerism, both as a response to the artist's desire for the females that he paints as objects, and also in relation to the influence of his illustration work upon his mature paintings. The examples of Hopper's commercial work discussed earlier, his awareness of seminal consumer images of the early twentieth century, such as the Gibson Girl, and his ability to perceive the human figure in relation to specific 'types', as derived from advertising, combine in his mature work to create women who are conceived and shaped as commodities. Hopper's females are objectified, and are a response to the modern American consumer culture.

It is the influence of contemporary culture that is apparent in Hopper's representations of the female figure that contributes to the individual nature of his work. He focuses on elements of modern American culture that are now considered as icons, and this is why

his work is especially accessible as a defining image of this period in America. His work still remains individual, as he responded to entirely different elements of modern America as compared to his contemporaries. As I discussed in Chapter four on the American city, Hopper ignores the skyscrapers of Manhattan that were portrayed by artists like Sheeler (figure 127) and O'Keeffe (figure 116), nor did he respond to more traditional American icons like the eagle, the Statue of Liberty or the Flag, which inspired Stuart Davis' series of paintings. However, he responds to the modernity of the American city, although he chose to confine his images to the areas of the city that he inhabited; which can be defined as the environments of the white middle-class worker in Manhattan.

Hopper finds his iconic images amongst the ordinary, the everyday, and the mundane: empty streets, Manhattan brownstones, movie theatres, diners, and automats. These individual areas of Manhattan combine to create a personal vision of the city that is predominantly inspired by journeys on the New York 'El'. These definitive American city environments are also based on the lower middle-class environments of the city, areas that he frequented. Essentially, Hopper responded to the modern American city in an individual way that has made icons of specific, but ordinary environments of the modern city. His depictions of the human figure within these specific modern American 'landscapes' has defined his place within the American Scene, but also as a 'painter-philosopher' as he imbued his paintings with the deeper psychology of the human figure within the city, and also within the human condition.[5]

The element of philosophy in Hopper's work, alluded to by Jeffrey, is illustrated by his references to the human condition within his paintings. His paintings are evocative of a certain mood, generally one of dissociation and alienation, which is created by his treatment of the figures and the play of light. Hopper uses light in his paintings to emphasise the alienation and isolation of his figures within their environments by setting the work either early in the morning or late at night, as with *Early Sunday Morning* (figure 12) and *Nighthawks* (figure 14). These are lonely times of the day, and they allow Hopper to paint the normally thriving social spaces and streets of Manhattan at a time when they are devoid of people. Therefore, the characters that he does place within these definitive American urban spaces are automatically sucked into the void of this alienating time of the day.

This is made particularly poignant when he displays this sense of alienation within the painting *Early Sunday Morning* (figure 12), as the empty street epitomises Hopper's

vision of the modern American city, particularly as he has depicted the street early in the morning emphasising the isolation of the scene, as it is a Sunday and a day of inactivity. The silence and stillness of Sunday as a psychologically alienating and isolating space is echoed in Weegee's *Naked City*, where he photographs an empty Manhattan street early on Sunday morning (figure 190) which he accompanied by the words:

> This is the most peaceful time of the whole week. Everything is so quiet...no traffic noises...and no crime either. People are just too exhausted for anything. The Sunday papers, all bundled up, are thrown on the sidewalk in front of the still-closed candy stores and newspaper stands. New Yorkers like their Sunday papers, especially the lonely men and women who live in furnished rooms. They leave early to get the papers...they get two. One of the standard-size papers, either the *Times* or *Tribune*...they're thick and heavy, plenty of reading in them, and then also the tabloid *Mirror*...to read Winchell and learn all about Café Society and the Broadway playboys and their Glamour Girl Friends. Then back to the room...to read and read...to drive away loneliness...but one tires of reading. One wants someone to talk to, to argue with, and yes, someone to make love to. How about a movie—NO—too damn much talking on the screen. "But Darling I do love you...RAHLLY I do,"...then the final clinch with the lovers in each other's arms...then it's even worse, to go back alone to the furnished room...to look up at the ceiling and cry oneself to sleep.[6]

Weegee's response here defines a vision of an alienated New Yorker on a stagnant Sunday morning, and describes the lonely isolation of the figure that is located within Hopper's American interior spaces, for example the furnished room or the apartment. These words highlight the silence of a Sunday within New York City, as the people in that city space are rendered impotent by the inactivity of the day. There is nothing for them to do on their one day of rest from the monotony of their urban existence, except read their Sunday paper and meditate on their loneliness and their inability to escape the nihilistic psychology of the modern American city.

Placed together, these elements combine to imbue Hopper's paintings with an ability to convey events that appear to be isolated within an unknown narrative. This is consistent with a statement that Hopper made in 1956, when he claimed that:

> 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.[7]

This also reflects the sparse compositional nature of Hopper's paintings, which he achieved through a process of reducing his images to a bare minimum of detail in order to convey the psychological impact he sought. He continued to clarify this process of reduction from 1924 until his death, removing all elements from his images that were

not required, so that he did not lose the original 'thought' behind the painting. This process culminates in his definitive image *Sun in an Empty Room* (figure 3); a painting which states his philosophic pessimism and acknowledgement of the final act of the human experience—death.

I have discussed many of Hopper's paintings as having an implied visual narrative structure, and the figures have been described as full of angst and alienation as, they, like the characters of Hemingway's short story *The Killers*, are unable to find any sense of *dénouement* (previously mentioned in both chapter 3 and 4). Therefore, we see the human figure trapped within its alienating environment, whether it be a physical or psychological space, unable to resolve its isolation. Hopper's figures are even unable to find a sense of *dénouement* or a resolution to their problems when they travel, or leave the confines of the city, in an attempt to seek a new life for themselves. They find themselves trapped again by their own inertia. He emphasises this with images of lonely roads, as in *Solitude* #56 (figure 67), and railroad tracks that have no visible destination, as in *House by a Railroad* (figure 136), *Hotel by a Railroad* (figure 49) and *Approaching a City* (figure 126). Consequently, these figures, trapped as they are within their human condition, will never find a resolution. The eternal confinement within this lonely and alienated existence is all pervading, until *Sun in an Empty Room* (figure 3), when the final answer becomes clear. The final destination of the human condition is death and this is the *only* resolution to the lives of the alienated figures that Hopper places within his paintings.

Sun in an Empty Room (1963) has erroneously been thought by many to be one of Hopper's last works simply because it takes his process of reduction in his images to an ultimate conclusion. This painting is the apotheosis of his oeuvre, as it is an empty room, devoid of furniture or any interior decoration and focuses on the play of light that enters the room through the window on the right of the composition. There are no figures placed within this interior space, although Hopper did allude to the presence of one in the preparatory stage, when he said that 'I had a figure in the sketch, but the figure was too big.'[8] This preparatory drawing no longer exists, and the two surviving preparatory sketches do not indicate the presence of any figures at all.[9]

This painting is the culmination of the process of reduction that Hopper applied to his work over a forty year period of his career. His works have moved from those of his early career where he painted wide angled views of the American landscape, as in *Blackwell's Island* (1911), *American Village* (1912) and *Queensborough Bridge* (1913),

moving in to focus on the single room, as in *Room in New York* (1932) and *Room in Brooklyn* (1932), and finally a concentration on the figure within a bare interior as in *Morning Sun* and *Excursion into Philosophy*. *Sun in an Empty Room*, is to my mind the ultimate 'Hopper' image. He has removed everything from the image that is not absolutely essential, and in this work he has even erased any visible trace of the human figure.

Hopper removes the physical presence of the figure in other paintings, as in *Early Sunday Morning* and *House by a Railroad*, for example, but in these two paintings the human presence is implied by the window blinds. These blinds rest at different levels which imply that an unseen figure has moved them at some point. In *Sun in an Empty Room*, the presence of the figure is not even implied. The window is bare and there does not appear to be any glass in it. It merely allows a view onto the greenery outside. The only essence of the figure that could be considered to remain is the life force indicated by the light that streams through the window. Hopper believed that light represented life itself, and consequently the light that floods into this empty room is representative of the life force of the human figure who is now absent.[10] With the exception of the light in the room the space is empty. This painting thus suggests death; the death of the human figure leaving only the empty space where it had once existed.

This painting might be seen as the final resting point of Hopper's depiction of the human figure. His mature paintings allude to death, particularly in his tunnels, as in *Approaching a City*, and pathways leading to foreboding woodland, as in *House at Dusk*, which has already been discussed in Chapter two as referring to the death of his mother. He even makes reference to suicide in *Hotel by the Railroad* and speculates on the nihilistic aspects of the human condition within modern America with his representations of the mundane spaces of everyday middle-class living in offices, automats, and apartment interiors.

His paintings of the human figure, particularly in the context of the city, explore the idea of confinement within these definitive American spaces. He condemns his figures to a life of eternal imprisonment in the everyday environments of their lives within his version of modern America. His men are trapped within the confines of their offices, as in *Office in a Small City*, and are weighed down by the monotony of their lives, also witnessed by *Sunday* and *Pennsylvania Coal Town*, where men sit or stand hunched over, weighed down by the tedium of their existence, and his women are isolated by their introspective thoughts whether they are in a public space like the movie theatre or

the automat, or within the private space of the apartment. Even his couples find no solace in their relationship as they are troubled and alienated, a reflection of his own relationship. The only escape that Hopper offers his figures is that of death and so *Sun in an Empty Room* represents the final release for these tortured people.

O'Doherty had asked Hopper during the Summer of 1963, just before he started work on *Sun in an Empty Room*, whether he was a pessimist, and elicited the reply that, 'A pessimist? I guess so. I'm not proud of it. At my age don't you get to be?' Hopper continued, 'It all ends in the same place. At [the age of] fifty you don't think of the end much, but at eighty you think about it a lot. Find me a philosopher to comfort me in my old age.'[11] Therefore it is understandable that this work has been erroneously attributed as Hopper's last work. It clearly demonstrates his preoccupations with his own death (he died four years later).

Hopper also admitted that he a long been 'intrigued' by the thought of an empty room.[12] It had clearly been an idea that he had had in his thoughts for a considerable time, as he noted when explaining his motivations for *Sun in an Empty Room*:

> I've always been intrigued by an empty room anyway. When we were at school, du Bois and Rockwell Kent and others debated what a room looked like when there was nobody to see it, nobody looking in even. Of course there might be a mouse somewhere. I'd done so much with the figure I decided to leave the figure out.[13]

Hopper's words here not only reveal the thought behind the subject of this painting but also acknowledge the crucial role of the figure within his paintings. That Hopper, as an art student, had considered the implications of the empty room as a subject suggests that the pessimistic inevitability of the human condition, death, had been present as an underlying thought throughout his career as an artist. This is perhaps why his paintings containing people, particularly within New York City, reveal his pessimistic view of the modern city.

The primary concern in this particular work, *Sun in an Empty Room*, as reflected in all his paintings, is Hopper's treatment of light. This has been addressed throughout this thesis as a crucial element in his paintings, and in particular, the effect this has upon his figures. In this painting Hopper has reduced the elements of this painting to such an extent that it allows his treatment of light exclusivity within the image. The illumination in this empty room has annihilated the figure. Hopper's use of light has been

demonstrated to be harshly penetrating and unforgiving throughout, and he uses it in earlier paintings to stream though windows and 'attack' his figures.

Hopper's painted light is strong and bleaches the elements of the image that it touches. In *Morning in a City* and *Morning Sun*, for example, it rests on the two females and bleaches their skin to such an extent that it appears as if it is cold, white stone or concrete. The sunlight that Hopper paints resting on the faces of his female figures also 'attacks' their facial features and renders them devoid of form and personality. The faces become ghoulish, like death masks, as demonstrated by *Morning Sun* and that of the female face that appears on the left side of the composition in *Chop Suey*. They are portrayed as being so pallid, it is as if they are already dead, like cadavers.

Like the Luminist painters of the nineteenth century (c.1850–1875), Hopper created a distinctly indigenous style of painting, both in style and subject matter. Both Hopper and the Luminists relied on the interpretation of light within their work as their primary mode of expression.[14] The luminosity that they employ in their works saturates their paintings and creates a 'suspension of time'.[15] Wilmerding's words, although written specifically about Luminist paintings, could equally be applied to Hopper's landscapes and distinctly American city locations in his mature paintings as he often paints his figures as if frozen, giving his images a movie 'still' quality. The light that he represents is harsh and unforgiving and he prefers the sunlight from the early morning or evening. The evening sunlight is particularly nihilistic, and Hopper had personal reasons for considering it so, as it was the blinding light at sunset that caused his friend John Dos Passos' driving accident that was responsible for killing his wife Katy and for him losing one eye.[16]

It is this obtrusive and harsh glare from the setting sun that is also present in Hopper's final two paintings. In *Chair Car* (1965) (figure 166) and *Two Comedians* (1966) (figure 191) the light has the strong yellow of the setting sun and can be attributed to a philosophical reference to the sun setting on the lives of both the Hoppers. This is especially the case as *Two Comedians* is a painting of the two of them taking their final bow on life before their deaths. Hopper died on 15 May 1967, and Jo Hopper only lived on until 6 March 1968. In this final painting Hopper has portrayed two figures dressed as the tragic lovers Pierrot and Pierrette. These two figures have clear references to both the world of the theatre that Hopper and Jo had enjoyed so much, and to French art.

The preparatory sketches for this work reveal Hopper's working processes as he portrays the two figures as characters from the *commedia dell'arte*, probably inspired by Honoré Daumier's (1808–79) lithograph *The Recall of the Singer* (1857) (figure 192). Again Hopper has given this painting a personal twist as Jo Hopper admitted that the two characters (the tall male and the rather diminutive female) represented herself and Hopper.[17] This work is then particularly poignant as he has placed them taking their 'final bow' to life. This acknowledges his speculations on his own mortality, as well as that of all his human figures, as the two tragic comedians have played out the most ironic comedy of all; human existence.

I have emphasised the importance of the theatre and the movies to Hopper's work throughout this thesis, particularly in relation to Film Noir. The theatre and the movies are significant as influences as they stemmed originally from the encouragement of Henri. Jo Hopper's life as an actress before her marriage is also significant, not only because it acknowledges her interest in the world of the theatre and the movies, but also helps to explain her versatility as an assistant for Hopper. She was responsible for assembling and arranging the props, effectively playing stage manager, as well as performing most of the parts. She acted as Hopper's assistant throughout their married life together, not only with his painting but also by keeping his record books for him. She also arranged and refused interviews on his behalf, often speaking for him, and was to a large extent responsible for his public image during his lifetime. She strove to keep their private life private and was keen to mystify the personal side of Hopper, taking the example from the way that Dégas managed to keep his own private and public life separate.[18]

She was constantly disappointed by the lack of artistic success that she achieved after her marriage and her diaries indicate that she clearly felt ignored and side-lined by Hopper's career.[19] It is important to note that at the time of their marriage Jo was a more successful artist than Hopper and it was she who was responsible for his inclusion in the 1923 exhibition at The Brooklyn Museum, which launched his career as a painter, although he had previously sold one painting at the Armoury Show in 1913.[20] Her diaries reveal her resentment at this lack of success and she clearly felt that Hopper did not do enough to help her, nor did he encourage her. In fact he was openly discouraging and critical of her work, both in its style and subject matter.[21] As the relationships played out on the canvases of Hopper's mature work are indicative of the tempestuous and troubled relationship of the Hoppers then it is significant that he gives Jo equal billing on the final painting before his death. In *Two Comedians* he has placed them both side by

side on a stage acknowledging their partnership, both as working partners and the partnership in marriage, as well as referring back to their mutual interest in the theatre, and Jo's former career as a actress.

Throughout this thesis I have argued that Hopper put more of his personal life onto the canvases than has been considered before, and that his artworks are clearly a vehicle for the expression of his personal philosophies and his relationship with his wife and his sexual desires. Jo Hopper revealed that the issue of sex was a perennial problem between them, one that seemingly arose just after their marriage and continued throughout their lives together, and one that she documents repeatedly in her diaries.[22] With this in mind Hopper's female figures have to be considered as a reaction to, and an embodiment of, his unfulfilled sexual desires.

The clothed females are generally more sensual than his nudes, as the clothing in which they are depicted hugs their contours and suggests the shape of their thighs, hips and breasts. In *Summertime* and *Office at Night*, *New York Office* and *South Carolina Morning* the females are sensual and curvaceous. Hopper has created women in these paintings that exude sensuality, yet they do not display their sexuality in an overt manner, certainly not like the stripper in *Girlie Show*. In *Summertime* the young girl stands on the step to the brownstone building in a position that permits the light to reveal the contours of her thighs underneath the fabric, in *Office at Night* the woman stands in a twisted position which accentuates her curvaceous figure which placed against the angular shape of the filing cabinet enhances her curves, and the one in *South Carolina Morning* is portrayed in a red dress that hugs her contours revealing the curves of her hips, and it is cut low enough so that it displays enough of her cleavage to shows her large rounded breasts. These women are sensual and represent a version of Hopper's ideal female figure.

The reason that they are more overtly sexual when they are clothed is probably because they offer a sense of sexual allure before the act of sex. Once they are naked they can be seen more honestly, like the 'wise tramp' in *A Woman in the Sun* where her veneer has been stripped away, suggesting that once Hopper's couples are married any illusion of the romantic or sexual fantasy offered by the young females in such images as *Summertime*, *Office at Night*, *New York Office* and *South Carolina Morning* is removed. If this is considered alongside Jo Hopper's dairy entries, then these clothed female figures are representative of the ideal fantasy of the artist, and consequently the nudes constitute his perception of the stark reality after marriage.

Sex was clearly a problematic area in Hopper's life and his painted females may be seen as synonymous with sex, as he places them beside, or on, a bed; significantly it has rumpled sheets to indicate its use, as seen in *Morning in the City*, *Morning Sun* and *A Woman in the Sun*. This is nowhere more apparent than when he has painted a couple together on a bed as he did in *Summer in the City* and *Excursions into Philosophy*. These couples are troubled, dislocated and alienated within their space and within their relationship. Their sexual union has not alleviated any of the tense alienation within their relationship; only exacerbated it. The placement of the bed within these compositions has to be considered as significant as it remains in the painting even when all other extraneous detail has been removed from the interior space on the canvas. Therefore the bed has to be considered as a direct reference to sex, particularly where the mood of the painting, as in *Summer in the City*, has been described as 'post-coital melancholy'.[23]

Hopper's images of young women can be read as representative of his sexual desires (his ideal females) and when he depicts men and women together they suggest his experience of his problematic marital relationship. His paintings trace the potential troubled development of relationships, from the young couple in *Sunlight in a Cafeteria* who look across at each other, as they shyly flirt, and *Summer Evening* where the young woman is stubbornly 'holding out for matrimony'.[24] Then his couples like those in *Summer in the City* and *Excursions into Philosophy*, where he has placed them on the bed clearly indicate the problematic nature of their sexual relationship, and hence the sense of post-coital melancholy. The older couples in Hopper's paintings are troubled and alienated as their earlier relationship problems are now compounded by time and *ennui*. They are unable to resolve their differences and find themselves trapped within their troubled and alienating relationship.

The suggestion of the captivity of his figures within the space in which they are placed is crucial to Hopper's vision of the human condition in his paintings. He offers the possibility of escape in paintings such as *Hotel by a Railroad*, but he also ensures that the railroad that is visible through the hotel window does not offer any real hope of escape. The railroad tracks in such a painting lead nowhere as they are placed horizontally across the canvas and are effectively cut off by the edges of the painting, just as in *House by a Railroad*. Even where he does include railroad tracks that lead into the painting, as in *Approaching a City*, they disappear into a dark tunnel which again offers not so much escape, as oblivion.

Hopper implies the potential of escape with the inclusion of railroad tracks, but immediately cuts off the railroad each side of the canvas in *Hotel by a Railroad* thereby ensuring that his figures are unable to escape by using it. This also offers a potential explanation as to why there is a reference to suicide in this work, admittedly from Jo, because the man's only possible route of exit from his situation in this painting is death. Again this painting represents the troubled relationship between the Hoppers and it is possible that the reason Jo reacts so strongly to the 'very depressing' nature of the painting was that she felt it echoed her relationship with Hopper.[25]

Even when Hopper's characters do seemingly manage to escape by travelling away from their relationships and from the city they find that they are still confined and that it does not bring the resolution that they desired. They either become isolated within the immensity of the American landscape as in *House by a Railroad*, or they are trapped within the railroad carriage as in *Chair Car*, where the door at the end of the carriage has no handle thereby ensuring that all the passengers are confined within the space of the carriage. They have effectively exchanged their imprisonment within one interior space for another.

Hopper's representation of the human figure within the confines of the modern American city, particularly that of the female, is his philosophical portrayal of the human condition as he perceived it within his experience of contemporary Manhattan. His paintings of New York City are a direct response to a specific American city 'landscape' of deserted streets, solitary diners in automats, closed theatres and empty movie palaces that existed only in the imagination of the artist, yet have become representative icons of the modern American city.

These definitive American images are created, not through the illustration of recognisable New York City icons, such as Brooklyn Bridge (1883), the Empire State Building (1931) and the Statue of Liberty (1886), for example, but through the representation of contemporary white middle-class American culture on canvas. The influence of advertising slogans and images, and the mass culture medium of the movie, when placed in specific American environments all embrace the importance of popular and mass culture upon the population. These elements of popular American culture, the dominant consumer culture and the influence of the movie developed in the early twentieth century have become synonymous with Hopper's vision of modern America and his perception of the effect of modern city life upon its inhabitants.

Therefore, the city for Hopper is as much about the human context as any other area of his work. In his city paintings the figures that he paints allow for a different and more psychologically based awareness of modern phenomena. What interests Hopper in the city is not the noise, energy, or expanse, as it does his contemporaries, but the effect that it has upon humanity, and again he explores this through the distinctive American environs of the city. As such, he responds to the modern American city in as fresh and individual way as the Modernists.

There is much about New York that he ignores, as he focuses on the street level or the level at which the city would have been seen from the 'EL'. He also concentrates on the effect of the city on the individual which is why his canvases fail to acknowledge the busy street and the cacophony of noise by which he was surrounded. Hopper's New York is eerily silent and still, like a ghost town, and he summed up his intention for his paintings by saying that he considered each 'an instant in time, arrested—and acutely realised with the utmost intensity.'[26] Although he was a realist painter, this is not a depiction of reality, it is a psychological representation of New York, as if it is permanently early Sunday morning, or late at night. It is the New York perceived by an introspective personality. He deliberately focuses on certain times of day, such as dawn and dusk, which allow him to visualise the city in an idealised and silent way, and this embodies the notion that he paints the 'pathos of the big city' and 'the loneliness of the individual in an impersonal setting'.[27] Essentially his vision of modern America in his mature paintings became the antithesis of the quasi-utopian images of modern America that he created in his commercial illustration work, as if he wanted to completely redress the illusion that he had helped to create through his commercial work early in his artistic career.

It is for these reasons that it is limiting to define Hopper's work purely within the confines of 'American Scene' painting alone. His work reveals elements of the 'American Scene' in that he depicts definitive American spaces and environments, but his images are also imbued with a deeper sense of the psychology of his fellow human as they exist within his city spaces and they ponder on the pessimistic, even nihilistic, philosophy of the human condition which renders them unable to escape their destiny. Hopper's treatment of the human condition within the modern American city can only be resolved by death. One has the sense that his figures are gradually worn down and beaten by a harsh and cruel American light, which eventually eradicates their existence, leaving only sunlight in an empty room. This is a destiny which condemns them to

eternal confinement within a silent and frozen world on canvas, representing Hopper's vision of their nihilistic existence within the modern American city.

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[1] See W. Lippmann, *Public Opinion*, London, 1949, pp.79–158. (Originally published in 1929)
[2] D. McCarthy, *The Nude in American Painting, 1950–1980*, Cambridge, England, 1998, p.82.
[3] Ibid., p.82.
[4] R. Bowlby, *Just Looking*, New York and London, 1985, p.32.
[5] I. Jeffrey (ed.), *Edward Hopper, 1882–1967: Hayward Gallery, London 11th February to 29th March 1981: A Selection from the exhibition Edward Hopper, the Art and the Artist, held at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York from16th September to 25th January 1981*, London,1981, p.15.
[6] Weegee, (Arthur Fellig), *The Naked City*, New York, 1945, p.14.
[7] A. Eliot, *Three Hundred Years of American Painting*, New York, 1957, p.298.
[8] Quoted in B. O'Doherty, *Object and Idea: An Art Critic's Journal 1961–1967*, New York, 1967, p.26.
[9] G. Levin, *Edward Hopper, Catalogue Raisonné*, New York, 1995, volume III, p.376.
[10] G. Levin, *Edward Hopper, An Intimate Biography*, Los Angeles, California and London, 1998, p.561.
[11] B. O'Doherty, "Portrait: Edward Hopper", *Art in America*, 52, December 1964. p.72.
[12] Quoted in B. O'Doherty, 1967, p.26.
[13] B. O'Doherty, "Portrait: Edward Hopper", *Art in America*, 52, December 1964. p.80.
[14] J. Wilmerding, *American Art*, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1976, p.93.
[15] Ibid., p.94.
[16] G. Levin, 1998, p.568.
[17] L. Goodrich, *Edward Hopper*, New York, 1983, p.154.
[18] G. Levin, 1998, pp.183–4.
[19] See G. Levin, 1998 for further detail from Jo Hopper's diaries, particularly pages 367–8, 409–11, 443–4, 446–7.
[20] Ibid., p.171.
[21] For example see Jo Hopper's diary entry for February 28, 1952. Cited in Ibid., p.448.
[22] See Ibid., pp.178–83, 373,503 and 525 for further detail from Jo Hopper's diaries on their sexual relationship.
[23] Ibid., p.420.
[24] Record Book III, p.25. Cited in G. Levin, 1995, volume III, p.320.
[25] Jo Hopper diary entry August 28, 1953. Cited in G. Levin, 1998, p.449.
[26] B. O'Doherty, 1967, p. 42.
[27] F. Sieberling, 'Movie Scene Subject of Oil Painting: Loneliness of Big City Stressed by Artist', *Toledo Sunday Times*, July 14, 1940, p.8.

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