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Frozen Time in Gustav Deutsch's *Shirley: Visions of Reality*

Abstract: Gustav Deutsch's film *Shirley: Visions of Reality* (2013) is a slow cinema film which employs Edward Hopper's paintings and reproduces their aesthetics. Both Hopper's art and slow cinema can be characterized by silence, passivity, and the theme of alienation. The mood of alienation and loneliness, accompanied by the visual motifs and the tension between light and shadow taken from Hopper's paintings, create an image of suspended time in the film. This is also enacted by the techniques characteristic of slow cinema that the film uses, particularly the long take. The poetics of slow cinema is employed to present the protagonist in in-between spaces, times and states that are located beyond the productive precinct of capitalism. The painterly stillness evoked in the film reflects the continuous present of the character's existence and her subjective experience of time away from the culture of acceleration. Her interior time is juxtaposed with other time vectors: the historical time of 1930s–1960s America, historical decontextualization and the temporality of non-places. The distinct time vectors contribute to the sense of timelessness that the film ultimately generates.

Keywords: suspended time, inbetweenness, slow cinema, alienation, Deutsch, *Shirley: Visions of Reality*

It's already clear to me how much life is forgotten even as it happens. Most of it. The unregarded present spooling away from us, the soft tumble of unremarkable thoughts, the long-neglected miracle of existence.

Ian McEwan, *Nutshell*

Slow cinema

Slow cinema is a trend in artistic cinema that came into being in the 1990s with films by Béla Tarr, Theo Angelopoulos and Alexander Sokurov. It emphasizes a slow pace of narrative, silence, minimalism, passivity and contemplation, which require the viewer's active engagement. An aesthetic of slow consists in de-dramatization, concentration on non-events that do not contribute to the narrative development, the use of long takes, de-centred and minimalist modes of storytelling, and a conspicuous emphasis on detail, internal experience and quiet observation of the everyday (Flanagan, "Aesthetic of Slow"). The dominating themes are those of isolation, alienation and boredom. Slow cinema defies expectations: sequences that would be very short or omitted in mainstream cinema are prolonged and accentuated here, while those in which the viewer would expect a slowing down and attention to detail, for instance, in fight scenes, in slow cinema may be very brief or excluded entirely. In this way, slow cinema critiques the prominence of action, violence and spectacle in mainstream Hollywood film, which has returned to an aesthetic of "cinema of attraction" with aggressive visual and sonic elements shattering spatio-temporal continuity (see e.g. Shaviro; Denson). Slow cinema thus renders alternative spatialities and temporalities, situated in the margins of the accelerated space-times of capitalism.

Slow cinema gestures back towards the modernist cinema of the 1960s, yet it is not as successful as Bergman's, Godard's and Antonioni's films, which were widely distributed and highly appreciated. Besides this discrepancy in popularity, there are also other features that distinguish slow cinema from the modernist school. While both attempt to blend the past and the present, and objective and subjective narration, in order to create self-conscious narration, modernism does so by means of an expressive *mélange* of elements of film language put together in an unconventional way, while slow cinema resorts to reductionism and crudity of form (Syska 241). The aim in slow cinema is to allow intense insight into a situation and to visualize the internal energy of film space-time, rather than to depict a sequence of events and the passage of time (Syska 241). Another important feature is that slow cinema shares with the modernist time-image Henri Bergson's resistance to clock time and his perception of time as a realm of flow and becoming, yet, unlike time-image, many films in slow cinema "do not seek to pit the temporal as a (good) dimension of heterogeneous multiplicity and creative synthesis against one of space as the (evil) realm of distinct homogeneity" (Koepnick 47). Instead, they critique Bergson's biased prioritizing of the temporal over the spatial and attempt to explore space as a dimension of multiple time vectors. This post-Bergsonian slowness, as Lutz Koepnick points out, can be seen as a juncture where heterogeneous temporalities meet (48).

Gustav Deutsch's film *Shirley: Visions of Reality* (2013) is a slow cinema film which employs Edward Hopper's paintings and reproduces their aesthetics, breaking down the boundaries between painting, photography and film. Hopper's art is a perfect choice for a slow film, sharing with it a number of features: silence, passivity, and the theme of alienation. Deutsch presents the protagonist in in-between spaces, times and states that are located beyond the productive precinct of capitalism, creating in the process the image of suspended or frozen time. The film combines various time vectors: the historical time of 1930s–1960s America simultaneously with historical decontextualization, the temporality of non-places and the protagonist's interior time. The distinct time vectors contribute to the sense of timelessness that the film ultimately generates. As in other slow cinema films, in *Shirley* action and causality are supplanted by empty moments—*temps morts*, dead time. In the case of *Shirley*, these are not just moments—the whole film is woven from dedramatized dead time.

Deutsch's/ Hopper's Americana

The film is based on 13 paintings by Edward Hopper which are stitched into the fictitious story of a woman, Shirley (Stephanie Cumming), over several decades in America. The 13 scenes of the film take place on 28 August in the year each painting was created. Each of them is introduced by the voice of a radio news presenter who reads news items on the Great Depression, World War II, the Cold War, Korea, JFK, Martin Luther King's speech and the Vietnam War. There are no dialogues in the film, only Shirley's interior monologues. In this, *Shirley* deviates from most examples of slow cinema, which usually follow the protagonist from the third person point of view, without access to his/her thoughts.

Shirley is a New York actress, playing for the Living Theatre, an American theatre company founded in 1947 by actress Judith Malina and poet and painter Julian Beck. The theatre's aim is the transformation of the hierarchical, competitive structure of society to a cooperative one by means of direct spectacle that breaks the fourth wall between the actors and the spectators. Shirley takes part in the experiments of the troupe, during which time she lives with them. When the theatre suspends its activity during the Great Depression in the 1930s and the Hollywood blacklist period in the 1940s, she works as an usherette at the cinema (this sequence is based on the painting "New York Movie") and as a secretary ("Office at Night"). Later we see Shirley in a hotel lobby reading a Thornton Wilder play ("Hotel Lobby") to be directed by Elia Kazan, in which she is to have the part of a maid. Shirley criticizes Kazan for denouncing eight people as communist party members, causing them to be added to the Hollywood blacklist. At the end of Deutsch's film, Shirley is about to move to Europe with the Living Theatre which has decided to leave America because of its persecution after staging *The Brig*, a

play that critiques the American army for the oppressive treatment of prisoners in a U.S. Marine Corps military prison. The information about Shirley's life is provided in the film in her interior monologues. Most of the film revolves around glimpses of her private life: at the cinema, at home and with her partner Stephen (Christopher Bach).

The characteristic aesthetics of Hopper's paintings (supported by digital colouring) pervades the film. Hopper's art generally depicts ordinary places in American cities, such as cafés, diners, train stations, offices, and ordinary apartments, which often appear unnaturally empty and anonymous. The paintings feature solitary figures who seem to drift in an existential limbo, lost in "day-dream scenarios", "on reverie's surface", somewhere between the past and the future, and thus they contribute to the emotional remoteness of the scenes (O'Doherty 89). Yet, as Margaret Iversen argues, theirs is not ordinary sadness; their mood is not just of the despair of a lost love and failed relationship, but a much more profound existential pain and desperation (56). Even if the characters are portrayed in physical proximity to other people inhabiting a scene, they do not communicate, but remain unconnected, "psychologically remote, existing in a private space of dreams and contemplation" (Levin).

The mood of isolation in the paintings is created by a consistent set of visual motifs, such as a variety of sharply delineated walls, doors and windows, which demarcate the characters from the world, and represent this "feeling of separation, of being walled off or penned in, combine[d] with a sense of near-unbearable exposure" (Laing 17). The space around the characters articulates those emotional states. As Jean Gillies points out, silence springs from the lack of movement, as it is movement that produces sound and implies the passage of time (404). Hopper's paintings are devoid of movement because they thematize empty spaces that evoke the impression of silence—a landscape, a solitary house, or a deserted city around a lonely figure or uncommunicative couples. The scenes are stripped of unnecessary details in ground and objects, leaving the surfaces empty. Light does not serve to accentuate details but "to limit the degree of complexity in the surface pattern of a painting" (Gillies 405). This also results in the impression of stillness and silence, which in turn generates the sense of timelessness. The places in Hopper's paintings seem non-descript and therefore universal—colour and light "reveal solidity of form while creating ambience and abstract relationships suggestive of time and place without making specific reference to it" (Gallup). This sense of timelessness, alienation and silence as content is furthermore fashioned, as Gillies demonstrates in her analysis, by spatial distortions in the paintings, enacted by obtuse angles, denial of the horizon and ambiguous sources of light, which lead to the viewers' inability to orient themselves to the painting in terms of space and time.

The mood of isolation and withdrawal from engagement with the world is also shaped by the play of light and shadow, another characteristic feature of Hopper's aesthetics. He juxtaposes very intense, distinct and high-pitched light areas with

dark ones, “two separate but interpenetrating domains where the pale yellows of the interior light and the cool blues of the exterior co-exist” (Iversen 63). In consequence, as Peter Wollen argues, the aesthetics of the paintings oscillates between clarity and vision, and darkness and gloom (73). This play between light and shadow creates the mood of a space and reflects the mood of a character. For instance, in “Automat” the black window behind a woman sitting in a café is, in Iversen’s interpretation, a metaphorical representation of her despondency and brooding, and seems to subsume her, while the reflection of lights in the window indicates “the vertiginous lure of nothingness” (57).

The mood of alienation and despair contributes to the paintings’ saturation with melancholic sensibility. Hubert Beck treats Hopper’s paintings as allegorical representations of the city resulting from the artist’s melancholic gaze. He claims that the melancholy of Hopper’s art and city creates a contemplative question in which time is immobilized (qtd. in Lipiński 75). The melancholic gaze becomes thereby a kind of rescue opening up the possibility of reflection, which becomes a mode of being in the city and towards the city without rejecting it and without yielding to its speed (Beck qtd. in Lipiński 75). Likewise, as Iversen points out, in Walter Benjamin’s understanding of the allegorical aspect of melancholy, allegory becomes a way of reflecting on the meaning of the “fallen world” and a productive attempt to find meaning in its fragments (61, 63).

Shirley assimilates the paintings’ introspective mood of alienation and solitude in the city. Deutsch enhances it by the prevailing long shot which produces the effect of characters being overwhelmed by their surroundings. He also preserves Hopper’s bright lighting accompanied by deep colours and his play between shadow and light. Another characteristic trait of Hopper’s painted universe that Deutsch reproduces is the voyeuristic point of view, which he creates by using fixed camera positions combined with the long take. Deutsch doesn’t fully exploit the possibility of getting inside the paintings that is offered by the medium of film, preferring to preserve Hopper’s distant point of view. The sense of being outside is retained throughout the film, and is particularly strong in the sequence based on the painting “Room in New York”, in which we look at Shirley and Steve through a window. Steve is reading a book while Shirley sits at the piano, and we hear the sound of a New York evening in the background. Shirley opens, then closes the window but we hear the sounds with the same intensity, which indicates that we never get a perspective from inside the room. Even if the camera, and with it the spectator, moves closer, the impression of being inside the room is invalidated by the sound of the rain outside. There is a sense of separateness of the characters from the viewer, then, but also of their detachment from each other. In each scene in which the characters appear together, they never talk, always lost in their own worlds, their own thoughts, never connected. Although the window constitutes the only access to the public realm, it doesn’t provide a view of the exterior, but traps the characters inside the room “in an otherwise imprisoning interior”; the window

is thus a point of connection with the outside world whose only role is to accentuate the prevailing sense of separation (Iversen 58). As a result, the scene represents “an erotics of insufficient intimacy” and “ripples with unexpressed frustration, unmet desire, violent restraint” (Laing 39). Intimacy doesn’t seem to bring any consolation to counteract the quiet desperation of existence. Yet, rather than express the pain of existential despair, the characters remain reserved, with their faces exhibiting boredom and resignation. This feature of Hopper’s paintings accords well with slow cinema’s rejection of the mainstream hyperexpressive style of acting that goes against the behaviour of people in real life.

Dead time

The mood of alienation and loneliness, accompanied by the visual motifs described above, and the tension between light and shadow taken from Hopper’s paintings, create an image of suspended time. This is also enacted by the many techniques characteristic of slow cinema that the film exhibits, the most salient of which is the long take. *Shirley* is fashioned out of nearly static tableaux vivants. The idea is to frame the scene in Hopper’s painting in a single fixed shot, stretching out to a period of six minutes either before or after the instant recorded in a given painting. The camera lingers for prolonged periods of time, positioned at one spot, refraining from following the protagonist when she leaves the room; nor is movement cut, even if we sometimes get audio information about what is going on beyond the frame (New York sounds, Shirley in the bathroom). The rooms of Shirley’s and Steve’s apartment are kept exclusively separate, retaining their integrity since the camera never bridges any of them. In one of the scenes towards the end of the film, we look at Shirley lying in bed and hear an ambulance coming to tend to Steve, but Shirley stays in her room, as if she were imprisoned in Hopper’s imagination, in the spatio-temporality of the painting, unable to leave it, or do anything that differs dramatically from what he had painted. The result of not breaking the scene into close-ups is “a sense of muted drama” (Bordwell 153) and repressed emotion. Along with this, the long take as a stylistic device creates a sense of continuous temporality. It is only by the long take that the uneventfulness and monotony of time passing and its unbroken duration can be conveyed, because breaking up the scene with cuts would introduce a dynamism that would have the opposite effect (Bordwell 87). The function of the distant long take is that it preserves real time in pristine form and creates a growing intensity, a focus on the detail and duration of the image (Le Fanu). In so doing, the long take supports *temps morts*, dead time (Bordwell 153).

All the film’s stylistic devices that are characteristic of slow cinema evoke the painterly stillness and thus produce an image of extended duration or frozen time. In this way the film reflects the continuous present of the character’s existence and

her subjective experience of time, her being in time. To become a witness to this continuous present palpably flowing through the frames, the viewer scans various segments of the frame to perceive barely detectable differences between separate moments. The rhythm of the film thus allows viewers to visualize the density of time, the pressure of time that runs through the edited pieces. The director fulfills and expands in *Shirley* the modernist goal of presenting everything that happens in a moment by inflecting it through slowness as a response to the accelerated rhythms of neoliberal culture.

In between media

Both Hopper and Deutsch problematize the notion of reality. Hopper goes beyond the medium of painting into photography and film, asking questions about the status of reality and representation. Clement Greenberg proposes that a special category of art should be invented for Hopper, as his painting is “essentially photographic”, and it is in its deficiencies (“second-hand, shabby and impersonal” means) that its value should be perceived (118). Similarly, in *Shirley* the tableaux vivants introduce “moment[s] of intensified intermediality” (Peucker 26). According to Brigitte Peucker, they pose

a meeting point of several modes of representation, constituting a palimpsest or textual overlay simultaneously evocative of painting, drama, and sculpture. ... it involves the “embodiment” of the inanimate image. Tableau vivant, in other words, translates a painting’s flatness, its two-dimensionality, into the three-dimensional. By this means it figures the introduction of the real into the image—the living body into painting—thus attempting to collapse the distance between signifier and signified. Film is a medium in which different representational systems may collide, may replace, but generally supplement one another, suggesting that those moments in films that evoke the tableaux vivants are moments especially focused on film’s heterogeneity. (30–31)

Simultaneously, Hopper’s paintings are widely considered to be very cinematographic and have been compared to individual film frames due to their asceticism of space and emotional intensity. McBride describes the paintings’ intermediality or in-betweenness, pointing out that the scenes that his paintings evoke are frozen; they contain some peculiar immobility which can be partly attributed to “the slowest of slow-motion pictures” (qtd. in Lipiński 164). He claims that they imply movement that doesn’t exist and simultaneously becomes the slowest of movements, and it takes place beyond the painting as a continuation in the spectator’s memory (149). For Deutsch, the cinematic quality of Hopper’s paintings is evident in their subject matter and themes, as well as the angle, points of view, and camera positions (Ollila). Treating Hopper’s paintings as such—as film stills or frames—Deutsch turns *Shirley*’s topic into art about art and an interchange between painting and film (Deutsch qtd. in Ollila). There is a closed cycle of return between Hopper’s paintings and

cinema, then, because cinema was a model for Hopper, and in *Shirley* Deutsch has used Hopper's paintings to create a film. The use of tableaux vivants in the film enacts the intermediality, and gestures back towards the history of cinema and the fact that it was the first medium able to animate pictures.

Reality thus has more than one level in *Shirley*. The film brings together various ontological layers: of painting, tableaux vivants, film and the digital, capturing America reflected in a nexus of images, representations, mirrors and simulations. If Hopper's paintings do not picture "an actual event in the world but rather stage a re-imagined event in narrative pictorial terms" (21), as Wagstaff has observed, Deutsch depicts a world that is the representation of a representation. Digital colouring further destabilizes the film's relationship with reality because it does not offer a direct record of the world located in front of the camera. The film thus becomes "a study on the staging of reality, or more precisely a meta-study. By restaging Hopper's fictional reality and filtering it through his protagonist, i.e. an actress playing an actress, the film invites the viewer to consider reality as a conceptual conundrum" (David). Deutsch additionally plays with the viewer when at the beginning we see Shirley on the train reading a volume of Emily Dickinson's poetry with a Hopper painting on the cover ("Chair Car") and the camera enters that picture (although we are already in Hopper's world), and then emerges from it at the end of the film. Plato's allegory of the cave, which Shirley reads about, introduces additional self-reflection on reality and the criteria by which we recognize something as real. It might also refer to the viewers sitting in the cinema and watching visions of reality like shadows in the cave. The film thereby comments on the act of watching a film, on the transformation of the paintings into a film, entailing the shifts between media, and on the different kinds of meaning that might be embedded in the film.

In-between states, times and spaces

In line with the assumptions of slow cinema, which shows places and times beyond the dictates of globalization and clock time, both Deutsch and Hopper depict liminal states, times and spaces that are zones of dead time. The places shown in the film—the train, hotel lobby, windows, porch, office, hotel room, bedroom, and unfurnished room—are actually non-places, interstitial zones of transition. For instance, in the sequence based on the painting "New York Movie", which shows Shirley working as an usherette at the cinema, a pillar in the auditorium divides the frame into two sections, on the left of which one can see a part of the screen and two cinemagoers, while on the right Shirley is propped against the wall, lost in thought. It is to her that the spectator's attention is drawn, positioned in the peripheral zone, a non-place of non-dwelling (besides the fact that cinema itself is a liminal space). In other cases, even if Shirley is shown in her apartment, it is not depicted as "home"; in fact, it does

not differ from a hotel room in any way. Shirley is just a user of space, rather than a dweller in it; she leaves it impersonal and uncozy. Her roles in relation to space are those of user, passenger or customer. Whether she is in New York, Cape Cod or Albany, she does not seem anchored in any places.

All the glimpses of Shirley's being-in-time take place at liminal times, either early in the morning (6 a.m., 9 a.m. and 7 a.m.) or in the evening (11 p.m., 9 p.m., 10 p.m., 8 p.m., 6 p.m. and 7 p.m.). When Shirley is on the train, she broods, "Travelling on a train, like living in the dream, an in-between state. The past is gone, the future is yet to come, a bright faraway light". The notion of in-betweenness can be ascribed to all the times and spaces in the film. Non-places evince "distinctive temporal parameters that replicate, deviate from, or completely subvert those that typically organize everyday life" (Gottschalk and Salvaggio 16). These idiosyncratic temporal parameters of non-places stimulate states of mind in which a person is "*disengaged* from the paramount orientation to reality" and confronts a mental wandering, a "'spacing out' or partial absence of mind" (Morse 200, 194). The camera is focused on the protagonist adrift in these liminal spaces, engrossed in the liminal states of physically passive activities, such as reading, lying in bed, sleeping, thinking or listening to the radio. Because of the character's disengagement from reality, the time spent in non-places that conveys a sense of temporal and spatial discontinuity and transition is therefore a kind of non-time or dead time. The sense of time in non-places that Shirley experiences is scaled down to a state of suspended presentness isolated from the past and the future. For David Bordwell this suspended or dead time is one of the main forms of dedramatization in which story action is broken down in favour of moments of sheer inspection, meditation or revelation (152–153). Because in *Shirley* it is almost only liminal spaces, states and times that we are given to see, the whole film is a tissue of dead time.

Historical decontextualization further contributes to the effect of in-betweenness and a frozen continuous present. On the one hand, the scenes seem to be anchored in particular historically-charged moments, announced by the radio broadcasts and intertitles between the scenes. However, the different historical decades have no visual counterpart in the film, which mirrors Hopper's consistent painting style, suspended between the past and the present, and creating, as mentioned before, the sense of universality and timelessness. Historical decontextualization also contributes to the effect of non-productive, wasted, expanded time, standing in opposition to the idolatry of speed. Additionally, although the (non)narrative spans several decades, Shirley herself does not seem to age. In this frozen vintage Americana, the passage of time from moment to moment is marked visually only by the change of light, the imperceptible movement of the characters, smoke wafting in the air, and the camera movements, such as zooming in or out, and changing the shot size. When Shirley travels by train, for example, the scene seems to be still, and it is only a slight modulation of *mise-en-scène*—the light passing on the floor—that gives sign of movement and of the passing of time before we hear the sound of the train.

The melodrama of time

The spaces, times and (non)actions presented in the film are of types usually not found in cinema, because, as noted at the outset, they do not contribute to the development of action but rather disrupt the flow of time. The liberation of time from the precepts of causal action makes *Shirley* an example of what Andrew Klevan has called the “melodrama of time”: the cinema in which “time is not subservient to the dictates of action, but becomes a subject in itself” (45). In place of causality and action, the film generates duration with powerful visuality and composition, informed by Hopper’s own aesthetics. When causality is eschewed, as Denis Lévy argues, time is not “linked together” but “amassed” in the slow film, from “successive blocks torn from actual time (the time of the take) in a cumulative logic” (112). The amassed unconnected moments in time, disregarding the flow of everyday life, generate a surplus of duration within the shot. It is in this surplus of duration that time, uncompressed and distended, manifests its existence within each frame to reflect existential time: time as it is lived and experienced by the psyche. Having dispensed with action, instead of causality, the film produces “aberrant movement, false continuity, so as to allow that which is seen to become charged with that which is unseen” (Restivo 175).

The “unseen” in *Shirley* is the culture of acceleration. Although invisible, it constitutes the underside of slowness, as slowness displays its resistance only in relation to the culture of speed. The contestation of the dictatorship of speed, however, is only available to people who can afford it, since the phenomenon of slow living is a conscious choice of the affluent and sated Euro-American middle classes. *Shirley*, a theatre actress travelling around the world and a person engaged in intellectualized existentialism, exhibiting an interest in cultural, social and political issues of the day, might be one of these people. However, slow cinema does not promote a leftist vision of deceleration and slow life but depicts passive characters entrapped both in space and in time, imprisoned in hopeless life situations, determined by fate. *Shirley* as a representative of the middle class leads a life determined by choice; nevertheless, obviously, she is also determined by political and historical events, especially the Great Depression and Hollywood blacklist, which force her to take in-between jobs. Like all figures in Hopper’s universe, *Shirley* seems trapped in existential ennui, solipsism, and an inability to form deep bonds with people or places. If, as Iversen claims, Hopper’s characters’ “withdrawal from life is partly voluntary, their solitude self-imposed” (57), it might be, in the context of the twenty-first century, the consequence of the refusal to submit to the culture of acceleration with the ensuing solitude of being left behind while the whole world keeps rushing forward.

By capturing activities that are unproductive from the capitalist point of view because they consume time but do not result in a concrete product, or “any result, any endpoint, any climax” (Groys), *Shirley* fulfills the role of suspended time in time-based art, described by Boris Groys as a literal representation of duration.

Shirley experiences “unproductive, wasted time” locked in mute private moments of liminal states, in the “useless expenditures” (Groys) of threshold states, times and spaces. It is only this excessive time experienced in the liminal times and spaces that allows Shirley to experience the unmediated presence of the present, the sense of being present in the present—con-temporary or “con-temporaneous to one’s present” (Koepnick 9). For Martin Heidegger boredom is a prerequisite to our ability to be contemporary with our present, to experience the world as a whole through boredom with all its aspects, by not being drawn by any goal (see Heidegger). The positive consequence of excess time is thus that, in Groys’ words, this time “attests to our life as pure being-in-time, beyond its value within the framework of modern economic and political projections”.

The unproductive excessive time manifests itself as the only way to escape from the ideology of speed and progress. Both Hopper and Deutsch represent this in their work, and—although separated by several decades—they share certain objectives. Hopper was a representative of the minority of American artists who resisted the machine age and subverted the ideology of the American dream and of optimism. Although he died in 1967, his paintings have become a fixed element of American iconography. The universality and popularity of Hopper’s art, due to the timelessness encoded in it, have given it an active part in the discussions on time, space and notions of reality. What is more, the timeless aspect of his “contemplative studies of modern life” makes them “transcend[] the hour and the place to become profound statements about the human condition” (“Tate Modern Exhibition”). Thus, the timeless figures in Hopper’s paintings are able to provoke reflection on twenty-first-century life, capturing the mood of the melancholy and loneliness of being. Through their employment in *Shirley*, Deutsch contributes to the resistance to the culture of speed, frenzy and progress as well as to the delirious “cinema of attractions”.

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