

Visual metaphors of liminality in Edward Hopper's paintings

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Abstract: This study examines liminality in Edward Hopper's paintings through the analytical lens of visual metaphor, foregrounding how pictorial elements construct threshold experience. Liminality, understood as a state 'betwixt and between,' entails suspended temporality, spatial indeterminacy, and destabilized existential boundaries. While Hopper's work has been widely discussed within art history, the metaphorical structures through which liminality is visually constructed have not been previously theorized. The article demonstrates that Hopper's environments function as metaphorical projections of psychological and ontological states. Solitary houses operate as visual metaphors of the human condition: anthropomorphized facades stand for isolation, sealed or darkened windows for emotional opacity, and architectural stillness for temporal arrest. These structures figure existential in-betweenness, poised between habitation and abandonment, presence and absence. Threshold objects further articulate liminality through metaphorical transformation. Windows become metaphors of perceptual and epistemic boundaries, simultaneously connecting and separating interior and exterior realms. Doors signify denied transition, suggesting passage while withholding it, whereas stairways embody suspended movement without arrival. Spatial configurations generate additional metaphorical mappings. Railroads operate as metaphors of rupture and separation, dividing pictorial worlds into incompatible domains. Coastal edges and lighthouses figure ontological thresholds between stability and flux, safety and exposure. Emptied interiors metaphorize human absence,

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transforming domestic space into an index of psychological desolation. Light and shadow assume a metaphorical role: twilight atmospheres and artificial illumination convey temporal indeterminacy, while chiaroscuro figures cognitive uncertainty and perceptual ambiguity, rendering space unstable. The findings demonstrate that liminality in Hopper is actively constructed through a coherent system of visual metaphors of suspension, isolation, and thresholdness that convert architectural, spatial, and luminous forms into vehicles of existential meaning. The study advances a metaphor-centered framework for interpreting liminality in visual art and opens interdisciplinary pathways for liminality studies in visual culture.

Keywords: Edward Hopper, liminality, visual metaphor, threshold, architectural symbolism

Introduction

Liminality, a condition ‘betwixt and between’ (Turner 1967), where conventional categories are blurred and boundaries are unsettled, refers to a threshold state characterized by ambiguity, transition, and the suspension of normal structures of time, space, and social order (Fisher 2016, 22; Kravchenko et al. 2025; Thomassen 2016). Initially associated with anthropological and sociological research within the study of rituals and rites of passage (Van Gennep 1909/1961; Turner 1969), the concept has been incorporated into various fields in the humanities (e.g. Kravchenko et al. 2024). Few studies, however, examine the phenomenon of liminality from an art-historical perspective (Maglov 2021; Motoc 2021; Shields 2019), despite the fact that art itself, from Plato onward, has been considered a borderline practice and the profession of the artist as “borderline” (Thomassen 2009, 15; Baldini 2022). Against this theoretical background, Edward Hopper’s painting offers a particularly productive field for examining liminality in visual art. His works repeatedly stage spaces of transition – between interior and exterior, presence and absence, movement and stasis – through carefully constructed architectural settings, light regimes, and spatial demarcations. Architectural forms, domestic objects, roads, railways, coastlines, and light-shadow configurations operate as metaphorical devices that transform material environments into threshold spaces.

In this sense, Hopper’s visual language can be understood as profoundly metaphorical: familiar urban and domestic scenes are reconfigured into symbolic sites of existential suspension, where temporal continuity is arrested and spatial coordinates become

unstable. Despite frequent references to ambiguity, isolation, and in-betweenness in Hopper scholarship, the specific role of visual metaphors as instruments for articulating liminality has, to our knowledge, not been explored to date.

Accordingly, this study seeks to investigate how visual metaphors function as primary semiotic mechanisms through which liminality is constructed in Hopper's paintings, revealing a metaphorically structured poetics of threshold experience embedded in his pictorial world.

Literature review

Liminality in Edward Hopper's work has been addressed directly in only a limited number of studies. One notable example is Motoc's article, which explicitly employs the concept to analyze liminal figures and the construction of spatial and temporal indeterminacy in Hopper's paintings within the framework of magical realism. Motoc (2021, 13) notes that "Hopper's art has strange, often unsettling undertones that are not easily explained", comparable to the blurred narrative coherence, ahistoricity, and atmosphere typical of magical realist aesthetics. The motif of liminality in Hopper's work is also examined in articles by Yudenko (2025; 2026), who, however, does not address the articulation of this motif through the visual metaphors employed by the artist.

In most Hopper scholarship, however, the term *liminality* is not used explicitly, although the analyses frequently operate within a liminal interpretive perspective. Renner (2017, 42), for instance, situates Hopper's work in an "ambivalent, Freudian world" where comforting and disturbing objects share a common origin. Stanton (1994, 24-25) emphasizes the dreamlike quality of Hopper's realism produced by blurred spatial boundaries, while Kardokas (2005, 120, 112) describes his paintings as evoking a "twilight zone of experience," transforming the familiar into the uncanny and rendering the "hidden dimension of existence tangible".

The motif of the threshold is examined in detail by Stanton (1994, 24), who, without employing the concept of liminality, argues that Hopper's scenes are "almost always on the edge," both literally and metaphorically. He highlights the tension between stable focal space and the instability of the world beyond it, with figures positioned between interior and exterior realms. Such spatial indeterminacy aligns with broader conceptualizations of liminal space as non-territorial and

transgressive (Heft 2021, 6), as well as with Foucault's notion of heterotopia – spaces of “otherness” that are “neither here nor there” (Foucault & Miskowiec 1986, 22–27).

Motoc (2021) identifies spatial liminality in *Nighthawks* (1942), where viewers are suspended between participation and exclusion. Spatial disorientation is further linked to framing strategies that enlarge or extend architectural forms beyond the canvas (Gillies 1972; Foster & Troyen 2009) and to the “denial of the horizon,” which produces boundless spatial effects (Gillies 1972, 412).

Temporal liminality has likewise been widely noted. Mitchell (1990), Motoc (2021), Bardet (2019), and Gillies (1972) all point to blurred thresholds between past, present, and future. Kardokas (2005, 124) observes that time in Hopper “refuses to move linearly”, while Martínez Serrano (2022, 87) describes his images as “frozen moments”, a notion echoed by Strand (1994, 63), who metaphorically characterizes Hopper's time as “a secret passage leading from time into the silence...” (Strand 2000, 12) Scholars attribute this temporal suspension to static composition, generalized yet recognizable imagery, and figures positioned between unrealized past and future (Mitchell 1990, 75). Bardet (2019) further links suspended space-time to horizontality, shadow, anonymity of figures, and lack of geographical specificity.

Liminality is also explored indirectly through the theme of emptiness. Burns (2019, 113) argues that Hopper's depopulated Parisian spaces generate uncanny inaccessibility, a view supported by Bardet (2019), who interprets spatial organization as producing existential indeterminacy.

Overall, Hopper scholarship consistently addresses spatial and temporal indeterminacy, thresholds, dreamlike atmospheres, depopulation, and the uncanny, which are key correlates of liminality, through such visual strategies as horizon denial, distorted chronology, boundary positioning, and architectural framing.

However, no studies have examined visual metaphors as instruments for articulating liminality in Hopper's paintings. In the present study, visual metaphor is understood, by analogy with verbal metaphor, as a conceptual adaptation of the source domain – the concept from which characteristics are borrowed, to the target domain – the concept to which these characteristics are transferred for its reconceptualization. The adjustment of encoded information is based on relations of similarity, analogy, part-whole, cause-effect, time,

space, and others (Kravchenko 2025). For example, in the visual semiotics of Hopper's paintings, solitary buildings stand for an anthropomorphized state of psychological isolation; sealed windows evoke closed eyes and emotional inaccessibility; twilight atmospheres and artificial nocturnal lighting metaphorically signify temporal indeterminacy. The novelty of the present study lies in offering the first focused analysis of how metaphoric imagery, through composition, chiaroscuro, object-based codes, and the figurative transformation of architectural forms, constructs liminality as an active semantic principle. Accordingly, the aim of the study is to investigate how visual metaphors operationalize existential "in-betweenness" in Hopper's pictorial world, thereby revealing a previously unexamined dimension of his artistic practice.

Architectural metaphors of threshold and temporal suspension

The motif of liminality in Edward Hopper's paintings is articulated through visual metaphors embedded in the pictorial structure, where individual details function as iconic codes marking states of threshold and in-betweenness. One of the most persistent metaphors in Hopper's oeuvre is the solitary house, often treated as a kind of 'portrait'. With a 'gaze' turned inward, such houses appear simultaneously realistic and subtly surreal, transforming architectural forms into liminal images charged with alienation and marginality. In works such as *Telbot House* (1926), *Adams House* (1928), *House by the Railroad* (1925), *Captain Upton's House* (1927) and others, houses assume quasi-anthropomorphic qualities, metaphorically embodying psychological isolation and suspension.

This metaphor is constructed through a complex visual apparatus including composition, spatial organization, chiaroscuro, chromatic restraint, and contrast, as well as object-based symbolic coding through which material details acquire metaphorical signification.

In *House by the Railroad* (Figure 1), the metaphor of liminality emerges through visual oppositions structuring a borderline space between past and present, presence and absence, permanence and movement. The Victorian house, architecturally robust yet devoid of habitation or social function, operates as a marker of a displaced historical past. As Strand (1994, 16) observes, "It stands in the sun but is inaccessible. Its hiddenness is illuminated but not revealed", rendering it something "beyond us". Childs likewise describes it as

“emblematic of a kind of separateness [...] which, because of its arresting surface, is unassailable” (Kardokas 2005, 135).

Liminality is reinforced through compositional contrast: the vertical mass of the house is intersected by the rigid horizontal line of the railroad, establishing both a spatial and metaphorical boundary. The tracks function as a barrier separating viewer and image while evoking a broader opposition between pre-industrial order and industrial modernity. Temporal tension remains immobilized, producing what Martínez Serrano (2022, 87, 89) terms a “suspended moment” and “a profound meditation on that which is simultaneously fleeting and timeless”.

Chiaroscuro further intensifies the liminal effect. Bright daylight does not animate the scene but accentuates stillness and emptiness. The contrast of illuminated and shadowed planes metaphorizes presence and absence, while the shadow engulfing the building signals diminished vitality. A muted palette of pale blues and yellows visually dissolves the house into surrounding space, reinforcing its intermediate status. As a result, Hopper constructs an architectural metaphor fixed on the threshold between epochs and meanings – what Strand (1988, 340) describes as a “fascination with passage” that remains structurally suspended.



Figure 1. Edward Hopper, *House by the Railroad* (1925).
Oil on Canvas, Museum of Modern Art, New York City

A comparable effect appears in *Haskell's House* (1924), where shadow modeling and layered blue-gray tones create depth counterbalanced by the building's spectral lightness. Diffuse illumination and softened contours create a metaphor for hovering in air, evoking a dreamlike perceptual logic in which architectural solidity dissolves into a liminal threshold between presence and immateriality.

**Anthropomorphic architecture and shadowed thresholds:
*Lighthouse Hill***

The solitary House in *Lighthouse Hill* (Figure 2) is permeated by symbolic and metaphorical ambivalence. Although the scene appears outwardly tranquil, the shadows covering the façade of the cottage, with its darkened windows facing the viewer, metaphorizes an inward withdrawal of consciousness, transforming the house into an emblem of emotional enclosure and existential reticence.

The shadows descend ominously down the slope of the hill toward the viewer, assuming a metaphorical agency of their own. Optical effects here create a spatial metaphor of encroaching indeterminacy, as if darkness were emanating from the building itself and spreading across the pictorial field. In this configuration, the house becomes a metaphorical source of liminality: it does not passively receive shadow but appears to generate and project it outward, dissolving the boundary between its inner essence and outer space.

Although Levin (1995, 39) does not explicitly employ the concept of liminality, he nonetheless describes the painting in terms closely aligned with liminal theory, noting that through the interaction of light and shadow the image produces a sense of “transition,” in which buildings function not merely as “border markers of civilization,” but as entities endowed with their own ambivalent forces. Read metaphorically, this formulation positions architecture as a threshold signifier – structures that stand for the unstable boundary between habitation and estrangement, presence and abandonment.

In this way, the building assumes an anthropomorphic and metaphorical subjectivity. Its darkened windows operate as metaphors of an obscured gaze; its shadowed façade becomes a metaphor of veiled interiority.

The house appears to observe and withhold simultaneously, embodying a consciousness suspended between exposure and concealment. Such personification intensifies the liminal connotations of the scene, transforming architectural form into a metaphorical actor within a threshold space, one capable of conveying tension, absence, and suspended presence rather than mere physical habitation.



Figure 2. Edward Hopper, *Lighthouse Hill* (1927).
Oil on Canvas, Dallas Museum of Art

Boundary metaphors: Nature–civilisation and maritime thresholds

In Hopper's work, houses frequently appear 'on the boundary,' framed by railroads, forests, or the ocean, becoming elements that metaphorically delineate the domains of civilization and nature. Through compositional demarcation, Hopper constructs pictorial spaces in which different zones belong to distinct worlds, producing architectural and landscape metaphors of threshold. In *Solitude* (1944), the house is visually enclosed by forest while a paved road, disconnected from the dwelling, represents civilization. The right and left sections of the composition differ so radically that they appear to belong to two separate realities. This arrangement functions as a metaphor for isolation and inaccessibility, intensifying the sense of liminality.

A similar metaphoric logic governs *Railway Crossing* (1923), where forest and field, functioning metonymically as signs of the natural world, are contrasted with telegraph poles and railroad tracks that separate the house from the forest, creating a visual metaphorical boundary between natural and human-ordered spaces. In *American Landscape* (1920), cattle crossing a railroad line metaphorically move from nature into civilization.

Coast Guard Station, Two Lights, Maine (Figure 3) exemplifies liminal metaphorization of maritime thresholds, visualizing the boundary between land and sea, safety and danger, stability and flux. The rigid architectural geometry of the station and lighthouse contrasts with irregular water and rock forms, functioning as a metaphor for human order confronting elemental forces. The sea operates as a metaphor for the changeable and unpredictable, while the station marks a liminal site mediating between worlds. As Levin (1995, 39)

notes, the buildings are “seized by sharp contrasts of light and shadow”, placing them “at the disposal of invisible forces” that reinforce their metaphorical agency.

The painting evokes a sense of atemporality: absence of human figures and motion, planar architecture against textured water and rock, and a restrained palette contrasted with the murky violet sea create a metaphor of suspended time. The station appears suspended between two tonal zones – between the dull gray sky and the violet sea. This color does not exist in nature and therefore generates a sense of ‘otherness’. The dimsky blurs boundaries between air and light, dissolving the horizon and producing a metaphor of threshold uncertainty. Light in the painting lacks a clearly identifiable source; rather than illuminating, it estranges. Overall, Hopper’s compositional and chromatic choices operate as visual metaphors articulating liminality, turning architectural and natural forms into signs of existential ‘in-betweenness.’

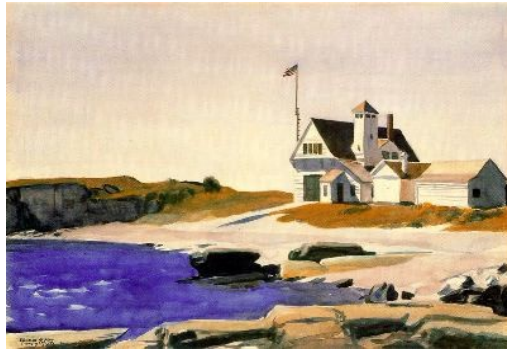


Figure 3. Edward Hopper, *Coast Guard Station, Two Lights, Maine* (1929).
Watercolor over charcoal, Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York

Spatial metaphors of dissolution and dreamlike liminality

Beyond devices of compositional demarcation, the liminal effect in Hopper’s paintings is often activated through the deliberate blurring of spatial boundaries. In his analysis of *The Lee Shore* (1941), Stanton notes that the composition is organized in such a way that the house appears to be situated at sea, while the boat, although located on the water, seems paradoxically anchored to the shore. This spatial ambiguity produces a striking perceptual effect akin to that of a dream, related to the way the eye and the mind process overlapping planes and unstable spatial cues (Strand 1994, 28). As a result, spatial relations lose their physical logic and acquire a metaphorical dimension,

transforming the depicted environment into a liminal zone where land and sea, stability and movement, exchange their conventional positions.

In *Rooms by the Sea* (Figure 4), the deformation of space further intensifies this metaphorical destabilization of boundaries. The viewer's perspective is disrupted through what Pamela Kubb (2004) describes as the surreal absence of land through the doorway. As Strand similarly observes, "The water seems to come right up to the door, as if there were no middle ground or shore" (Strand 1994, 63). The elimination of an intermediate spatial zone collapses the distance between interior and exterior, safety and exposure, rendering the doorway, which is itself a threshold space, not as a point of transition, but as an impossible, suspended boundary. In this way, spatial distortion functions as a visual metaphor of liminality, in which the very conditions of spatial orientation are unsettled, and the image evokes a dreamlike state of perceptual and conceptual in-betweenness.

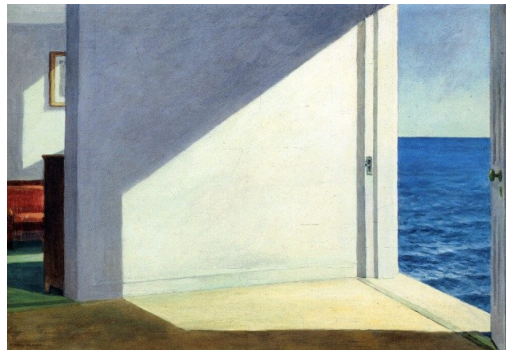


Figure 4. Edward Hopper, *Rooms by the Sea* (1951).
Oil on Canvas, The Yale University Art Gallery

Taken together, *The Lee Shore* and *Rooms by the Sea* exemplify a distinct mode of blurred liminality in Hopper's work, in which spatial boundaries are perceptually dissolved, producing a metaphorical threshold where land and sea, interior and exterior, collapse into a dreamlike zone of unstable orientation and suspended meaning.

Windows as iconic metaphors of liminal consciousness

Recurrent metaphors of liminality in Hopper's paintings are the window of the solitary house, which are often veiled by darkened curtains or sealed by shutters, without reflections. These windows function as visual metaphors of closed eyes, blurring boundaries

between life and absence, the real and the imagined, interior and exterior, presence and non-being. As O'Doherty (1974, 25) observes, the window is "the most obvious and the most enigmatic motif" in Hopper's work, whose function "has only just begun to be understood". Traditionally a symbol of contact between interior and exterior, in Hopper's paintings the window disrupts this relation. Its inward orientation and opacity produce a threshold without passage, evoking a dreamlike or suspended consciousness: the house appears neither fully alive nor entirely dead, caught in a liminal state.

Windows recur throughout Hopper's oeuvre, in *House by the Railroad* (1925), *Telbot House* (1926), *Sunday* (1926), *Captain Upton's House* (1927), *Lighthouse Hill* (1927), *Adams House* (1928), *Coast Guard Station, Two Lights, Maine* (1929), and *The Lee Shore* (1941). Dark, impenetrable 'eye-windows,' as Ward (1985, 188) notes, resemble "some grotesque head dominated by eyes", consistently denying access to interior space. In *Early Sunday Morning* (1930), ten windows with shutters and curtains are metaphorically described as "eyes beneath the descending brow of the cornice" (Marling 1988) or "watching windows" (Hughes 1997, 422). These windows articulate a visual dichotomy between unity and variation: they appear in an orderly, rhythmic sequence along the red façade that extends across the canvas and beyond its frame, while differing in the configurations of curtains and blinds within each opening. Despite the absence of visible human figures inside the building, the curtains subtly suggest human presence, reinforcing the ambiguity between occupancy and emptiness.

In *Rooms for Tourists* (1945), black, curtained windows contrast with windows illuminated by intense artificial light emanating from within the house, as if the building itself were radiating light (Levin 1995, 42). Merging with an undifferentiated external light source that bathes the façade, this illumination produces a strange and estranging effect (Ibid, 42), one that simultaneously conveys comfort and unease. In *Sunday* (1926), two large dark windows function as a metaphor of emptiness, mirrored in the vacant gaze of the man seated with his back turned toward them. In industrial scenes such as *Approaching a City* (1946) and *Dawn in Pennsylvania* (1942), unlit, lifeless windows generate spatial metaphors of symbolic boundaries, marking thresholds between interior and exterior, reality and imagination, life and lifelessness.

Even in public interiors, windows operate metaphorically. In *Automat* (Figure 5), a vast black window occupies almost the entire

background, functioning as a visual metaphor of perceptual and existential void. Beyond it, no life is visible; instead, the glass yields only the repetitive reflection of identical rows of electric lights. This repetition operates as a metaphor of temporal arrest: time appears caught in mechanical duplication, generating a sense of enclosed pause and suspended duration. The window functions simultaneously as mirror and metaphoric threshold. By reflecting an intense artificial yellow light, it metaphorizes the instability of perceptual reality, visually multiplying space while rendering it ontologically uncertain. Reflection here destabilizes the visible world, transforming the surface into a metaphor of epistemic ambiguity.

The inky blackness of the window itself becomes a metaphor of denied access, indicating that the exterior is symbolically withheld and unavailable. At the same time, the reiterated lights, belonging physically to the café interior, are projected into this darkness, metaphorically occupying the void. This superimposition produces a doubled spatial code: the reflections exist both inside and outside, belonging fully to neither realm. The liminal impact of such repetitive reflection is supported by experimental studies that link liminal states to deviations from typical, expected configurational patterns (Diel & Lewis 2022), one of which is the replication of visual elements.

Thus, the window in the picture constructs a metaphorical topology of “between inside and outside.” It becomes a liminal threshold surface, positioning the viewer within a suspended perceptual interval between two worlds, one of which is material, illuminated, and inhabited; the other opaque, indeterminate, and unreachable. The result is a metaphorical enclosure in which space, time, and presence are held in a state of threshold tension.

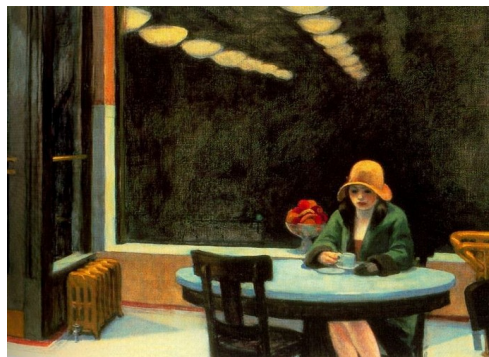


Fig. 5. Edward Hopper, *Automat* (1927).
Oil on Canvas, Des Moines Art Center, Des Moines

Thus, in Hopper's oeuvre, windows function as iconic metaphors of liminality, visualizing thresholds in which boundaries of presence, absence, and perception are persistently blurred and remain unresolvable.

Denied transitions: Doors, stairways, and empty interiors as object metaphors of threshold experience

Doors, stairways, and the noticeable absence of expected objects function in Hopper's paintings as potent metaphors of spatial and existential liminality. The meaningful absence of objects, such as furniture, doors, or human presence, triggers liminal perception, as suggested by Diel and Lewis in their deviation hypothesis (2022).

In *Sunlight in an Empty Room* (1963), the stripped interior becomes a visual metaphor for human absence. Sunlight entering through a darkened window acquires an almost lunar quality, destabilizing temporal logic. A vertical shadow echoes exterior darkness, reinforcing emptiness; as Kranzfelder (1998, 192) notes, the room lacks "even a trace of the requisites that would indicate human presence". A similar logic governs *Rooms by the Sea* (1951), where the emptiness of the interior is intensified by a trapezoidal wedge of sunlight that cuts through the room. The liminality of these interiors can be described using Strand's characterization of Hopper's work as offering a "vision of a world without us", "emptied of us" (Strand 1994, 58).

Doors in Hopper's work subvert their conventional function as connectors, operating instead as metaphors of threshold and disjunction. In *Compartment C, Car 293* (1965), a door devoid of handle or window promises passage yet denies it, becoming a paradoxical symbol of liminal stasis. The converging lines of the car roof form a trapezoidal channel, guiding the gaze while simultaneously reinforcing the sense of an unreachable passage, evoking both progression and impossibility. Strand (1988, 342) characterizes it as "an anxious connection between nowhere and nowhere, events of departure or arrival", where spatial logic and expectation collide.

Stairways similarly assume metaphorical significance, embodying transition toward the unknown. In *Stairway at 48 rue de Lille, Paris* (1906) and *Stairway* (1949), empty staircases metaphorically function as thresholds without passage, materializing the very essence of liminality. In *Stairway*, stairs descend past an open doorway into

indeterminate space, becoming a visual metaphor for suspended crossing between known and concealed realms. Kranzfelder (1998, 35) observes that Hopper used staircases as symbolic conduits between contrasting elements, often mediating the tension between human order and the indeterminate, untamed realm beyond.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that liminality in Edward Hopper's paintings is structurally articulated through a system of visual metaphors embedded in pictorial organization. Architectural forms, light-shadow configurations, spatial contrasts, and object-based symbolic codes function as metaphorical mechanisms that transform familiar environments into threshold spaces marked by ambiguity and suspension. In Hopper's visual language, concrete environments become metaphors of psychological, temporal, and existential in-betweenness.

The house emerges as the primary metaphorical locus of liminality. Solitary buildings function as visual metaphors of the human condition: anthropomorphized facades stand for psychological isolation, sealed windows metaphorize emotional inaccessibility, and architectural rigidity signifies temporal arrest. Positioned compositionally between illumination and darkness, habitation and abandonment, past and present, these structures become metaphors of suspended existence. These are dwellings that signify presence and simultaneously encode absence.

Beyond architecture, Hopper constructs extended metaphorical fields. Railroads operate as metaphors of historical rupture and blocked transition, separating epochs rather than connecting destinations. Coastlines function as metaphors of ontological thresholds, marking the unstable boundary between permanence (land) and flux (sea). Forest edges and urban peripheries become metaphors of existential boundary states, visualizing the liminal interface between culture/civilization and nature.

Light itself assumes a metaphorical function. Suspended illumination, twilight atmospheres, and artificial nocturnal lighting operate as metaphors of temporal indeterminacy, when time freezes between day and night, activity and stillness. Chiaroscuro contrasts metaphorize epistemic and emotional uncertainty.

Object and their configurations further reinforce Hopper's metaphors of liminality. Empty interiors become metaphors of

human absence; doors without handles metaphorize denied transition; stairways metaphorically symbolize the transition toward the unknown. Such elements transform functional objects into threshold symbols, materializing the experience of 'crossing without crossing.'

The contribution of this article lies in establishing visual metaphor as a central analytical framework for interpreting liminality in Hopper's oeuvre. While prior scholarship has addressed spatial ambiguity and temporal dislocation, it has not foregrounded the metaphorical structures through which these effects are produced. By demonstrating how specific visual forms metaphorize ambivalent psychological states, temporal and spatial disorientation, and existential uncertainty, the study reaffirms visual metaphor as a key mechanism of artistic conceptualization.

This perspective positions Hopper's work as a metaphorically organized topology of thresholds, opening interdisciplinary pathways between art history, visual semiotics, metaphor theory, and liminality studies.

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