

## Edward Hopper's *Gas*: Two Roads Diverge

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### Article abstract

Cet article examine comment l'iconographie de *Gas* pourrait refléter les attitudes de Hopper à l'égard des quatorze frustrantes années pendant lesquelles il voulait se dévouer entièrement à la peinture mais devait gagner sa vie comme dessinateur commercial. Les représentations des stations de service, avant que Hopper traite le sujet, étaient presque exclusivement du domaine de l'artiste commercial.

Hopper soulignait les accents religieux et patriotiques inhérents aux réclames de stations de service, et aux conceptions des produits; mais il renversait les messages habituels d'unité entre les stations de service et l'environnement et les messages de l'habileté qu'avait la technologie à améliorer la vie humaine. Étant un grand lisuer, Hopper aurait pu être inspiré par le thème de la « machine dans le jardin » tel qu'il paraît dans les oeuvres de Thoreau, de Fitzgerald et de Robert Frost. Les images impressionnistes et post-impressionnistes françaises démontrant les artistes abattus et sans travail auraient pu aussi avoir affecté sa représentation du pompiste fatigué et sans clients. Finalement, *Gas* semble concrétiser un autre thème de « croisement » de Hopper : le choix d'un chemin « a fait toute une différence ».

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# Edward Hopper's *Gas*: *Two Roads Diverge*\*

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## RÉSUMÉ

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Cet article examine comment l'iconographie de *Gas* pourrait refléter les attitudes de Hopper à l'égard des quatorze frustrantes années pendant lesquelles il voulait se dévouer entièrement à la peinture mais devait gagner sa vie comme dessinateur commercial. Les représentations des stations de service, avant que Hopper traite le sujet, étaient presque exclusivement du domaine de l'artiste commercial.

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The service station has become a beacon on our highways, and the polite, uniformed attendant is an American institution.

Henry Dreyfuss, *Designing for People*  
(New York, 1955), 143-44

Already it was deep summer on roadside roofs and in front of wayside garages, where new red gas-pumps sat out in pools of light.

Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (1925)

Edward Hopper painted *Gas* in 1940 when he was 58 (Fig. 54). In his studio, he slowly developed the image of a middle-aged, stoop-shouldered man tending the pumps of a Mobilgas station from sketches of pumps and other details, and drawing on various impressions of stations, since he had not found a particular one that suited what he had in mind (Figs. 55-56).<sup>1</sup>

Hopper was impatient with interpretations of his art, while acknowledging that "the inner life of a human being is a vast and varied realm, and does not concern itself only with stimulating arrangements of color, form and design."<sup>2</sup> He worked intuitively, avoiding explicit social commentary; he disliked being labelled a regionalist or an heir to the Ash Can tradition (although Robert Henri had

been his favourite teacher between 1903-1906).<sup>3</sup> Hopper said certain subjects appealed to him because: "I believe them to be the best mediums for a synthesis of my inner experience."<sup>4</sup>

This article seeks to consider how the iconography of *Gas* may reflect Hopper's feelings about the 14 frustrating years when he wanted to devote himself entirely to painting, but had to earn his living as a commercial designer. Hopper disliked compromise to please clients, stating: "Partly through choice, I was never willing to hire out more than three days a week. I kept some time to do my own work. Illustrating was a depressing experience. And I didn't get very good prices because I didn't often do what they wanted."<sup>5</sup> After a successful watercolour show in 1924 he stopped doing commercial art, and later dismissed his career as an illustrator—even "covered it up."<sup>6</sup>

Until Hopper's portrayal of the subject, depictions of gas stations were almost the exclusive province of the commercial artist. Before discussing his interpretation, it is necessary to consider the rich iconography advertising artists, copywriters, architects, and industrial designers of the 1920s and 1930s had developed to indoctrinate

the American public in the mythology of the gas station. Since Hopper had illustrated the subject of motoring, he would be aware of these tactics (Fig. 57).

"Elemental in much effective advertising is the transubstantiation of soup or beer or laxatives into symbols of some higher and more holy good."<sup>7</sup> Gasoline and oil companies, realizing their products looked and acted much like those of competitors, called on commercial artists and industrial designers to create compelling brand images with which customers could identify.<sup>8</sup> Pegasus, the "flying red horse," became the Mobilgas symbol of "speed and power"—bringing with it the prestige of Greek mythology.<sup>9</sup> Oil companies hired architects to remodel haphazardly organized country garages, or to build new stations. Some designs were modern and streamlined, while others sought to stimulate patriotic or religious associations through references to historic regional architecture, including New England churches.<sup>10</sup>

Motoring ads of the 1930s promised adventure, power, and romance to a public shaken by the Depression. Ads encouraged drivers to renew themselves by driving into the wilderness; "Uncle Sam" pointed to the Mobilgas flying horse and urged Americans to explore their country coast-to-coast (Fig. 58). A tank of the right gas could propel lovers up a star-lit mountain road, or take fun-loving people to tennis courts and ski resorts (Fig. 59). Mobilgas products were synchronized with the seasons: a robin sings on a blossoming branch in an ad for lightweight summer oil; there is a snowman in one for anti-freeze (Fig. 60). These ads suggested that Mobilgas products were in tune with nature's cycles, and allowed humans to live healthier lives closer to nature.<sup>11</sup>

The mythology of the gas station that developed in the 1920s and 1930s drew on symbolism traditional to roadside shrines, lighthouses, and oases. (Hopper painted more than one lighthouse before being drawn to this "beacon on the highway.") Gas stations offered refuge in the wilderness; they were eagerly anticipated stops where drivers might relieve mind and body, be set on their true paths once more, and have halt and lame cars made whole again.

In ads, the gas station attendant embodied qualities of the Good Shepherd, St. Christopher, and Cupid. He could send lovers cruising down the road to romance, befriend the fisherman with a tip on a stream, or change a tire for a woman driver. Often shown elevating a nozzle of a gas hose—above ad copy that stressed product potency—he projected boundless cheerfulness and the will to serve, the perfect servant for drivers who seldom had any others (Fig. 61).

Slickly crafted products and powerful images that publicized them were created in urban centres, then distributed across the country, much as statues of Augustus were carted to the provinces, images of saints shipped from Spain to the New World, and Roman triumphal arches erected across the empire. Writer Dwight Macdonald was impressed by parallels between the structure and authority of the medieval Catholic church and twentieth-century American corporations. Although speaking of *Time the Weekly News Magazine*, his words suit Mobilgas too: "Like all machines it is vastly impersonal. Its products bear the name of no individual authors, appearing as pronouncements *ex cathedra*, with the whole weight of the organization behind them."<sup>12</sup>

In *Gas*, Hopper dramatized the patriotic and religious associations inherent in gas stations and related advertising. For example, his station office resembles "Old Ship" Church, Hingham, Massachusetts, although simplified and reduced in scale. This may be his ironic comment on the popularity of New England churches as inspiration sources for gas station designs of the 1930s (Fig. 62). There are correspondences in the box-like shape, symmetry, dark base, white clapboards, cornice, roof sloped up from four sides (hip fashion), and belfry—in a Record Book entry, Jo Hopper referred to this structure in his painting as a "cupola."<sup>13</sup> In one of Hopper's sketches, the station office's crowning structure bears an even closer resemblance to the "Old Ship" belfry (Fig. 63).

Hopper employed in his work many of the stylistic devices derived from religious art with which industrial designers empowered station equipment. The stiff-elongated pump bodies—repositories of energy—and halo-like heads, resemble saints in medieval mosaics. Brilliant colour, luminosity, polished surfaces, symmetry, and monumental scale set the pumps apart from the natural world in general, and the attendant in particular.<sup>14</sup>

The darkness of the forest and illumination of the station lights in *Gas* suggest it is twilight, yet the sky looks too blue for early evening. The effect is to call attention to the colour blue, completing the patriotic red, white, and blue triad. Despite the fact that Hopper brought out, perhaps unconsciously, the religious and patriotic overtones of American consumerism, his image would fail badly as an advertisement. The artist Charles Burchfield, commenting on Hopper's sense of irony, said the laconic title *Gas* seemed to express the impact "of that commodity on American life"; Hopper often dealt with "painfully barren phases of contemporary life."<sup>15</sup>

In *Gas* Hopper “deconstructs” typical ad imagery, thus negating the subtext of such ads. He reveals the techniques commercial artists use to convey promises that soar beyond the utilitarian, and implies such promises will not be fulfilled. *Gas* can be seen as a wayside shrine to the gods of commerce, but it is clear that the submissive acolyte has been drained of energy rather than revitalized by contact with the quasi-divine pumps. His lethargy resembles that of the usherette in *New York Movie*, which Hopper painted the year before (Fig. 64). The movie on the screen, like gas pumps, had mythological power, was created by artists employed by corporations, and distributed nationally, yet failed to enliven the young woman. Hopper, like Sinclair Lewis in *Main Street* (1920), seems to show that the American secular religion of “boosterism” fails to nourish the spirit.

Hopper's *Drug Store* (1927), in which product packages are laid out symmetrically like precious offerings in the display window, offers a precedent to the quasi-religious, quasi-patriotic imagery of *Gas*. Red and blue rays of glory radiate from an “altar” flanked by glowing vials, white rectangles complete the patriotic triad. *Drug Store*'s shrine promises the night wanderer comfort, yet were his needs as prosaic as the advertised EX-LAX, he would find the store closed, and contact with the “altar” barred by glass. Allusion to defecation by the EX-LAX sign in *Drug Store*, and the toilet sign in the lower right-hand corner of *Gas*, may be Hopper's ironic comments on the deification of technology. These paintings call to mind Duchamp's glowing white urinal *Fountain* (1917), which parodies a holy water basin, and is ideally suited to the worship of commerce.

Hopper's *Gas* carries on what Leo Marx calls “the machine in the garden” theme; Marx traces this back to Virgil's contrasts of rural peace and simplicity with urban power and sophistication—with a shepherd to link the worlds. George Inness had depicted a benign relationship between nature and technology in a painting commissioned by Lackawanna Railroad in 1854. A train moves along gracefully curving tracks which unify the valley. Animals graze peacefully, and a relaxed figure contemplates the view “in the serene posture of the good shepherd looking out across Arcadia.”<sup>16</sup> Mobilgas ads of the 1930s stressed similar harmonies through stylistic unification of all elements: station, attendant, cars, customers, and environment. The station attendant directs travelers to the region's natural wonders; his smile attests to the beneficent effects of the technological world he represents.

By contrast, Hopper places natural and artificial worlds in surreal juxtaposition—as if the station

has materialized from some alien dimension. The brash assertiveness of the pumps contrasts with the attendant's dejection. Cars and customers are conspicuous by their absence—though Hopper included a car in a preliminary sketch.<sup>17</sup> He does not show his pumps as part of the natural cycle. They will not lose their colour, as has the roadside grass, nor their firmness, as has their attendant, whose form imperfectly echoes theirs on a smaller scale. The two worlds have their own lighting: the station will remain lit when the sun has set. The space of these worlds also clashes. The station's geometric lines resemble those found in perspective instruction books: the edges of trees and grass are irregular. Vanishing points from the station compete for the viewer's attention with the nearly converging lines of the road that turns into the dark forest.<sup>18</sup>

Hopper, an avid reader, may have been affected by the portrayal of clashing relationships between garden and machine by certain American writers. Thoreau, who Hopper admired, dramatized this conflict in *Walden* by having a locomotive's whistle break his reverie in the forest. In *The Great Gatsby*, Fitzgerald employed the garage of “George B. Wilson at the Gasoline Pump,” as a waste-land link between the bucolic suburb of West Egg and the high-powered city of New York. The station in *Gas* exists in a similar in-between world. Wilson, like Hopper's attendant, is “one of these worn-out men.”<sup>19</sup> Daisy Buchanan runs over the garage owner's wife (her husband's mistress), while speeding home to West Egg from New York. The garage owner “shepherd” is destroyed by those he serves. Robert Frost also dealt with disharmony between garden and machine. In “A Roadside Stand” (1936), he portrayed the attraction city glamour exerted on country people who resent motorists stopping to ask for directions or gas, instead of to buy produce.

Here far from the city we make our roadside stand  
And ask for some city money to feel in hand  
To try if it will not make our being expand,  
And give us the life of the moving-pictures' promise.<sup>20</sup>

Hopper's man, unlike Inness's Virgilian shepherd, has turned away from the garden to concentrate on the machine. But what is he doing? Linda Nochlin compares *Gas* to nineteenth-century images of work, such as Millet's *Sower*, but comments that Hopper's attendant isn't involved with something as fundamental as soil, and “not even represented doing his own kind of work—filling up the car.” Nochlin concludes “. . . one might say Hopper has, perhaps unconsciously, bodied forth the alienation of the worker from the instruments and products of his labor, in an offhand and

unemphatic—or emphatically non-socialist-realist—way.”<sup>21</sup>

However, Hopper may have considered the attendant a small businessman—like the tender of Frost’s “A Roadside Stand”—rather than a worker, in the sense of a station employee. The man’s maturity, and lack of the uniform and visored cap Mobilgas employees wore in ads, suggest he is an independent dealer. Although Mobilgas did own some company operated stations in the early 1930s, by “1936/37 virtually all station operations were back in the hands of independent dealers.”<sup>22</sup>

Whether a small businessman or a company employee, a key aspect of an attendant’s work—as ad campaigns stressed—was to project enthusiasm. His personality was as critical as his automotive skills; he was expected to be an actor of sorts, with the brightly lit station as his stage. Some corporations even used performers such as Eddy Cantor to play the roles of service station attendants in their ads (Fig. 65). Therefore, *Gas* may involve a special category of work that revolves around serving and entertaining pleasure-seekers. Hopper’s attendant has been caught off-guard, vulnerable, and dejected, after his client has gone—an American version of the bar maids, actors, or prostitutes in works by several French artists Hopper admired, such as Daumier, Manet, Toulouse-Lautrec, and Degas.<sup>23</sup>

*Gas* could fit into the category of Hopper’s theatrical themes. Hopper specialists have noted resemblances between the artist’s features and those of certain performers in his paintings, such as the clown in *Soir Bleu* (1914), and the man in *Two Comedians* (1965).<sup>24</sup> It also seems he identified with the gas station attendant in *Four Lane Road* (1956); Hopper’s wife Jo, who was noted for interrupting him, was the probable inspiration for the woman who shouts at the attendant from a window.<sup>25</sup>

Hopper may have recognized parallels between his role as a commercial artist who had to please clients, and the role of the station attendant. Both the attendant and the commercial artist must project enthusiasm for products, whether they feel it or not. The man in *Gas* is free to show his true feelings in the absence of customers. Once Hopper felt secure enough to give up his commercial practice, he admitted his distaste for it.

The man’s half-hidden gesture is puzzling, but could be understood as a reversal of the exuberant power gesture of a vigorous young attendant hoisting a nozzle in an ad. In *Gas*, the attendant, like the sky, is in a twilight phase. His obscured gesture conveys impotency—he could be hanging up his hose. In some sense, the man may represent

Hopper’s understanding of what he might have become if he had continued as a commercial artist.

Hopper was sensitive to the lack of support for the fine compared to the commercial arts in America—especially after witnessing the higher regard for the arts in Europe. In 1955, looking back on his return from France in 1910, Hopper remarked: “Of course, it’s the experience of most Americans who have been to Europe for the first time that America seems very crude and raw and unsympathetic to art.”<sup>26</sup>

The climate for fine arts support was not favourable during 1939 or 1940. Well-publicized attacks on a bill introduced in 1937 to establish a permanent Bureau of Fine Arts resulted in it being tabled by the House in 1939. Reduced funds and restrictions for the Federal Arts followed. Oliver W. Larkin comments: “The price of one battleship was evidently too high a price to pay for the greatest experiment in democratic culture the world had ever seen.”<sup>27</sup> The fine art displays at the 1939-40 New York Fair were overshadowed by what a critic called “Corporation Style wares.” Larkin notes: “The World of Tomorrow made abstraction the medium of advertising.”<sup>28</sup> The Fair dramatized how commercial artists might serve corporations and help pull the nation out of the Depression—it was they, rather than fine artists, who were an acknowledged necessity to their country.

While Mobilgas used Pegasus as a symbol of “speed and power,” in fine art it was also a symbol of art and poetry existing in the highest realms, as in the 1758-60 Hertel Edition of Ripa’s *Iconologia*, where the winged horse soars above the “hurly burly,” in an allegory on the “mad world” (Fig. 66).<sup>29</sup> In French Symbolism (a movement that interested Hopper), there was revived interest in Pegasus as a symbol of the creative imagination: Redon’s lithograph *Pegasus Captive* is an example.<sup>30</sup> The irregular lettering on the Pegasus sign—some letters slant, and their bases are not aligned—suggest it may have been painted by a local sign painter, as often happened in small stations in remote areas.<sup>31</sup> There is a tradition of depicting impoverished artists scrounging a living painting signs, as in Hogarth’s *Beer Street*, where a skinny, ragged French artist paints a tavern sign near a group of plump, prosperous beer drinkers. On returning from France, Hopper landed in a kind of Beer Street, where he had to hire himself out to commercial clients. That seems the point of the humorous sign he made for himself, titled: “MAISON E. HOPPER OBJECTS D’ART ET D’UTILITE.” Through early involvement with Henri’s circle he was well aware that American painters typically paid their bills by doing commercial art. Later in

life, he said: "I don't know a single man in this country who hasn't had to teach, paint signs, shovel coal or something."<sup>32</sup>

In *Gas*, a flattened Pegasus is imprisoned in a standard Mobilgas "shield," and cannot soar freely into the sky. Pegasus must serve the "hurly burly"—the sign is an apt symbol for the creative imagination held captive by money.<sup>33</sup> Perhaps the sign symbolized for Hopper the compromises of his early career. Looking back to those years, he said: "Illustrations don't interest me. I was forced into it by an effort to make some money, that's all."<sup>34</sup> He recalled interviewing for assignments this way: "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."<sup>35</sup>

Let us consider the absence of cars in *Gas*. A critic has commented that the passage between office and pumps seems almost too narrow to accommodate cars, as does the strip between road and pumps—and the sign would obstruct their passage.<sup>36</sup> As in the case of a blue sky which does not work well for sunset, yet functions excellently as the colour blue, so an empty, perhaps unusable path calls attention to itself as a path. Hopper scholars have noted the artist's frequent use of crossroads themes, and *Gas* quite literally, embodies one (some of the drawings make that even clearer): the straight, artificially lit path, walled by Mobilgas artifacts, crosses the road that curves into nature and darkness, at a point marked by the Pegasus sign.<sup>37</sup> Hopper once faced a crossroads formed by the financially secure, predictable, enervating path of "sign painting," and the risky, but deeply alluring, road of personal creativity that led into the unknown.

*Gas* may commemorate Hopper's declaration of independence from illustration. He selected a subject from the province of commercial art, and reversed, element by element what would have made it an effective ad. A 1938 book on creating effective advertisements indicates the thinking of the time: "Note that the people in the illustration are shown in animated poses—not dull and quiet. A single glance suggests something dramatic is happening."<sup>38</sup> Prolonged staring at *Gas* reveals nothing dramatic at all: no cars, no virile attendant in action, no alluring lights twinkling in the distance.

In his commercial illustrations, Hopper demonstrated considerable skill in selecting effective viewing angles, clear body language, and appropriate placement of worker, tools, and object of work, enabling viewers to grasp what a worker was doing and how he was doing it (Fig. 67). Yet, the gesture by the aged, unanimated attendant in *Gas*

is hidden by a pump, so the meaning of his action is unclear. Hopper complained that as an illustrator, he had to please editors who "wanted people waving their arms."<sup>39</sup> By obscuring the attendant's gesture in *Gas* Hopper defied such demands.

The road through the station leads to a dead end, but the road into the forest clearly continues to an unknown destination. *Gas* brings to mind Frost's poem, "The Road Not Taken," in which two roads diverge in a wood, and the choice of road "has made all the difference."<sup>40</sup>

#### NOTES

- \* A version of this paper was given on 20 May 1988, at the Northern Pacific Popular Culture Association Conference, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, B.C. I want to thank Deborah Lyons, Administrator of the Hopper Collection, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, the staff of the Smithsonian Archives of American Art, San Francisco, and Patricia K. Marshall, Manager, Analytical Research Service, Mobil Oil Corporation, New York, for their generous help. The term "Mobilgas" is used rather loosely to refer to the station in *Gas*. Ms. Marshall indicated that stations of the type depicted in *Gas* probably belonged to Socony Vacuum Oil Co., Inc., a Mobil predecessor company.
- 1 Lloyd Goodrich, *Edward Hopper* (New York, 1976), 109, and Gail Levin, *Edward Hopper: The Art and the Artist* (New York, 1980), 50.
- 2 Edward Hopper, "Statements by Four Artists," *Reality*, 1 (Spring 1953), 8.
- 3 Goodrich, *Edward Hopper*, 11.
- 4 Quoted in Gail Levin, "Edward Hopper's Process of Self-Analysis," *Art News*, LXXIX, 8 (October 1980), 144.
- 5 Quoted in Suzanne Burrey, "Edward Hopper: The Emptying Spaces," *Arts Digest* (1 April 1955), 9 and 33.
- 6 Gail Levin, *Edward Hopper as Illustrator* (New York, 1979), 1.
- 7 Bruce A. Lohof, "The Higher Meaning of Marlboro Cigarettes," *Journal of Popular Culture*, III, 3 (Winter 1969), 442.
- 8 Henry Dreyfuss, *Designing for People* (New York, 1955), 143-44.
- 9 Letter of 3 October 1986 from P. K. Marshall, Mobil Oil Corporation.
- 10 Dreyfuss, *Designing for People*, 144. See also Wm B. Rhoads, "Roadside Colonial: Early American Design for the Automobile Age, 1900-1940," *Winterthur Portfolio*, XXI, 2/3 (Summer/Autumn 1986), 133-52. Rhoads claims the American gas stations typify their period as much as Gothic cathedrals symbolized medieval life. See also David Lewis and Laurence Goldstein, eds., *The Automobile and American Culture* (Ann Arbor, 1983); Chester H. Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile: American Roadside Architecture* (Boston, 1985); and Daniel I. Veyra, "Fill'er Up": *An Architectural History of Gas Stations* (New York, 1979).
- 11 *Life* issues from the 1930s contain a good number of these ads. An "Editorial" in *Socony Vacuum News* (April 1940) states that the "service station concept began in the 1920's. Before then, motorists expected little of what came to be called 'service' with purchases of fuels and lubricants." Some merchandisers recognized the value of building goodwill through service and the company began to train attendants and station managers in service techniques.
- 12 This excerpt from a 1937 article in *Nation* appeared in Raymond Fielding, *The March of Time* (New York, 1978), 7. An excerpt from the "Annual Report to Employees," *Socony-Vacuum News* (June 1940) suggests the large-scale nature of their operations. "We not only engage in all

- branches of the oil industry at home, but, in one way or another, we do business in most of the world."
- 13 Hopper's Record Books are part of the Special Collections of the Library, Whitney Museum of American Art.
  - 14 In a 17 November 1987 letter, P. K. Marshall states that pumps of the type in *Gas* were "metal protected by high-grade laquer. The pump tops were either a glass globe or a wide metal circle enclosing two glass discs. A light bulb was placed in the globe or between the discs."
  - 15 Charles Burchfield, "Hopper: Career of Silent Poetry," *Art News*, XLIX (March 1950), 14-17.
  - 16 Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden* (New York, 1964), 18.
  - 17 Located in the Hopper Archives, Whitney Museum of American Art.
  - 18 See Jean Gillies, "The Timeless Space of Edward Hopper," *Art Journal*, XXXII (Summer 1972), 404-12, for diagrams indicating that lines from station office and pump meet at more than one vanishing point. My statement implies that the lines *appear* to converge, but not that they actually do.
  - 19 F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (1925), in *The Bodley Head Scott Fitzgerald* (London, 1958), I, 44 and 127.
  - 20 From *A Further Range* (1936), as published in E. C. Lanthern, ed., *The Poetry of Robert Frost* (New York, 1969), 286-87.
  - 21 Linda Nochlin, "Edward Hopper and the Imagery of Alienation," *Art Journal*, XLI, 2 (Summer 1981), 136-37.
  - 22 P. K. Marshall letter of 17 November 1987.
  - 23 See Gail Levin, "Edward Hopper, Francophile," *Arts Magazine*, LII (June 1979), 114-21, for a discussion of particular French artists admired by Hopper.
  - 24 See Levin, *Edward Hopper*, 52-58, as well as Bryan Robertson, "Hopper's Theatre," *New York Review of Books*, 16 December 1971, for discussions of theatrical themes. Levin says that while Hopper tended to reject ideological content related to the oppressed, he seems to have identified sympathetically with the clown performer, a fringe member of society, perhaps, in part, because of his outsider status while living in Paris. See also Levin's "Edward Hopper: The Influence of Theater and Film" *Arts*, LV, 2 (October 1980), 123-27.
  - 25 Gail Levin, "Edward Hopper's Process of Self-Analysis," *Artnews*, LXXIX (October 1980), 146.
  - 26 Brian O'Doherty, interview with Edward Hopper, in *Invitation to Art*, television series, Boston Museum of Fine Arts and WGBH-TV, Channel 2, 1955, transcript courtesy Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.
  - 27 Oliver W. Larkin, *Art and Life in America* (New York, 1966), 464.
  - 28 Larkin, *Art and Life in America*, 411.
  - 29 Dover Pictorial Archives Series, 1971, plate 141.
  - 30 Gail Levin (in *Hopper's Places* [New York, 1984], 58) discusses his interest in the Symbolists. Her explanation of the Symbolist connection between *Twilight* and lost desire may shed insight on the time of day in *Gas*. She also deals with such connections in "Edward Hopper's Evening," *Connoisseur*, CCV, 823 (September 1980), 56-63.
  - 31 P. K. Marshall letter of 31 October 1986.
  - 32 Archer Winsten, "Wake of the News: Washington Square North Boasts Strangers Worth Talking to," *New York Post*, 26 November 1935.
  - 33 There may be a precedent for Hopper's use of a symbolic animal, Pegasus, to add irony to a painting in his use of a dog the year before in *Cape Cod Evening*. Levin speculates he may have meant the traditional symbol of fidelity to act as an ironic allusion to the couple's deteriorating relationship. She remarks on Hopper's interest in Dutch and Flemish art with its rich symbolic content. See "Edward Hopper's Evening," 61.
  - 34 Brian O'Doherty, *American Masters: the Voice and the Myth* (New York, 1973), 16.
  - 35 Quoted in Alexander Eliot, "The Silent Witness," *Time*, 24 December 1956, 37; reprinted in Alexander Eliot, *Three Hundred Years of American Painting* (New York, 1957), 297.
  - 36 Rob Silberman, "Edward Hopper and the Implied Observer," *Art in America*, LXIX (September 1981), 154.
  - 37 Susan Alyson Stein, "Edward Hopper: The Uncrossed Threshold," *Arts Magazine*, LIV, 7 (March 1980), 159.
  - 38 John Caples, *Advertising Ideas: A Practical Guide to Methods that Make Advertisements Work* (New York, 1938), 23.
  - 39 Quoted in Winsten, "Wake of the News." Hopper's feelings about commercial art are also expressed in his 1927 comments on John Sloan: "John Sloan's development has followed the common lot of the painter who through necessity starts his career as a draughtsman and illustrator: first the hard grind and the acquiring of sufficient technical skill to make a living, the work at self-expression in spare time, and finally the complete emancipation from the daily job when recognition comes" ("John Sloan and the Philadelphians," *The Arts*, II [April 1927]).
  - 40 From *Mountain Interval* (1916), as published in Edward Connery, ed., *The Poetry of Robert Frost* (New York, 1969), 105.



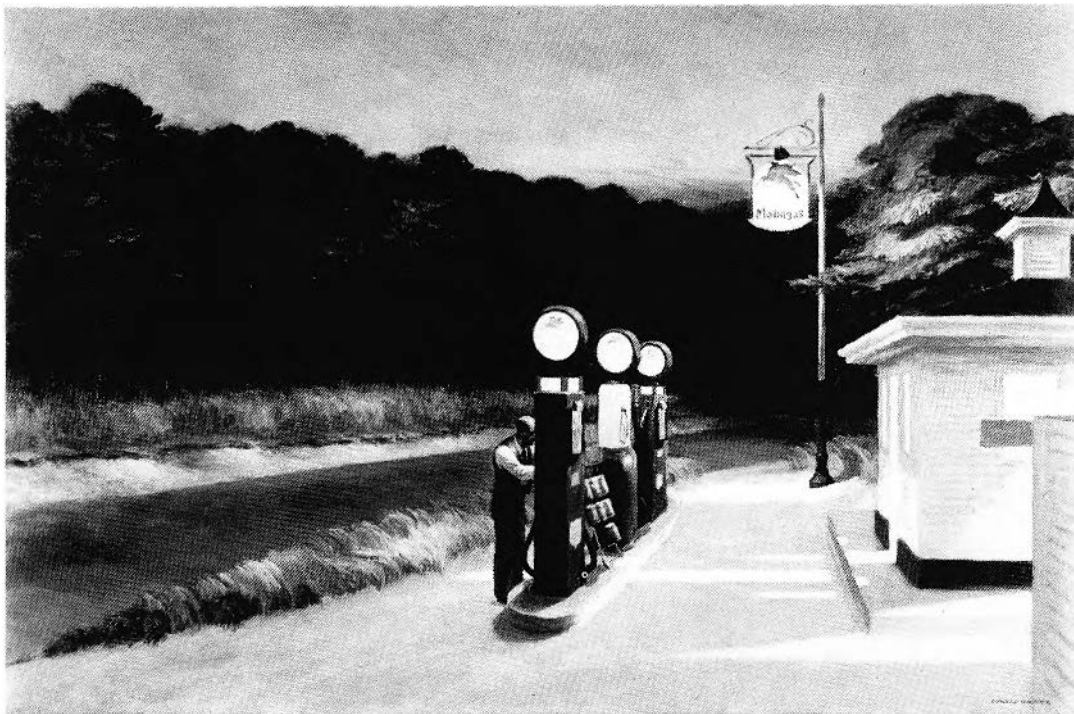


FIGURE 54. *Gas*, 1940. Oil on canvas, 26-1/4 × 40-1/4 inches. The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Mrs. Simon Guggenheim fund (Photo: MOMA).

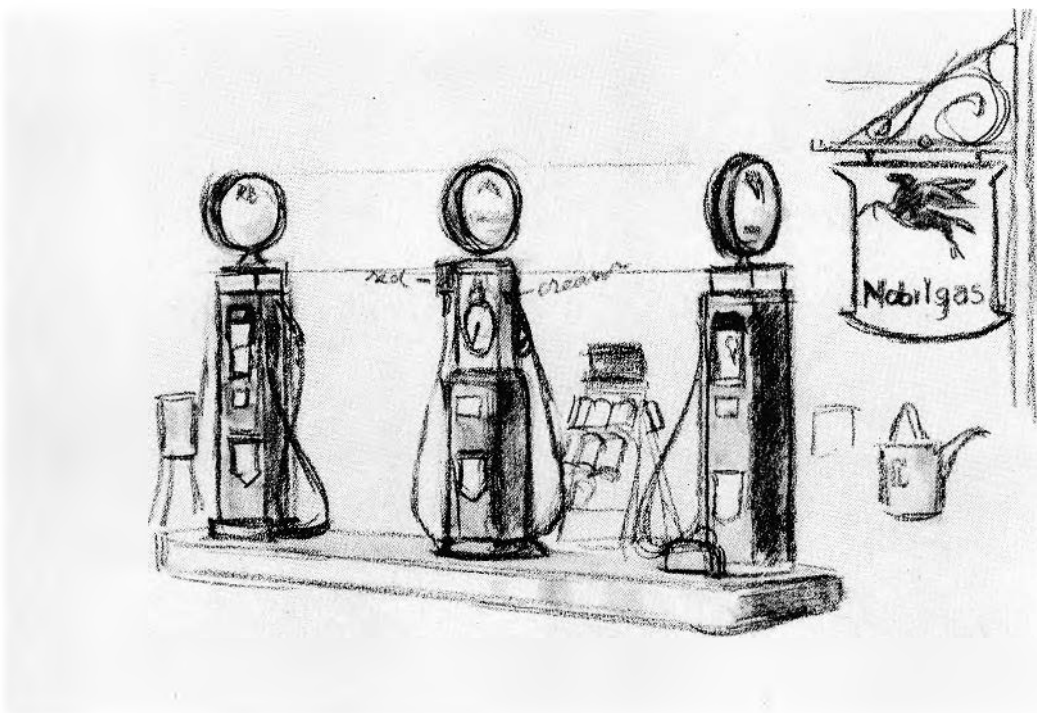


FIGURE 55. Drawing for painting *Gas*, 1940. Conte on paper, 8-7/8 × 11-7/8 inches. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York: Bequest of Josephine N. Hopper. 70.225 (Photo: Whitney Museum).





FIGURE 56. Socony Vacuum Service Station, Orleans, Mass., as photographed 30 March 1938. Reprinted with the courtesy of Mobil Corporation.

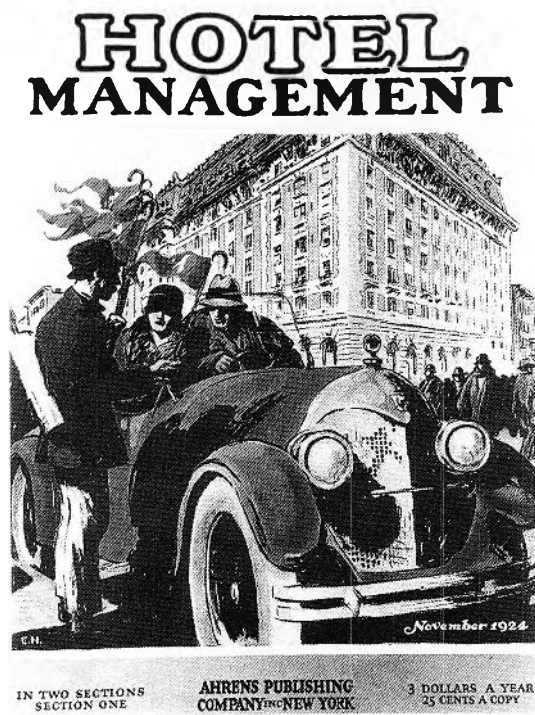


FIGURE 57. Hopper, illustration for cover of *Hotel Management*, November 1924.



FIGURE 58. Mobilgas ad of 1939. Reprinted with the courtesy of Mobil Corporation.



FIGURE 59. Mobilgas ad of 1939. Reprinted with the courtesy of Mobil Corporation.



FIGURE 60. Mobilgas ad of 1939. Reprinted with the courtesy of Mobil Corporation.



FIGURE 61. Mobilgas ad of 1939. Reprinted with the courtesy of Mobil Corporation.

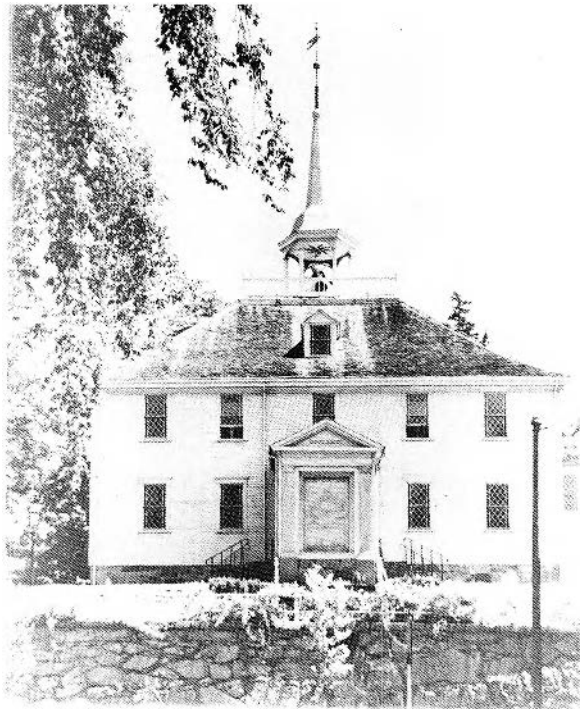


FIGURE 62. "Old Ship" Church, Hingham, Massachusetts (1681 with 1731 and 1755 extensions).

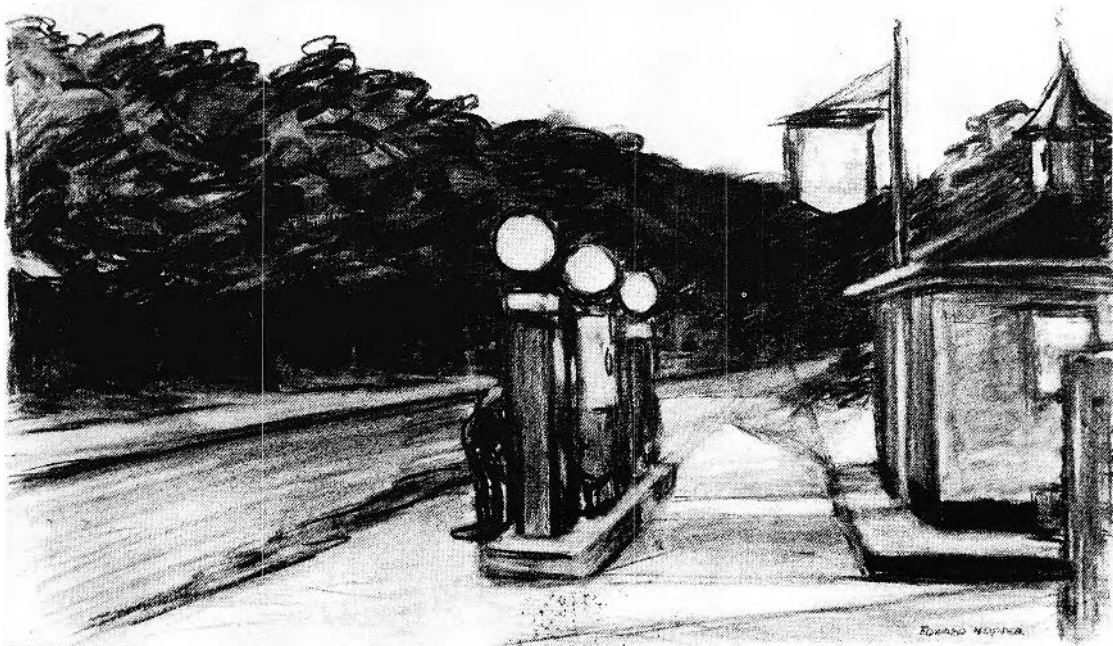


FIGURE 63. Drawing for painting *Gas*, 1940. Conte and charcoal with touches of white paint on paper, 15 × 22-1/8 inches. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Bequest of Josephine N. Hopper. 70.349 (Photo: Whitney Museum).



FIGURE 64. *New York Movie*, 1939. Oil on canvas, 32-1/4 × 40-1/8 inches. The Museum of Modern Art, New York (Photo: MOMA).



FIGURE 65. Eddie Cantor in a Texaco ad of 1938. Reprinted with the courtesy of Texaco, Inc.

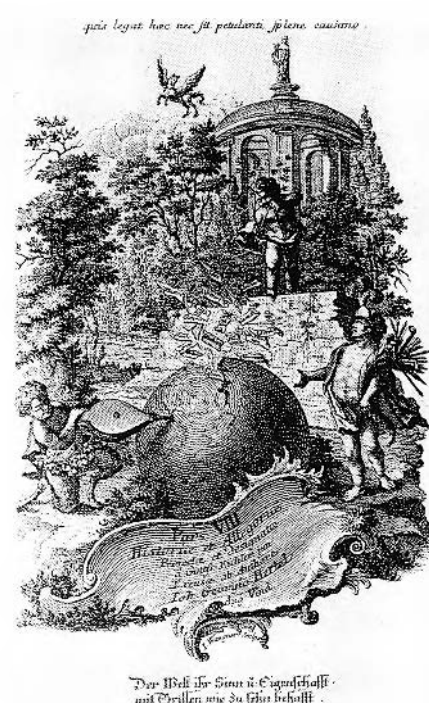


FIGURE 66. An allegory on the "mad world," from the 1758-60 Hertel Edition of *Iconologia* (Dover Pictorial Archives Series, 1971), plate 141.



FIGURE 67. Hopper illustration for cover of *The Morse Dial*, September 1920.